


WORDS | **WORD ON THE STREET**
 a paper for the people



THE TRAGIC STORY OF FENTANYL

WOTS UP IN THE NEW YEAR?

BOG FOLK

Y WE LOVE THE YMCA

HOUSING FIRST

STORIES, ART, POETRY

Housing-First and Assertive Community Treatment Take Time and Investment



By Terrence Sharrer

Housing-first is a policy that offers permanent housing for those experiencing chronic homelessness, unconditionally. Services are wrapped around those struggling with addiction, mental illness, disability, etc. The policy has shown great promise in progressive communities. However, although performed correctly in the beginning with the New Path Community Housing development in Boise, it seems that Ada County lost sight of how housing-first is a long term solution – meaning that positive results in reducing unsheltered homelessness are not always clear in the beginning.

The initial year of housing-first as implemented



at New Path, which houses and provides support to residents who have been chronically unhoused through public/private partnership, saved taxpayers over \$2 million dollars in emergency services. More conservative voices argued that the model wasn't working. The county decided to cut

a third of its funding for New Path and suggested that we reverse course to a merit-based model that has been the norm for 50 years.

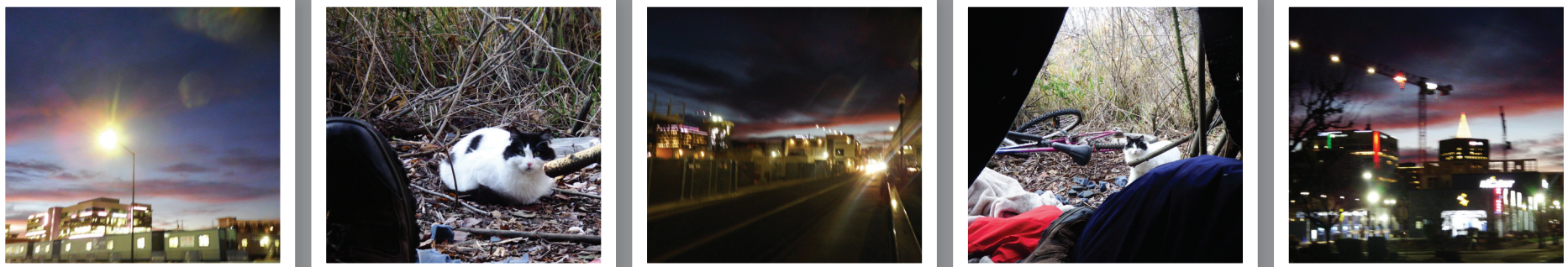
I run Project Recovery at Interfaith Sanctuary and my educational background focuses on Assertive Community Treatment, a crucial but often forgotten component of housing-first. In my experience, ACT is the only model that works to help people who are chronically unhoused with addiction and mental health challenges housed. ACT works because it wraps services long-term (five years minimum) around those who are our most housing-challenged community members. Those who need individualized and consistent support in day-to-day life receive it. ACT helps these people develop independence over time, but never disconnects them from a trusted community when they begin living alone, and is more comprehensive than permanent supportive housing as it is today. At our shelter, we often move guests who have gone through recovery into permanent supportive housing, but when they're removed from community and on their own, the services provided under the existing model are frequently not individualized enough. We do what we can here at the shelter to stay connected, but our resources are limited.

Long-term and comprehensive ACT services are an investment in reducing negative health outcomes, improving care, and giving our most vulnerable the respect and safety they deserve. Housing-first is a wonderfully effective way to reduce homelessness over time. It just needs specialized care baked into the model and an expectation that those services never go away. Our officials should exercise patience and keep open minds, not fall back on an old merit-based system that has failed many.

Read more about ACT here:
<https://www.verywellmind.com/assertive-community-treatment-4587610>

Photos by Gypsy Wind

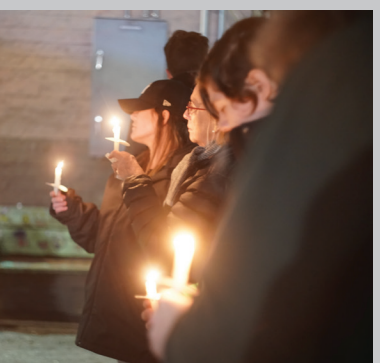
Gypsy Wind is a photographer experiencing homelessness in Boise. These are photos he took around town this month.





