

## **Coping with College Series**

### **Getting Past Homesickness**

By Kim Hay  
Staff Psychologist

Your college experience has just begun. There are people to meet, classes to challenge you, parties to attend, and every kind of club or organization you can imagine. So why aren't you having fun? You may be experiencing some good old-fashioned homesickness. What is it and, more importantly, what can you do about it?

Homesickness is that aching feeling you get when you long to be back in familiar surroundings with familiar faces and friends and family. We all get attached to things. Even that neighborhood you thought you were dying to leave behind! It's hard to let go of things you've enjoyed to start over with the unknown. Letting go of your past life experience and maybe the only home or surroundings you ever knew is very stressful, even if you have been looking forward to the excitement and change of college life.

So what can you do about it? Homesickness is a grieving process that takes time to work through. But there are some steps you can take to help ease yourself into your new college home. Take some small gestures to get acquainted in your residence hall. Go down to dinner with your hall mates, or attend hall meetings to get acquainted. If a group from your floor decides to go out for an evening of fun, join in, even if you might be feeling a little down.

If others don't suggest doing something, you can take the initiative. Find out where Baskin Robbins is, take a hike on the Constitution Trail, discover the discount theatre next to College Hills Mall, rent some roller blades, or even visit the Blue Moon Café at Illinois Wesleyan, but do something! Engaging with others will help you discover that you aren't the only one fending off homesickness, and it will begin to lay some groundwork for new friendships.

It's very tempting to go home on the weekends when you are homesick. But try to spend weekends here at school, especially early in the semester. If you return home every weekend, by Thanksgiving when you are feeling more settled and excited to be here, you may find that friendship groups have already formed. It can be more difficult to join into groups that are already fixed.

Indulge your connections with home by using e-mail or giving your family a call. Invite them down for Homecoming and the Red Dog Chili Supper. You may want to talk with other new students about feeling homesick. People cope with change very differently, but be assured you aren't the only one here feeling

homesick. You may find that talking with others about how they coped gives you some ideas. And the Student Counseling Services is available if you need to talk through what you're feeling with a counselor.

Remember, homesickness won't last forever, but the exciting ways you will grow and learn at college will stay with you for the rest of your life. Hang in there with the homesickness and have a great semester!