

THIS FEAR BECOMES AUTOMATIC AND ISN'T BASED ON REAL RISK  
FEAR-BASED ASSUMPTIONS MAKE COMMUNITY SPACES FEEL UNSAFE, EVEN WHEN THEY AREN'T  
who use drugs

From a young age, many of us are taught to fear people who don't fit societal norms, especially unhoused folks or people

Media and cultural narratives are notorious for linking poverty, substance use, and homelessness with violence, even though that's not reality. If we haven't spent time around certain groups, our brains can misinterpret unfamiliar behaviors as threats.

Our brains are wired to protect us, and unfamiliar situations can trigger anxiety or unease

UNCOMFORTABLE  
Does Not  
always  
mean  
UNSAFE



ENCAMPMENTS  
SEEING A SEX WORKER WALKING THE STROLL  
SOMEONE SLEEPING AT THE DOOR OF YOUR APARTMENT BUILDING  
SEEING A PERSON USING DRUGS  
SOMEONE ASKING FOR CHANGE  
OUTSIDE OF TIM HORTONS  
HEARING A PERSON TALK OR SHOUT ABOUT THINGS YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND  
GIVE THEM SOME MONEY OR MIND YOUR BUSINESS  
LEAVE THEM ALONE, OR BETTER YET, ASK THEM IF THEY NEED ANYTHING

THINGS THAT  
DO NOT  
PUT YOU IN DANGER

WHAT REAL SAFETY  
LOOKS LIKE

PEOPLE HAVING ACCESS TO HOUSING, HEALTHCARE, AND BASIC NEEDS  
LISTENING TO PEOPLE WITH LIVED AND LIVING EXPERIENCE  
SUPPORT SHOWING UP BEFORE CRISIS - NOT ONLY AFTER HARM HAPPENS  
A TOXIC DRUG SUPPLY ADDRESSED THROUGH DECRIMINALIZATION AND SAFE SUPPLY  
DE-ESCALATION, CONSENT, AND COMMUNICATION  
RESPONDING TO ACTUAL BEHAVIOR, NOT ASSUMPTIONS  
SPACES WHERE PEOPLE CAN EXIST WITHOUT BEING SURVEILLED OR CRIMINALIZED



Many behaviors people label as "scary" are actually signs of distress, fear, or unmet needs.  
LACK OF SLEEP (EXTREMELY COMMON WHEN UNHOUSED)  
TRAUMA AND CHRONIC STRESS  
UNTREATED MENTAL HEALTH AND/OR MEDICAL CONCERNS  
TOXIC DRUG SUPPLY  
PSYCHOSIS DOES NOT EQUAL VIOLENCE  
MOST PEOPLE EXPERIENCING IT ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO BE HARMED THAN TO HARM OTHERS

WHY SOMEONE MIGHT  
BE ACTING IN AN  
ALARMING MANNER

FEELING UNEASY DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE UNSAFE.  
IT MIGHT MEAN YOU'RE BEING ASKED TO SEE SOMEONE'S HUMANITY

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND WHY SOMEONE IS BEHAVING A CERTAIN WAY WE CAN RESPOND WITH DE-ESCALATION, REDUCE HARM INSTEAD OF INCREASING IT, & KEEP EVERYONE SAFER, INCLUDING OURSELVES

LABELING SOMEONE AS "DANGEROUS" STRIPS THEM OF COMPLEXITY AND HUMANITY  
PEOPLE STOP BEING SEEN AS NEIGHBORS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS, OR PEOPLE WITH LIVES, AND START BEING SEEN AS THREATS



CONSTANTLY HAVING  
AUTONOMY VIOLATED  
BEING SURVEILLED, MOVED ALONG, QUESTIONED, OR CRIMINALIZED ALL DAY  
HAVING NO CONTROL OVER SPACE, TIME, OR SAFETY  
BEING TREATED AS A PROBLEM INSTEAD OF A PERSON

FEAR &  
BEING IN SURVIVAL MODE  
BEING HYPER-VIGILANT AFTER REPEATED VIOLENCE OR THEFT  
EXPECTING HARM BECAUSE HARM HAS BEEN ROUTINE  
RESPONDING DEFENSIVELY TO PERCEIVED THREATS

WHAT LOOKS  
LIKE AGGRESSION  
IS OFTEN  
SELF PROTECTION

PEOPLE ON THE STREET  
ARE OFTEN GRIEVING  
THEIR

LOVED ONES...  
HOUSING...  
HEALTH...  
STABILITY...

THINK ABOUT A TIME YOU'VE EXPERIENCED GRIEF...  
NOW IMAGINE EXPERIENCING THAT WITHOUT THE COMFORT AND SAFETY OF YOUR OWN HOME