LONGEST NIGHT VIGIL PHOTOS

Photos by Erin Sheridan of the Longest Night Vigil, held every year on the longest night of the year (December 21) to honor those who died while experiencing homelessness.



How I Disagree with Others

By Critter

My Values are in accordance with the dictates of reason. These I believe are based on the fact that the purpose of life is to perpetuate it in peace and kindness. Therefore, if I stay above reproach within my reasonable system, I feel that I may be allowed to disagree with someone in difference of my values. If I feel the need to make them aware of this disagreement, I will do so to my best ability with tact and kindness in order to disassociate myself from them to keep me and my loved ones safe, yet separate.

Home and Center

By Molly Nunamaker



Bring me home, my heart no longer wishes to roam.

Bring me back to center, help me remember the warmth of family.

Show me compassion as I follow my passions.

Joy and peace what I now seek, and I create them with every word I speak.

Choosing words with discretion, moving forward in a new direction.

Choosing love and choosing light, no longer fighting until the darkness of night.

New Year's Resolutions



A few resolutions by the WOTS editorial staff!

- To be a great communicator.
- To be a better listener
- To sell some of my art
- To learn how to paint a dragon!
- To get teeth and glasses.
- To stop trying to worry whether I'm authentic or not (people-pleasing).
- To learn more patience (although I don't know that's ever going to happen!)
- To apply for my master's program.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH



You can listen but not hear
- Justin, Project Well-Being



Thank You YMCA



by Jodi Peterson-Stigers

The YMCA has been a fixture in this community since the early 1900's. Their buildings create welcoming communities for all. From babies to the elderly, the YMCA has

programming and support for all members of our city. Dave Duro, the current CEO of the YMCA, is a driving force in creating an institution that brings so much to so many. Recently Interfaith Sanctuary was really struggling with trying to support the over 40 kids we currently have living at our Hotel shelter. Because these kids all go to different schools, the bus travel is long with the hotel being the last stop. This means our kids do not get back until after 4:30pm during the school week. Once the kids got back to the shelter they had so much energy they needed to burn off, but there were not many options available to them. We knew we needed to do something to bring socialization, fun, and stimulation to

our kids so we reached out to Dave Duro to see if the YMCA could help. Dave asked us to send the ages and school names for all the school-age kids at our hotel shelter, and the very next day we were contacted by Jane, Dave's executive assistant, who helped us get paperwork filled out for all the kids. By the end of the week they had made arrangements to have Y buses pick up our kids at their schools and bring them to the YMCA to participate in after school programming. This has been a game changer for the families and the staff. The kids are able to be kids and get added support from the Y staff. What a tremendous gift the YMCA has given our families.

Bog Folk



By Gerri Graves

This bit is from 19th c. English poet, Thomas Hood. It reminded me of myself. All I've done is stitch and sing my way through these past two years. "With fingers weary and worn, With eyelids heavy and red, A woman sat, in unwomanly rags, Plying her needle and thread: Stitch! stitch! stitch! In poverty, hunger, and dirt, And still with a voice of dolorous pitch, She sang the "Song of the Shirt!" I wanted to write you a poem for this evening, but I don't produce poetry unless I'm in love.....or feel loved. However, these past two years have been dark ones. Love has not been a constant in my universe. I'm starved for it.....and the words, they will not come. I've worked very hard to give you insight into the community. I've wrung myself dry of empathy, to project my heart into paragraphs.

To paint a picture of poverty with words. To remind you: we're still here. Breathing air. Existing but only just.

But, no poetry from me.

Just stories from people that are no longer granted a rung on the societal ladder. Nor are we the 'platform' of everyday folk. The noble nameless faces in the crowd. No. We're the bog the platform juts from. We're less than, and we're treated accordingly.

Reduced to adjectives instead of names. Percentages instead of autonomous individuals. Tolerated instead of welcomed.

A blight.

