

- Calling home less frequently. It may be difficult to do this at the initial stages of your life at the new setting. However, constantly staying in contact with home, especially during your first few weeks away, may hinder having a new social network and result in a longer adjustment period.
- Trying not to go home in the first couple of weeks, the time that offers plenty of opportunities to socialize. Remember that developing a new social circle facilitates the transition.
- Determining the travel date and allocating money to buy your ticket in advance when you are scheduling a home visit.
- Adjusting your expectations if things are not working out as you planned. Be proud of what you have achieved so far.
- Avoiding constantly thinking about your memories and the good times you spent with your close friends.
- Crying. You don't have to keep the emotion inside. if you feel like it .
- Starting a personal journal. Write down your feelings and thoughts. Or, reflect on the challenges you face, obstacles that lie ahead of you. Keeping a journal can be a simple way to clear the mind of stress. And perhaps a journey in which you discover your potential and/or nourish your skill in writing.
- Do not hesitate to contact us, particularly if you suffer from severe homesickness. We can guide you in developing some strategies to deal with it.

References

Homesickness is a Normal Part of Life. The University of Melbourne. Retrieved June 08, 2007, from www.services.unimelb.edu.au/counsel/
Surviving Homesickness. The University of New England. Retrieved June 08, 2007, from www.une.edu.au/chaplaincy/homesickness.pf

Prepared by : Dr. Z. Eda Sun Selişik
SDCC : 661 (2185)-(2187)-(2188)



MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Northern Cyprus Campus

HOMESICKNESS

Student Development
and
Counseling Center

A physical separation from home and loved ones may generate a specific type of emotion called "homesickness". During the transition from living at home to living away from home, we might be surrounded by preoccupying thoughts of home and have to cope with a variety of distressing feelings, particularly the strong sense of longing for home and loved ones. At its core, homesickness is a longing for the familiar. It does not usually last long and most of us can handle this intense feeling and the accompanying apprehension efficiently. This emotional change can be viewed as a symptom that points out the necessity for taking steps into the new environment in order to be part of it. For some, however, intense homesickness can be overwhelming and distressing, and this transition takes longer. It may cause a decline in the level of self-confidence and hinder adjustment to the new social and academic environment.

Homesickness is most commonly associated with anxiety, anger, despair, emotional numbness, and a longing for loved ones, and it can be conceptualized as a type or stage of grief, which is a natural part of life. Homesickness can be caused by the loss of what is familiar and secure, for instance, the loss of roles such as being a first-born in the family, being the best friend of someone or being one of the most admired students in class. What is more, homesickness may trigger feelings of anxiety, confusion, self suspicion and self-evaluation that one experiences when adjusting to new tasks (Can I cope with it? Do I really want to be here?). It is also associated with the loss of confidence when your prior knowledge is ineffective and you fail to develop coping strategies in the new environment.

Symptoms of Homesickness

- Feeling unhappy for no reason
- Physical complaints without an easily identifiable medical cause (e.g. headache, insomnia, stomach upset, etc.)
- Feeling trapped in your own room
- Failure to develop a good daily routine which works with your body's natural rhythm instead of working against it
- Preoccupation with home-focused thoughts
- Longing to return home as soon as arriving at the campus
- Not wanting to go to classes following a holiday
- Not feeling like oneself; noticing signs of odd or unusual behavior
- Crying for no reason
- Feeling anxious in situations that you do not usually consider to be worrying
- Having a negative attitude towards the new environment, new foods and odors; longing for what is familiar and secure

Homesickness-Related Thought Patterns

- Repeatedly thinking about past memories
- "I do not belong here. I cannot get along with these people."
"I will change a lot if I keep living here and nothing will be the same when I am back home."
- "This is a difficult experience, things have gone off the rails. This is not what I expected."
- "I am so lonely."
- "Everything is beyond my control."

What might help?

- Having a few small items that remind you of home may help you feel at home in a different environment.
- Getting involved in activities you are familiar with on a frequent basis. Over time, you will feel more relaxed in your new surrounding.
- Being open to trying new things. It is a good time to explore your abilities and interests or develop new ones!
- Getting more familiar with the campus and the surrounding area by walking around and exploring (with a few others if possible). The more you familiarize yourself with the campus, its environment, and its culture, the more comfortable you will feel.
- Getting involved with a few people in some everyday activities (e.g. doing shopping, going to cinema) will help you to socialize better rather than getting superficially connected with many people at parties.
- Keeping the dorm room door open while you are in, gives you an opportunity to interact with passers-by, to get to know and meet people.
- Taking advantage of campus life.
- Getting out of your comfort zone and accepting invitations to parties and social gatherings and inviting other people to social occasions yourself.
- Sharing your feelings of homesickness with other fellow students who are going through the same experience. Recognize that these feelings are typical and part of the transition to a new setting, and that everybody, to some extent or another, feels exactly the same way you do.
- Talking to students who have already experienced the transition from living at home to living away from home and asking them how they overcame their homesickness; they may suggest some coping strategies.