



# Three Homes

by Ken Kraybill

## Home

one's place of residence, domicile, house

the social unit formed by a family living together

a familiar or usual setting, congenial environment

the focus of one's domestic attention (home is where the heart is)

habitat, a place of origin (salmon returning to their home to spawn)

headquarters

an establishment providing residence and care for people with special needs

the objective in various games

out of jeopardy

in a comfortable position with respect to some objective

to a vital sensitive core (the truth struck home)



## At Home

relaxed and comfortable

at ease (felt completely at home on the stage)

in harmony with one's surroundings

knowledgeable (teachers at home in their subject fields)

on familiar ground

**Each of us “resides” in three homes.**

## Our First Home

The *first home* is our primary home—the self—our body, mind, and spirit, the home of our very being and identity. This first home consists of physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions that are profoundly interconnected.

We receive our first home at birth. Early in life, others have primary caretaking responsibilities for our care and nurture. Gradually, we increasingly claim this responsibility for ourselves.

We must keep this first home warm, dry, safe, and in good working order. It needs exercise, rest, nutrition, and proper maintenance. It needs nurturing and cultivation through intellectual stimulation, emotional support, behavioral regulation, time for reflection, and a sense of purpose and meaning in connection to the outside world.

Although human bodies can achieve great things, we are also fragile and vulnerable beings. Even the strongest among us experience frailty at times. Despite our best self-care efforts, we still need the care, love, and support that others can give. To thrive, we each require the sustaining efforts of others.

## Reflecting on the first home

**1** How would you assess your upkeep of your first home physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually? What “home improvements” are you thinking of making in the near-term and long-term?

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**2** In partnering with the people you serve, how can you support them in the upkeep of their first home?

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## Our Second Home

Our *second home* is our housing, it's where we "hang our hat," where we "nest." It refers not only to the physical structure in which we live, but also to the kind of living environment we create within the structure.

Like our first home, this home possesses vital physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions. It offers safety and protection from the elements and the outside world. It provides private space where we can attend to hygiene, rest, and nutrition needs.

The very structure and design of housing points to these functions. For example, when we build a home, we construct a foundation (stability, grounding), walls (protection, privacy), a roof (shelter, protection from the elements), doors (welcoming, shutting out), windows (light, connection with the outside world), and perhaps even a chimney (for letting off steam!).

This second home serves as a base of operations and a place to keep and use one's possessions. It offers a place of welcome, familiarity, and stability. In this home, we can welcome guests, share in celebration and suffering, be creative and silly, be still and mindful, be intimate with loved ones, and find renewal of energy and purpose. This second home provides the necessary context for meeting the needs of the first home and an important foundation and link to the third home.

## Reflecting on the second home

- 1** What makes a house a home for you personally? Consider taking an unhurried "tour" of the place you call home. Take time to notice what you see. Invite each item to reveal to you how it helps you feel more "at home."

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- 2** If you were to ask people you serve what makes a house a home for them, what do you think different individuals might say? And if you were to follow up by asking them how you could support them in feeling more "at home" where they are, what ideas might they suggest?

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## Our Third Home

The *third home* in which we reside is the larger community, or more accurately, the multiple communities, where we are located from the local to the global. Here, our interdependence with other individuals and organizations is fully evident. It is in the context of these various communities that we fulfill various roles and participate in the life around us. We give and receive, produce and consume, lead and follow, serve and be served.

There are numerous opportunities for participation and resources in this third home that permit us to meet the needs of our first and second homes. It is in the context of the community, for example, that we connect to health care, education, work, food procurement, transportation, socialization, purchasing goods, entertainment, the arts, politics, recreation, and community service. This third home provides the social, economic, service, and cultural context for our lives.

### Reflecting on the third home

- 1** Where do you find connection and meaning beyond the walls where you reside? Who is part of your “circle of care?” What activities and involvements are life-giving, helping you grow and thrive?

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- 2** How would people you serve answer these same questions? How might you help them become more “at home” in the larger community?

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What implications does this notion of three homes have for service providers? Due to the trauma of homelessness, individuals who lack housing find it hard to feel “at home” in body, mind, or spirit. They are disaffiliated from a meaningful role and purpose in the larger community.

If we are to help people resolve their home-less-ness, we are compelled to address their immediate survival needs while helping them find safe, affordable housing where they can regain their footing. Beyond achieving stability, we want to support people in recovery, healing, and pursuing their aspirations to live their best life as they define it.



Helping others move toward a greater sense of being at home in their lives begins with our very first encounter. It's when we offer a hospitable presence, “creating a free and friendly space for the stranger,” in the words of Henri Nouwen. Creating this space opens the door to the possibility that the other person may experience the sense of being home. The seeds that we plant in such relationships go far in helping others move toward greater stability and vitality within their own three homes.

## Notes

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### Learn more about the Homeless and Housing Resource Center

Providing high-quality, no-cost training for health and housing professionals in evidence-based practices that contribute to housing stability, recovery, and an end to homelessness.

**Contact Us:** [hhrctraining.org](http://hhrctraining.org) | [info@hhrctraining.org](mailto:info@hhrctraining.org)