These words are heavy, yes? Imagine carrying them, like a scarlet letter.... for years. Like a patch of black nothingness where portions of a soul used to flourish.

Flowers do not grow here. Love does not linger. Thoughts grow morose. Hope is only a dream once had.

But we folk of the bog, we try. We rise above the depths you're afraid of, in the dark, quiet hours. We're the weed in the societal pavement crack that keeps on coming back. We rise above every adversarial trial thrown at us and live to dream again.

We send our folk out into the world. To share their wisdom, tolerance and love, for we that know the dark love the hardest.

For, you see, you cannot know the value of the sentiment without the lack of it.

Interfaith offers a second chance. It's not just saving lives, it's changing them and it's changing our

communities through those they send back out into the world.

To some, we are a problem to be dealt with. A political agenda. A statistic. A cancer to be excised to someone else's neighborhood. Someone else's problem.

Without programs to heal and reform, without housing stability, without someone to believe in us.....that's what we'll all become. A statistic. A nameless, nobody that died under some tree, in some park, in some city.

We have this opportunity to reverse the downward trajectory of a life.

What's a life worth to you? A life like mine – a depressed, morose, cynical, snarky, broken woman on the cusp of her twilight years who still dreams of saving the world?

That's the rub of delegating us all into the bog. There's gems here. Victims of circumstance, sure, but more of a community than any neighborhood I've ever lived in.

None of us should have to justify our own existence in reference to others assumptions. WE are worthy. 'I am worthy.

Worthy of a foothold on a rung.

I wanted to give you poetry, but instead, gave you my mind's heart. I hope it was enough.

I'll close with a line from the bard himself:

"How far that little candle throws its beams! So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

Together, let us create a bonfire!!!

Poem

By Gypsy Wind

I am thankful for the darkness that hides me at night,
I am thankful for the cold that reminds me that I am alive.
I am thankful for the police that take all my things, leaving me naked in the cold November night screaming from the cold never ceasing.
I thank the police for taking my blankets, because people saw me sleeping, as comfortable as can be. They screamed as loud as they could scream, I don't want this homeless man sleeping anywhere near me or my family. He looks disheveled, his camp is a mess, he is most likely mentally ill and we don't need the stress. So take everything he owns, drive him out of his nest. So I can stand in the background of this mansion on a hill and not have to look down on someone broken and ill.
Just force him into a homeless shelter to fill – our tax dollars pay the bill to warehouse him and his ilk.
This they did do, except one little thing. I did not move into shelter; I am as feral as can be. Hiding from the police. Which I am thankful they hurt me, because it teaches me to be invisible to them, their drones and all humanity.

If I Must Die

By Refaat Alareer



Refaat Alareer was an academic, writer, poet, and activist from Gaza. He taught English literature to students in Gaza for over 16 years and used his work to promote empathy, lift up the work of young writers, and make visible

circumstances in Gaza to a global audience. Alareer was killed in his home in the Gaza Strip alongside six members of his family by an Israeli airstrike on December 7. "If I Must Die" was Alareer's last known poem. Since his death, it has been translated into dozens of languages by readers around the world. Read Alareer's work in the books "Light in Gaza" and "Gaza Writes Back".

If I must die,
you must live
to tell my story
to sell my things
to buy a piece of cloth
and some strings,
(make it white with a long tail)
so that a child, somewhere in Gaza
while looking heaving in the eye
awaiting his dad who left in a blaze –
and bid no one farewell
not even to his flesh
not even to himself –
sees the kite, my kite you made, flying up
above
and thinks for a moment an angel is there
bringing back love
If I must die
let it bring hope
let it be a tale

Winter Work by the Art Collective

By WOTS Staff

Interfaith Sanctuary's Homeless Art Collective worked all winter to make items for the Xtreme Holiday Xtravaganza and more. Here's some of the work they donated to help raise money for the shelter. Thank you art collective members!



Well-Being When Homeless

By Julie Loomis

One of the most important things for me is my mental well-being. Being homeless makes it difficult to treat mental illness. Even when I had a roof over my head, my mental illness was too much for me and it almost cost me my life. Fortunately, I ended up at Interfaith Sanctuary where they have a well-being program. The staff also helps by being available in case of a mental health crisis. There are social workers to help with medication management, getting on housing lists, and any other issues keeping someone from being housed.

