Managing homesickness

What is homesickness?
Most people experience homesickness at some time in their life and it can be overwhelming. You will definitely not be the only person feeling homesick when you arrive at University. Suddenly you need to cope with being away from your familiar group of friends and family and adapting to a large and unfamiliar environment.

What does it feel like?
It is normal to feel a mixture of excitement and anxiety about coming to a new place, making new friends and taking on new courses. Some people overcome their apprehension quite quickly, whilst others may take longer to make the transition and will find themselves preoccupied with thoughts of home.

Homesickness may make you feel depressed, anxious, experience difficult thoughts and possibly, develop minor physical ailments.

You may have felt fine at first and then noticed you have become homesick later in the year, maybe after returning to university after visiting home.

Who gets homesick?
Research shows that 35 percent of new students experience homesickness, and, even if you have been away from home before and managed it without difficulty it doesn’t necessarily mean you are immune to experiencing it now.

Vulnerability to feeling homesick can be affected by:
- The distance from home
- Parental breakdown in family home
- A sense of anticlimax at arriving, having worked hard for so long
- Whether it was your decision to come
- Unhappiness due to expectations not being met
- Feeling out of control with the work load
- Differences in lifestyle

Coping with homesickness
In coming to university you need to be able to:
- Leave familiar things, places and people
- Adapt to new things, places and people.

Transitions can be hard because in a familiar place people generally feel secure and safe and can take on challenges and changes successfully.

Without this support and familiarity it is much harder to adapt to the new and existing coping mechanisms may be challenged. This can lead to a drop in confidence and self esteem.
What can help?

- Acknowledge how you feel and believe that it will pass because it almost always does.
- Talk to someone - if you haven’t made any friends yet, seek out your personal or academic tutor, student support tutor (SSGT in some academic schools), chaplain, supervisor, course rep (student representative on your course) counsellor or any staff or rep in the student union. They will all understand and want to help.
- Orientate yourself the local area so you feel integrated and more at home.
- Keep in touch with people at home and fix a time to go back but also give yourself enough time to get involved at University.
- Remember other people will be feeling like you, so talk to them!
- Be realistic about what you expect from university life. Don’t either just work or just party all the time! Find a balance and take time to relax in the way best suited to you.
- Give yourself time to adjust - it won’t happen overnight. The transition to University is a process not an event.

Practical things to do:

- Establish a routine as soon as possible
- Join clubs and societies to meet people and spend time in the union. Contact the Students Union for further information www.brightonsu.com
- Talk to the Careers Service if you have doubts about your choice of course www.brighton.ac.uk/careers or see help and advice section of the website www.brighton.ac.uk/current-students/advice-and-support/index.aspx
- You could get involved with volunteering. Contact Active Student for further information www.brighton.ac.uk/volunteering
- If you are an International Student, you could join the International Students Society. Many international students experience culture shock when they come to live in the UK for the first time - some information as well as advice and support can be found in the UKCISA guide to culture shock
  
  If this issue is causing you personal or emotional distress phone the Samaritans on the 24/7 freephone number - 111 123 or 01273 772277.
  
  Also visit: www.thesite.org/workandstudy/studying/studentlife/homesickness

If the feelings persist seek help from a Counsellor or your doctor.

Counselling at the University

The Counselling and Wellbeing Service provides a range of self-help information, useful contacts, apps and e-books - www.brighton.ac.uk/current-students/advice-and-support/dealing-with-difficult-situations/index.aspx

Counselling provides a safe, confidential environment for you to see an experienced counsellor and is available on all sites. More details about Counselling can be found at www.brighton.ac.uk/current-students/my-student-life/health-and-wellbeing/need-to-speak-to-someone/index.aspx or by email at counselling@brighton.ac.uk. Alternatively please contact or visit us at your site of study.
Eastbourne:
Trevin Towers Student Centre, Eastbourne
01273 643845

Falmer:
Student Services, E Wing. Checkland Building, Falmer
01273 643584

Grand Parade:
Student Centre, Ground Floor, Main Building.
01273 643187

Moulsecoomb:
The Manor House, Moulsecoomb Place
01273 642895

Hastings:
The Student Centre, Room 108, 1st Floor, Priory Square Building
01273 644643

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