

HOMESICKNESS & LONELINESS

Finding yourself in the totally new college environment can often feel overwhelming. The first few weeks on campus can be a lonely experience as the reality of separation from old friends, home, and family sinks in. However, with time and effort students begin to find friends and other sources of support in their new home.

College is not an extension of high school in that students are seriously challenged to make the journey from dependence to independence and develop more mature relationships with diverse others and acquire other life skills. Many students may have enjoyed independence before leaving for college but others may not have.

There is an increased level of personal freedom and responsibility which can be challenging for a new student. Compared to high school the academic demands are higher requiring more time for reading, studying for exams and preparing papers. More material is covered in a shorter time and class schedules may fall over a number of days and different times. Discipline and good time management, study habits and test-taking skills are necessary for success. Asking yourself the following questions can help determine whether you will have difficulties with homesickness and loneliness:

- ***Did you need a lot of supervision at home?***
- ***Did your parents talk to other adults for you?***
- ***Have you had problems with responsibility in work, groups, or teams?***
- ***Do you lack self-confidence and assertiveness?***
- ***Has peer pressure been a problem for you?***
- ***Is it difficult for you to make or keep friends?***

Some coping strategies to move beyond loneliness and homesickness:

- Be aware of your feelings
- Recognize that a period of confusion and disorganization is inevitable in a new environment.
- Be aware of your expectations and determine if they are realistic or unrealistic.
- Begin to establish a support system. This may be one person or several. The support may have to be from friends back home until a friend is found.
- Recognize that comfortable routines are missing. It often takes time to develop comfort and a sense of security. Instant comfort, security and friendship at a meaningful level is extremely unlikely even when new surroundings are pleasant. We often expect immediate gratification – or “instant feel good”. This relates to the earlier unrealistic expectations.
- Understand that it requires effort and stamina to endure temporary loneliness. Make an effort to connect with new opportunities, join campus organizations, get involved.
- Remember that uncomfortable situations have occurred before and that they have passed.
- Do not feel trapped by loneliness. In a new environment, it is necessary and inevitable.

Students who believe they may have difficulties in this area should consider developing a strategy to overcome them. With the appropriate support of family, friends and the professionals available at the Wellness Center, students can find that college need not remain an overwhelming or frightening experience.

Call the Wellness Center (SLC2200) at 727-873-4422 to make an appointment.