Many people have no clue about the real struggles that face an individual who is homeless.

I truly believed that with all my health issues, I would die when I became homeless. It was surprising to see so many people at the shelter using walkers, on oxygen, and in wheelchairs – not to mention the elderly who needed nursing care. I realized that I was among the many older people that had physical issues keeping them from being able to work. This doesn't even touch on mental illness and addiction. It saddened me to see the struggle with physical and mental illness. What inspired me that they didn't give up – many kept working on the issues that contributed to them being homeless. I believe that this was one reason I chose to get in the well-being program.

I could list so many things that make it difficult to have housing. I am going to concentrate on my own journey. My last

two articles talked about how I became homeless and what I do to help myself. This one will explain why someone like me ended up here.

For the past three years, I've been struggling with depression and anxiety along with my health issues. I believed I could contain my depression and anxiety and I was wrong. When I could not get a job, I just existed. I was isolating and hiding how bad my



Julie performing with the Interfaith Sanctuary's Project Sing in October 2023

mental health was. When I had to face being homeless alone, I tried to kill myself. While in the mental hospital, I realized my mistake in thinking my mental health was not that bad.

Not caring what happens to you is part of being majorly depressed. That was hard

enough to try to overcome. I had just started getting better when I went from the hospital to the streets. There is no halfway house to help ease our way back to well-being. The cost of housing makes it very difficult to afford a place. There is no safety net to catch us in our most vulnerable place. I am glad my son had a place to go while I worked on getting better.

That is why Project Well-Being is so

support we need to not just find housing, but to also be successful in keeping our housing. Unfortunately most people that struggle with mental illness self-sabotage by letting our illness take over. Here, we are given the tools to conquer our doubt and stay healthy.

There is also a recovery program to help those with addiction problems. Interfaith sanctuary tries very hard at making a difference in their guests' lives.

We need more programs like this to help with the homelessness problem. This is becoming a societal problem that is not going away. Not only does the government need to help with addiction and mental illnesses, but they also need to find a way to have low-income housing. Most people experiencing homelessness have income through Social Security benefits or working. The housing cost is too high. The waiting lists take years to get through and then qualifying when you have been homeless is quite daunting. For example, most landlords require that you make three times the rent, have a good credit score and rental references. You can see why we have such a homelessness crisis.

The staff and volunteers that give us a helping hand and programs to help us recover from mental health, addictions, or both – these people are true heroes. We have a safe place to sleep and they feed us too. I am very grateful and humbled by being here. So I will continue the well-being program and hope someday I can help others like me.

important. Instead of just offering a temporary bed and a meal, they offer salvation from our mental problems. It is not perfect and you have to want to get well. They extend the group meetings we had in the mental hospital.

They have wonderful staff that gives us the

Photos by Julie



Between Us

What is this thing between us,
I don't know.
Is it like? Is it love?
Will it grow?
All of its fine movements,
It's like a dance.
Wrap myself in its warmth and
give it a chance.
Step by step we explore,
It's all aglow.
It's our moment, our time,
Let's go slow.

VIOLA CROWLEY

**DONATE TO
WORD ON THE
STREET!**

Our writers, poets, artists, activists, and creatives appreciate your support! Readers can visit this link to donate: <http://bit.ly/44bySIP>

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT FENTANYL?



By Jodi Peterson-Stigers

What can a lost life do for the living? Can their story save another's life? What do we do about that drug dealer waiting in the alley offering pills to make you feel better in that moment of despair? What about the dealer hanging out near your children's school selling dreams in tablet form? One night in late December, a group of staff members at a homeless shelter tried valiantly to save the life of a guest who had taken one of those pills laced with Fentanyl.

This scene unfolded in front of a group of people who saw first hand what fentanyl does to someone during an overdose. They saw what this remedy for despair can do to a friend just looking for a moment of relief. It caused a tragic and painful death and terrible trauma for all who witnessed the death, and for those who tried to save his life.

