

## **Coping with College Series**

### **Coping With Loneliness and Isolation in a College Environment**

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The Fall semester has begun and many students have chosen Illinois State. If you're finding yourself struggling with feeling of homesickness, loneliness and isolation, you're not alone.

It is normal to feel lonely. Most students have some difficulty adjusting to college, a community that is often different from their home community. Here are a few suggestions to help you cope with your feelings of loneliness and isolation and move toward feelings of acceptance and belonging.

Loneliness is often related to a sense of displacement or unfamiliarity with your new environment. Work to create a comfortable physical and psychological "space" here at Illinois State and in Normal.

Place important things from home in prominent places in your room or apartment. Orient yourself to the physical environment by taking a leisurely, non-time-pressured walk through campus and through adjacent downtown Normal.

By far, the best method of moving beyond transient feelings of loneliness is involvement with others -- for instance, your peers and your neighbors in this community.

Be around others as often as possible. You don't have to be highly sociable if that doesn't work for you. Instead, study in the library, watch television in residence hall and campus common areas, or take advantage of the many on-campus (and often free or inexpensive) activities.

Check out the many student organizations, including community service, Greek, departmental, honorary, recreational, political, diversity and religious organizations through the Office of Student Life.

Reach out and make efforts to extend yourself to others. Even though it's difficult for many of us, make eye contact and say "hello" to people in your classes, people you pass walking around campus, or people hanging out in common areas.

If all of these efforts are not successful, that's OK. It's good just to take the risk. People with more active social and romantic lives have also had more rejections than those who don't risk rejection at all.

Above all, don't despair. If you've tried these and other methods of coping, and are still feeling lonely and confused, come to Student Counseling Services on the third floor of the Student Services Building. We offer several groups for students dealing with issues such as loneliness and isolation, low self-esteem and conflict with family members.

Remember, this change-filled time in your life can be exciting as well as frightening.