

What is Homesickness?

Homesickness is distress caused by being separated from home. It may look different for a lot of people. Some of the most common symptoms are:

- Feeling sad, down, or depressed
- Grief over the loss of familiar surroundings
- Anxiety or nervousness
- Withdrawing from or avoiding other people
- Wanting to stay in your room or being afraid to leave your room
- Feeling nostalgic about things that remind you of home
- Being easily irritated by new things, or things that are done differently than how you're used to.



1) Understand that your feelings are normal

It is common to feel uncomfortable with new surroundings and wish to be back with the familiar people and places of home. These feelings are part of your adjustment and they will fade once you get comfortable with your new environment.

2) Make your space your own

Bring some of the comforts of home to your new place. That can include pictures, decorations, or a favorite blanket or pillow. The more familiar your surroundings are, the more comfortable you'll feel.

3) Get involved on campus

There are a lot of activities on campus, especially within the first few weeks. Find some that interest you and dive in! They will keep you busy and give you the chance to make new friends.

4) Keep in touch

Phone calls, texts, email, and social media like Facebook and Twitter are great ways to stay in touch with family and friends back home.

5) Talk about it

Even if people aren't talking about it, a lot of students probably share your feelings. Say something to roommates, your RA, or new friends, and process some of your feelings. Other students might be scared to bring it up and could be glad that you started the conversation first.

What NOT To Do When You're Homesick

- **Don't stay in your room all the time**

Your room can be a safe haven during your time at college, but you don't want to spend all of your free time there. It prevents you from getting out, getting to know new people, and finding new things that you like.

- **Don't go home every weekend**

You miss your loved ones and it can feel really nice to see them as often as you can, especially if they live close by. But going home every chance you get may keep you from establishing your new life on campus. That can make your homesickness even worse.

- **Don't ignore your feelings**

It's totally normal to feel homesick. You are adjusting to a new place and a new culture. But, if you ignore those feelings, they may bottle up and make you feel worse. Try to process those emotions, by talking to someone, writing in a journal, or expressing yourself artistically.

Why Am I Homesick?

The 5 Stages of Culture Shock

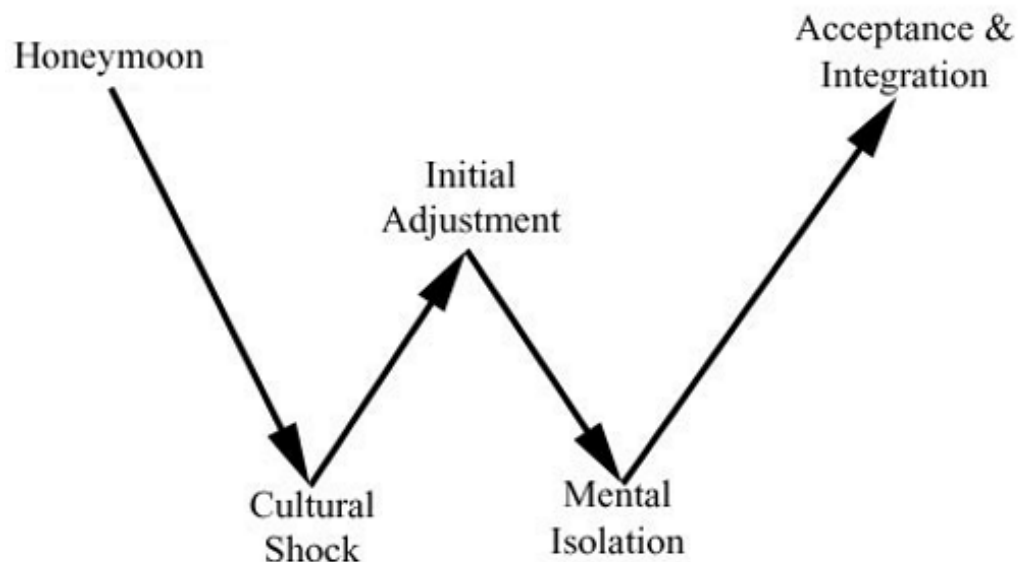
Honeymoon stage: Typically occurs when you first arrive on campus. You may be nervous but excited to start on your journey. The campus community is fun and welcoming. You may be a little homesick, but there are enough fun things to do that keep you feeling positive.

Cultural shock stage: After a while, the excitement wears off, and you start to deal with all of the adjustments of college life, such as coping with roommates, eating in the dining hall, and going to classes. You may really miss home and all of the things you are most familiar with, and may feel sad, down, or lonely.

Initial adjustment stage: After a while, you start to get into a routine and college life isn't as scary as it once was. You may still miss home, but you start to feel that you can manage yourself as a college student.

Mental isolation stage: You feel stuck between two worlds. Home is not as familiar as it once was, but you don't feel 100% integrated in college life. This commonly occurs after students go home for a longer break

Acceptance and integration stage: You start feeling connected to your campus community. You may have a solid group of friends and start feeling like the university is your home. You have successfully adapted to college life.



Adapted from Zeller and Mosier (1993). Culture Shock and the First-Year Experience

When does homesickness become a more serious issue?

How often is it happening?

Homesickness can occur at any time. It may happen when you are alone or when you are with others. If you find yourself feeling homesick every day, even when you are busy doing other activities, you may want to talk to someone.

How intense are your feelings?

It is normal to feel sad or anxious sometimes, especially in a new environment. And some students experience their feelings more intensely than others. If your feelings are too intense, they may interfere with other activities like your classes or job.

How long is it lasting?

Different people take longer to adjust to college life. Some may feel homesick for one weekend or one month. Some don't get homesick at all. For many students, feelings of homesickness typically subside after the first semester.

UNC Counseling Center

1901 10th Ave.

Cassidy Hall, 2nd floor

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Counseling Liaisons:

Asian/Pacific American Student Services &

Native American Student Services (Kohl House)

Center for Human Enrichment (Michner Library L116)

César Chávez Cultural Center

Gender & Sexuality Resource Center

Marcus Garvey Cultural Center