The following week we hosted a memorial to honor this man's life and tragic death. Our guests and staff were invited to share their

thoughts about the lost life, and their experience being witness to it. We also provided flyers that had information on what fentanyl is, the risks related to this deadly drug, and information about how to recognize a fentanyl overdose and what life-saving steps we can take to try to save a life. This information was received gratefully and a wonderful discussion followed about how we can all protect each other from this deadly drug.

This experience was a very hard way for our community to learn

about the dangers of this drug being laced into almost every substance sold on the streets to our children, friends, and family members – anyone who is struggling and looking for some relief with some street medicine.

We share this story in hopes that in the telling we can hopefully save some lives. This man's death could be the reason why someone chooses to say "no" when they are offered relief in the form of a pill.

Rest in peace DS.

Here is some important information on Fentanyl from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

"Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to **50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine**. It is a major contributor to fatal and nonfatal overdoses in the U.S.

There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illegally made fentanyl. Both are considered synthetic opioids. Pharmaceutical fentanyl is prescribed by doctors to treat severe pain, especially after surgery and for advanced-stage cancer.

However, most recent cases of fentanyl-related overdose are linked to illegally made fentanyl, which is distributed through illegal drug markets for its heroin-like effect. It is often added to other drugs because of its extreme potency, which makes drugs cheaper, more powerful, more addictive, and more dangerous."

"Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids are the most common drugs involved in overdose deaths.¹ Even in small doses, it

can be deadly. Over 150 people die every day from overdoses related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl.

Drugs may contain deadly levels of fentanyl, and you wouldn't be able to see it, taste it, or smell it. It is nearly impossible to tell if drugs have been laced with fentanyl unless you test your drugs with fentanyl test strips.

Test strips are inexpensive and typically give results within

5 minutes, which can be the difference between life or death. Even if the test is negative, take caution as test strips might not detect more potent fentanyl-like drugs, like carfentanil."

According to the CDC, signs of a fentanyl overdose include:

- Small, constricted "pinpoint pupils"
- Falling asleep or losing consciousness
- Slow, weak, or no breathing
- Choking or gurgling sounds
- Limp body
- Cold and/or clammy skin
- Discolored skin (especially in lips and nails)

According to the CDC, "It may be hard to tell whether a person is high or experiencing an overdose. If you aren't sure, treat it like an overdose—you could save a life." Here are the steps you can take.

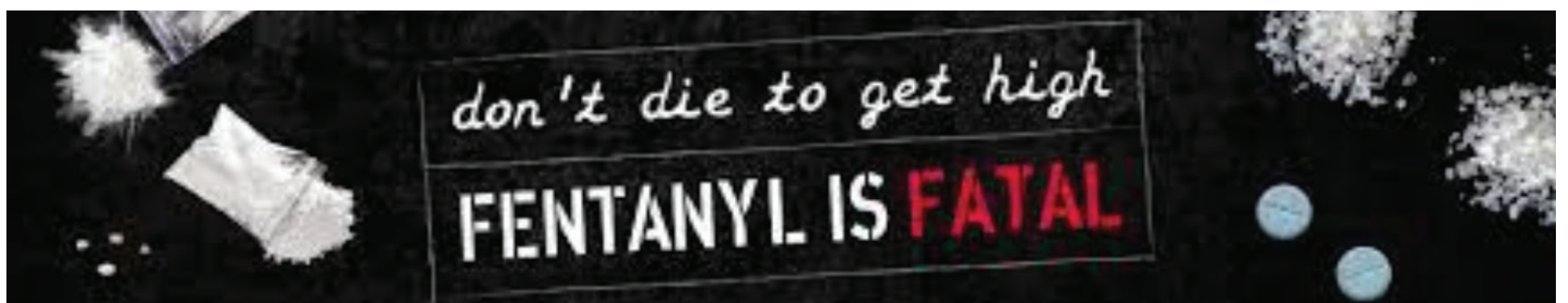
1. **Call 911 Immediately.***
2. **Administer naloxone, if available.****
3. **Try to keep the person awake and breathing.**
4. **Lay the person on their side to prevent choking.**
5. **Stay with the person until emergency assistance arrives.**

*Most states have laws that may protect a person who is overdosing or the person who called for help from legal trouble.

***Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse the effects of opioid overdose

and save lives. It is available in all 50 states and can be purchased from a local pharmacy without a prescription in most states.

For more information, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/fentanyl/index.html>



What is Nonviolent Communication?

By Janet Kaufman

Throughout the programs at Interfaith Sanctuary that support individuals' growth and well-being—Project Well-Being, Project Recovery, Just Mad, and groups with parents and children—we are practicing communication to bring more compassion, understanding, and peaceful problem-solving to our community. No matter what challenges we face, it helps to address them with communication that is more likely to help us meet our own and our common needs.

We use a couple primary tools to guide us, the Grump Meter—a tool for emotional self-regulation—and Nonviolent, or Compassionate, Communication. Each tool gives us different questions.

The Grump Meter's question is: What color are you on? The Grump Meter is like a color ladder, with each color standing in for intensifying feelings. Developing awareness about the state of your feelings or mood is the first step to communicating compassionately with yourself and others. Calm, peaceful blue sits at the bottom. If your feelings escalate and you land on red at the top of the Grump Meter, you might behave in ways that cause some damage or hurt, and require a lot of clean-up. So the goal is to avoid the climb to red. How to do that?

This is where Nonviolent, or Compassionate Communication is so helpful. Nonviolent Communication (NVC), considered a "language of life" by its founder, Marshall B.

Rosenberg, is a way of being that fosters human connection and helps people meet their own and others' needs with a genuine sense of care. NVC has blossomed all over the world. It takes as a basic premise that human beings, by virtue of being human, share some common needs regardless of where we're from, the language we speak, our age, or the culture or religious background we grew up with. These needs are basic—like love, connection, respect, honesty, meaning, play, and freedom. They are fundamental to our humanity, and they reflect the beauty of our human spirits. All over the world, we strive to meet these needs to thrive. NVC inspires the question: How can we meet our needs in

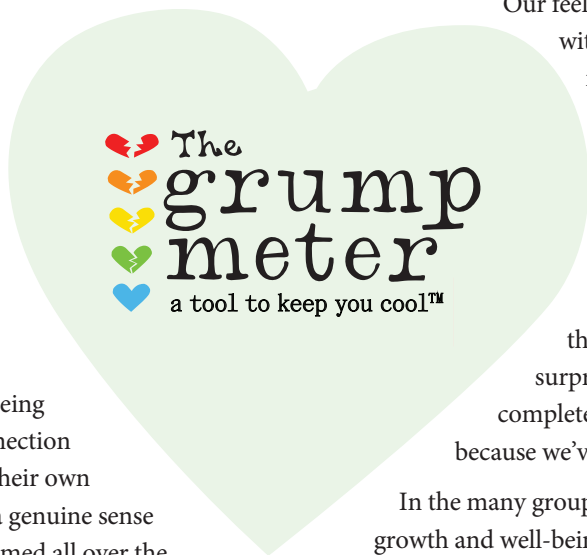
ways that help ourselves and others, and give us more satisfaction, wonder, harmony?

NVC offers a few points of focus to help meet our needs. One is our observation of what's actually happening—not our judgment or evaluation of a situation, but the observable details as best as we can see them, as a camera would at its most objective. The next focal points are our feelings about the situation, and the needs we experience in it. Sometimes we sense our feelings in our body—even before we can name them in our minds. So if you feel fidgety, or get a headache, or clench your jaw, you can ask yourself what you might be feeling and needing.

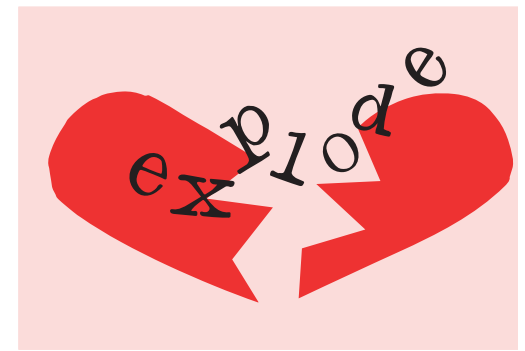
Do you want safety or protection? Help? Connection? Consideration? When basic needs like these are met, we tend to feel warm feelings like calmness, appreciation, delight, openness. But when our needs aren't met, we tend to feel unpleasant feelings, like fear, sadness, anger, and overwhelm. Developing awareness of our feelings and needs, understanding that they are part of our human condition, and caring for them with kindness, tenderness, and respect, helps us find our way back down the Grump Meter, to harmony with ourselves and others.

