HOMESICKNESS

‘I hate it here. I just feel bad all the time. I feel so weepy. I’m not enjoying lectures, because I wish I wasn’t sitting there. Everyone is quite friendly but I feel so out of it all and miserable. I don’t think I’m going to make any proper friends because I don’t have anything to say. When I get back to my room I just feel sick with worry and dread everything. I’ve got no appetite and I can’t sleep. If only I could leave tomorrow.’

Does that sound familiar?

It is for quite a few people. In fact close on 70% of students – two out of three - feel homesick to some extent over the first six weeks at University. Sometimes the symptoms are mild, like feeling a bit disorientated and muddled and unsure how to manage things in a new place. But some people take longer to settle – perhaps most of the first semester – and some of their feelings will be pretty acute, even overwhelming, at times.

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Physical Signs

- Tears
- Headaches
- Trembling
- No appetite
- No energy
- Disrupted monthly periods
- Feeling sick
- Patchy sleep
- Constant tiredness
- Absentmindedness
- Poor concentration

Feelings

- Feeling overwhelmed
- Feeling disconnected and miserable
- Feeling misunderstood and weird
- Feeling younger than everyone else
- Feeling very vulnerable

- Feeling insecure
- Feeling trapped
- Feeling constantly anxious
- Feeling isolated and lonely

Thoughts

- I wish I were home
- I wish I hadn’t come here
- I don’t belong here
- I can’t wait to get away
- I’ve got no one to talk to
- As soon as I’m alone I’m in tears
- Everyone is fed up with my phoning home
- I’m letting everyone down
- I can’t stop thinking of my girlfriend/boyfriend
- I just don’t care about anything
- I don’t think I’ll ever make it here
Why do we get homesick?

It’s a mixture of things. Some common factors include being a long way from home, being unprepared for so much change, little previous experience of being away from home, being faced with inappropriate challenges (i.e. course, college, university etc. were ill chosen), missing close friends, or being at University not through choice but to please someone else or fit in with the expectations of others.

What can you do about it?

- First of all admit that you are homesick and accept that it’s totally ok to feel homesick. There’s nothing ‘weak’ or ‘wimpish’ about homesickness. On the contrary, it takes strength to confront your feelings and to do something about them.
- Talk to someone. If you haven’t yet made any friends, try talking it through with your personal tutor or making an appointment with the University Counselling Service.
- Use your phone. Text people. Send emails. They’re good ways to stay in touch and keep friendships going.
- Decorate your room with familiar items from home, such as photos, posters, plants, etc. It’s not a childish, self-indulgent thing to do. It’s a really good way of making yourself at home in new surroundings.
- Don’t make any major decisions. Even if you eventually decide that you don’t want to stay, take your time and talk to people.
- Keep busy. Get into a routine. The fuller your days are, the less time for feeling homesick or lonely.
- Treat yourself to food that you enjoy.
- Walk around. Explore your new surroundings.
- Be realistic about student life. It’s not expected that you will work 168 hours a week and you couldn’t even if you tried. 30-35 hours is sufficient, and leave you plenty of time for making friends and leisure activities.
- Plan a date to go home and make firm arrangements.
- If you can’t eat or sleep properly see your GP.
• Volunteer to help with something. There are plenty of groups looking for volunteers.
• Don’t expect to get everything right. You’re bound to make mistakes, forget things, get lost, not understand things etc.

Where can you find support?

If you continue to feel lonely and miserable, and nothing seems to be getting any better, make an appointment with the Counselling Service.

Find out more about the University Counselling Service at http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling/

Telephone: 0115 951 3695
Email: counselling.service@nottingham.ac.uk

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