MANAGING HOMESICKNESS

CREATING A FRIENDLY, POSITIVE, INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT
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 per cent of new students experience homesickness. 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 and 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 and guidance tutor (SSGT), faith adviser, supervisor, course rep (student representative on your course) or a rep in the Students’ 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. If possible, try to reach out and chat with 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.

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
- If you’re a student living in halls, you can access a range of wellbeing support from your Residential Life team www.brighton.ac.uk/residential-life
- Talk to the Careers Service if you have doubts about your choice of course www.brighton.ac.uk/careers or refer to the ‘Problems with your course’ webpage at www.brighton.ac.uk/ontherightpath
- You could get involved with volunteering, www.brighton.ac.uk/volunteering
- Search out and join communities and networks with other students with similar interests.
- If you are an International Student, you could reach out to the International Student Advice Service at www.brighton.ac.uk/current-students/my-student-life/international-students/index.aspx. 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
- Nightline | students there for students, 6pm–8pm every night during term time Tel 020 7631 0101 or email listening@nightline.org.uk. Free calls on skype via www.nightline.org.uk.

If the feelings persist, consider seeking help from your doctor.

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