

Overcoming Homesickness

Homesickness is very common among college students, especially first-year students. It may feel as if you are completely alone, but there are others experiencing the same feelings.

Anxiety over courses and grades can contribute to homesickness. It is possible to be “sick with worry.” If your new environment is really different from the one you left, it may feel frightening at first. Will you be able to get the work done? Will you be accepted?

You may be thinking about giving up and going back home. For most people, homesickness disappears after a month or two, but each person is different. Try to stick it out, and have confidence that it will get better. Here are some steps you can take to overcome homesickness:

1. Develop new friendships.

You may find people with common interests in your dorm or classes, but you may need to take direct action to get to know them. As college courses do not encourage off-topic conversations among students, you may have to identify a person who seems to be like you in some way and make a point to talk to that person after class. Also, try joining a club or other school-sponsored organization. Use the activities to identify people who might share your interests, then make a point to talk to them. If you can develop new friends with whom you can talk to about your feelings, it will make a big difference in how you feel about your new environment.

2. Surround yourself with memories.

Another part of homesickness is missing your family and familiar places. You can address this by collecting photos and souvenirs that remind you of good times in your past. Let your family and friends know that you would like to receive things that bring back memories of home. Use them to decorate your room, or place them in a scrapbook that you can look at when you feel homesick.

3. Keep in touch with your family and friends.

Talking with your family or friends from home is usually helpful. Set up a regular (e.g., weekly) time to call home and/or correspond via e-mail.

4. Invite a friend home.

Invite someone you have met at college to go home with you. This will give you a person in your new environment that you can talk with about the things you are missing back home. It will also give your family a way to connect to your new environment. Your new friend may help to bridge the gap between home and college.

5. Find places that remind you of home.

Are you missing a favorite kind of food, a certain atmosphere, or even a smell? There may be a local restaurant or store that reminds you of home. Treat yourself to the comforts of home in your new environment.

6. Keep a journal.

Writing about your feelings and experiences may help you to feel less lonely. It often helps to put thoughts and feelings down on paper.

7. Participate in campus activities.

Attend on-campus events. Look for activities that you might enjoy. Most colleges are full of fun things to do, and as you find things you like about your college, you will spend less time thinking about home and have more reasons to be happy about being at college.

In addition to these steps, you might want to read “Balancing My Social Life” and “Identifying and Setting Goals.” It is important to be patient and to give yourself enough time to get over your homesickness.