Our feelings and needs can get tangled up with our thoughts and judgments, and it takes practice to get clarity about what we're feeling and needing in a situation. We can help each get that clarity through careful listening. Then, there's one other focal point to consider: requests of ourselves or others to address the situation at hand. Sometimes it's surprising to see that we come up with completely new or unexpected approaches—because we've seen the situation with new eyes.

In the many groups we have at Interfaith to support growth and well-being, we are making space to build skills in human communication and human being. We start from the premise that all feelings are normal and understandable, and that no human feeling or need is wrong. The way we express our feelings, and the steps we take to meet our needs, can create more (or less) connection, care, and trust. So we take the time to listen to each other, and practice hearing each other with care and compassion. The practice of our groups enables us to carry more effectiveness out into our daily interactions, to work, families, friends, and to ourselves.



what
color
are
you on?



Where To Find Word On The Street



Limited print copies of Word on the Street are available at:

The Record Exchange.....1105 W. Idaho St.	Guru Donuts.....928 W. Main St #100
Downtown Boise Public Library.....715 S. Capitol Blvd.	Interfaith Sanctuary.....1620 W. River St.
Downtown Boise YMCA.....1050 W. State St.	Hillview United Methodist Church.....8525 W Ustick Rd.
Corpus Christi House.....525 S. Americana Blvd.	Cathedral of the Rockies.....717 N 11th St #4.
The District Coffee.....219 N. 10th St.	Red Rock Christian Church.....1124 S Roosevelt St.
Laundry Haus.....222 S. Orchard St.	Liberating Spirit Metropolitan Community Church.....1088 N Orchard St.
Washing Time Laundry.....4744 W. State St.	Collister United Methodist Church.....4400 W Taft St.
Americana Pizza.....304 S. Americana Blvd.	First Congregational United Church of Christ.....2201 W Woodlawn Ave.
Neckar Coffee.....117 S. 10th St.	Once and Future Books.....1310 W State St

THE REGROUP GROUP



WITH ZOE 
EVERY WEDNESDAY
6PM-7PM

re•group: to stop for a short time and prepare yourself before you continue doing something that is difficult : to stop and think, reorganize, etc., before continuing. Let's regroup and try this again.

Wait a minute.
I need to regroup.

AT INTERFAITH SANCTUARY
IN THE OVER-FLOW CLASSROOM

Environmental Justice Is Housing Justice

Graphics by Grace Johnson,
Boise State University

1 SMOKE

INCREASED WILDFIRES LEADS TO POOR AIR QUALITY.

WILDFIRE SMOKE CAN LEAD TO LUNG INFLAMMATION, IRRITATION AND CARDIOVASCULAR ISSUES.



(WALKINS ET. AL, 2020) FROM BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

3 COLD

PROLONGED EXPOSURE TO COLD TEMPERATURES WITHOUT PROPER CLOTHING CAN LEAD TO HYPOTHERMIA, ILLNESS, AND INJURY.



(DUGGAN, 2022) FROM IDAHO PRESS

DID YOU KNOW...

THE HOMELESS POPULATION IS MORE VULNERABLE TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE HAZARDS?

SCROLL TO LEARN MORE 

2 HEAT

BOISE HAD 27 DAYS THAT WERE 100° F IN 2022.

THAT NUMBER IS ONLY EXPECTED TO RISE.



(EGGERS, 2022) FROM KTVB

THE HOMELESS POPULATION IS MORE AFFECTED BY ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.

AS ISSUES LIKE EXTREME WEATHER AND WILDFIRES BECOME MORE PREVALENT IN IDAHO, WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO OUR HOMELESS POPULATION?

READ THE CAPTION TO FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN HELP!

