

A Sermon on Intoxication and Ignorance

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for August 4th, 2024 (and beyond)

On July 9th, 2024 I went for a walk and met a homeless man who was in his 20s and initially I thought he might be intoxicated. But, as weak as he seemed, I gave him \$10 and he had difficulty grasping the \$10 bill. I recognized he was experiencing poor fine motor skill function. I am an American Heart Association CPR/AED/First Aid certified cleric. I also do a lot of independent research and we've been experiencing extreme heat with accompanying public weather advisories that include the risks in WA State. I asked him if he could hear me, he weakly and barely audibly said "Yes, I can hear you." I advised he immediately buy water and get some real food with the \$10. There were no beverages on him, but he did have open salty snacks. He was hunched over and very weak. I returned home and did some quick research to find that heat exhaustion can impair fine motor skills. At that point, I grabbed a cold bottle of water from my refrigerator and headed back out to where I found him. He was almost finished drinking a bottle of water he purchased with the \$10 and was able to stand up, but still very weak. I offered to buy him lunch as there was a Subway sandwich shop nearby and he accepted. He struggled with ordering and his voice was still very weak, but I could hear him and made sure the order was correct. He was still recovering, but far away enough from death's door when I left him to enjoy his meal.

I know better than to default to assuming that anyone is intoxicated when there are many potential health reasons that offer similar symptoms. I'd like everyone else to do the same. Ignorance is the cornerstone of prejudice and only knowledge can defeat it. I hope all will strive to be more charitable and compassionate, even if only in spirit at any given time.

Symptoms of intoxication include, but are not limited to: blackout, dehydration, or flushing, amnesia, mental confusion, or unresponsiveness, depression, euphoria, problems with coordination, rapid involuntary eye movement, or slurred speech.

Symptoms of dehydration include, but are not limited to: dry mouth, headache, dizziness, irritability or confusion, rapid heartbeat, rapid breathing, fever, fainting, shock, and hallucinations.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion include, but are not limited to: heavy sweating, headache, nausea or vomiting, dizziness, weakness, irritability, thirst, fast breathing, fainting, decreased urine output, cramps, impaired fine motor skills, and if not immediately addressed has a 10-65% likelihood of death depending on severity.

Symptoms of malnutrition include, but are not limited to: Confusion, poor concentration, feeling cold, loss of appetite, lack of interest in food or fluids, reduced ability to perform everyday tasks, getting ill often, taking a long time to recover, fatigue, and dizziness.

Symptoms of Hypothermia (exposure to extreme cold) include, but are not limited to: increased heart rate and breathing, numbness in extremities, sluggish/weak responses,

drowsiness or lethargy, confusion, slurred speech, memory loss, weakness, and loss of coordination (aka fine motor function).

Allergy Symptoms: Itchy, watery, red, or swollen eyes; nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, cramping, diarrhea, bloating, or swelling of lips, tongue, face or throat; rash, hives, itching, blistering, peeling skin; feeling faint, light-headed, a sense of impending doom; Stuffy or runny nose, itchy or tickly throat, sneezing, mucus, cough, wheezing, chest tightness, and difficulty breathing.

Symptoms of Hypoglycemia: early warning signs include Pale appearance, shakiness, sweating, hunger or nausea, irregular or fast heartbeat, fatigue, irritability or anxiety; late signs include headache, dizziness, lightheadedness, confusion, difficulty speaking, seizures, and coma.

As you can see, it is easy to confuse or misdiagnose even from a lay perspective when meeting or happening upon someone in need of medical or first aid assistance. It is best not to assume the symptoms are a result of intoxication when there are many other likely causes. And, sometimes food and water can fix the problem without going to extreme measures like calling emergency services especially when the person in need is still conscious and responsive.

I hope this helps everyone be more conscientious and better informed to help combat ignorance and prejudice while encouraging greater charity and compassion for all.

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.