

How to Navigate Homesickness

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Being away from home can be an incredibly difficult change. Whether it's the first time or you've been away from home before, whether home is across town or across the world, homesickness can impact anyone. Here are a handful of things you can do to ease feelings of homesickness.

Limit your trips home. Spending most or all of your weekends back home will make it really hard to adjust to being away. Plan out your trips home in advance to avoid spontaneous trips home. Plus, knowing that there's a visit home upcoming will serve as something to look forward to.

Surround yourself with old and new. Many students feel homesick because they continue to surround themselves with reminders of home. Instead, decorate your living space with pictures from home AND pictures of campus. Alternate your phone/computer background image between pictures of people from home and people you've met since coming to campus.

Find ways to get involved. The sting of homesickness begins to lessen when you begin to feel more connected to your new environment. One of the ways to facilitate this is to find people, groups, places that become part of your routine. Try out a club. Sign up for intramurals. Start looking for a job. Student involvement is one of the strongest predictors of which students stay enrolled. Get involved in your new home, and being away from your old home won't feel as hard.

Explore the campus. Before classes start, practice going to class so you don't feel lost on the first day. Walk through your schedule. Find the buildings and classrooms where your classes are held. Again, exploring campus with other students is a good opportunity to start making connections with the people who may become friends.

Maintain your support network from home (in moderation). Staying in contact with people from home is a helpful way to lessen feelings of homesickness. Technology makes it very easy to stay in touch, so check in with family and friends back home. Reach out to your friends attending other schools, as they may have difficulty with homesickness as well. If you find yourself passing up opportunities to get to know others on campus because of the time you spend connecting with those from home, though, you may want to scale back how much time you spend connecting with people from home.

Have an adventure... and bring someone along. It can be really hard to miss the comfortable and familiar things from home. Your favorite restaurant, your old gym, that place you go to get away all feel especially nostalgic after you leave home. Start exploring your new environment to find your new spots. If you like coffee, go explore local coffee places. If you're into music, go see a show at a local venue. Explore the nearby malls or find a movie theater. Find ways to get off campus, too, exploring areas outside of town or traveling to nearby cities. Again, bring a roommate, someone from your floor, or a new friend with you on your adventure and discover things together.

Recognize that you're not alone. Most students struggle with being away from home to some degree. While it may not look like it from the outside, your peers also feel alone sometimes, they probably miss their family or friends back home, and they don't always feel comfortable in their new surroundings. Whether it's a roommate, a classmate, or a friend, talking to someone else who's also adjusting to a new environment may help with feelings of isolation.

Time is the most effective remedy. While homesickness has no 'cure,' many students report that over time, their feelings of homesickness lessen. Although it's difficult to accept, know that there may be nothing you can do to make homesickness go away. Learning to accept that being away from home is inherently difficult may be helpful. Furthermore, psychotherapy may be a helpful way to process the difficulties of being away from home.