

HOMESICK

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Managing the Transition and Adjustment to College



University of Findlay

Office of Counseling Services

What Is Happening?

Even the most excited and independent freshman can find themselves struggling with the transition and adjustment to college life. The realities of meeting new people, adjusting to a completely new environment and a college workload can feel overwhelming. Some students can feel overwhelmed to the point they would rather retreat into their comfy new twin XL bed or even back to the familiarity of home. If this sounds like what you are experiencing, take a deep breath and understand these three realities:

1. You ARE NOT ALONE in feeling this way.
2. These feelings most often go away after a few days or weeks of college life.
3. Counseling Services and other campus resources are here to help you overcome these feelings and succeed as a student!

What Is Homesickness?

Homesickness is a normal and common experience that many students have. According to the Higher Education Institute at UCLA, approximately 69% of first year college students experience homesickness. In its most basic form, homesickness is related to the thoughts and feeling about home. And while many people think it is literally about home it is more about longing for what is comfortable, normal and familiar to us. When homesickness is present, you may experience an intense longing and preoccupation about home.

What Can I Do?

Understand that what you are experiencing is normal

While it may look and feel like everyone around you is "*fine*" and you are the only person on campus struggling, the reality is that most all students go through an adjustment phase. Acknowledging that you are feeling homesick or sad is the first step. Acknowledging this does not make you weak and it does not mean that you are not ready for college life. Once you acknowledge what is actually happening you can begin to take steps to make it better.

Get familiar with campus and our community

Since much of homesickness is related to the discomfort with everything that is new and unfamiliar, take the time to explore campus and the community. Take walks around campus either alone or with someone and find the location of your classes, areas where you could envision yourself studying, and options for grabbing a quick snack. Becoming familiar with the community at large can also help you to feel more at home. Learn the routes to stores you like, find out where the movie theater is, a local park you can enjoy or even a local coffee shop to hang out at. The more you make the campus and community familiar, the more like home it will begin to feel.

Make Your Space Your Own

Adjusting to community living in the residence halls can take some time. One of the best ways to help this process is to make your space comfortable and enjoyable to you. Put up pictures of your family and friends, keep your cozy blanket out, organize things in a way that feels right to you. While homesickness can also sometimes cause you to withdrawal, make an effort to get to know your roommate and those on your floor. Even the simple act of keeping your door open while you are in the room sends others the message that you are open to talking and meeting new people.

Stay Connected

Staying connected with family and friends back home can help you to miss them less. Phone calls, texting or even video calls are a great way to feel reassurance and gain additional support. Having these contacts with family and friends every few days or even daily initially can be helpful but if you are finding yourself doing so every few hours it can actually make you feel worse. Part of the adjustment and transition to college is learning to live differently which includes making connections with new people. That can be challenging to do if you are always on your phone with old friends and family.

Make An Effort

Making the transition and adjustment to college requires effort and **active** participation on your part. Unfortunately, it will not just magically happen. This can be hard when you are feeling sad, perhaps not eating and sleeping like normal or even at times feeling overwhelmed to the point that crying spells are happening. Make an intentional effort to meet at least one new person a day, attend events and seek out campus organizations and groups that are interesting to you. This may feel awkward or even uncomfortable at times but keep in mind that everyone is working to establish and develop new friendships and their college identity. It can also be helpful to remember that connections with people take time to develop. Don't expect interactions with new people to immediately feel like it did with your high school friends. Those relationships most likely took years to develop. Creating new friend groups is a process and takes an open mind, patience and time but the investment and effort is worth it!

Give Yourself The Gift of Time

Make an intentional effort to be patient with yourself. You have just undergone a HUGE transition in a very short amount of time. Don't expect it to all be perfect immediately. Students will often make rash decisions to return home or begin looking for other schools to transfer to. Until you have given all of the strategies and resources a **legitimate** try, don't give up on yourself or the school. It takes time. It can be helpful to give yourself some timelines such as reevaluating how you really feel after a few weeks or even after the first semester. One of the worst things you can do for yourself is making your mind up before the semester has gotten into full swing. This approach often makes you feel worse and limits the help and assistance from all of the campus resources.

Strategies To Try...

Challenge yourself to select one or two of these strategies per day. It may seem difficult but these are helpful ways to feel more connected to campus and assist in developing your new college identity so things feel more familiar.

Talk to one new person on your residence hall floor...keep your room door open

Invite a group to lunch, dinner or to go get coffee

Get the contact information from one new person in each of your classes

Invite someone to go for a walk down main street to explore the community

Attend one campus event this week

Join a student organization and attend a meeting

Ask a hall mate to go workout

Explore small groups and services offered by Campus Ministries

Attend your floor meetings

Attend welcome week activities

Make an effort to get to know your RA

Introduce yourself to your professors

Attend a sporting event

Ask some people to form a team for intramurals

Seek out some fellow students in your most challenging class to form a study group

Resources To Consider

There are many people and offices on campus that are here to help you succeed.

Consider checking out some of these options:

Your RA & RD can be great resources to openly talk with!

Counseling Services 307 Frazer Street 419-434-4526

Oiler Success Center 2nd Floor Old Main 419-434-4068

Student Activities and Commuter Student Services AMU 419-434-4606

Campus Ministries 1049 N. Main Street 419-434-5624