



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

Coping with homesickness

Strategies, myths and facts



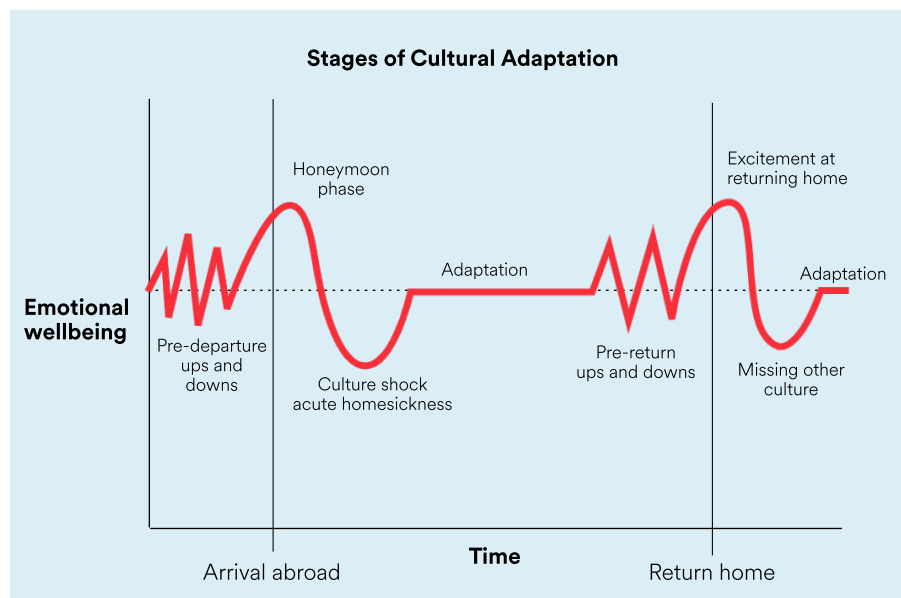
Homesickness is the feeling of emotional distress, sadness, missing or longing that comes from being away from home in a new or unfamiliar environment.

It can be felt for anything you left behind – people, pets, places, routines, food, hobbies, interests and so on. Feeling homesick is a normal part of moving to a different country, and affects many people.

Signs and symptoms of homesickness

Homesickness looks and feels different for everyone. Here are some of the most common symptoms you might experience:

- Anxiety
- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite
- Frequent crying
- Headaches
- Lack of concentration
- Nausea
- Worry
- Low mood
- Dizziness
- Lack of energy



Adapted from Lynne Mitchell and Wayne Myles, University of Guelph, 2010

Myths and facts

Let's get the facts straight. You might have heard from a friend about homesickness, or read something on the internet about it – but here are some common myths and facts according to the University's Counselling Support service.

• **Myth: Homesickness lasts around four weeks**

Homesickness can last a few days, weeks, or even months – the length depends on the individual and circumstances. Although in most cases the feelings pass or improve within a few weeks, it can sometimes last longer. It can also peak and trough: significant events or dates at home (or missing out on celebrations etc) can make the feelings kick up again when you had otherwise been feeling good.

Just remember – support is available, and you are not alone in feeling this way. It is *normal* to feel homesick, and is something you can learn to get through.

• **Fact: Talking about homesickness will help.**

Talking about feeling homesick will not make it worse. Talking provides an outlet for feelings to be expressed and creates an opportunity to share experiences and learn coping strategies.

Talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling, such as a close friend, family member, or someone from the University.

• **Myth: As soon as you feel homesick, you should visit home.**

Many students feel that they want to go home when they feel homesick, but often this can make the feelings of missing home more intense. Try connecting with people at home via video call instead – this can feel much more personal than texting.

• **Fact: Most students will feel homesick.**

It is important to realise that you are not the only one feeling homesick. Homesickness is a normal part of leaving home or experiencing change. Getting through these difficult feelings will help you develop skills to cope with similar situations in the future.

• **Myth: Homesickness is only something that young people get.**

Anyone can experience homesickness. It's normal for anyone to experience some anxiety or sadness when they are away from home. The symptoms and feelings can be the same, regardless of age, culture, gender.

Top Tips for Coping with Homesickness

So what do you do if you're feeling homesick? There are many strategies that can help you get through tough periods - when you experience homesickness, try the following:.

Be patient

Everyone takes time to get used to changes to routines. Be kind to yourself and try not to judge yourself harshly if things aren't happening straight away. This is an opportunity to develop your emotional awareness by having space to identify what you are feeling and why. You aren't just learning what's on your course, you are learning how to live independently too.

Take care of yourself

Keeping basic healthy habits will make a huge difference: stay active, eat healthily and regularly, and ensure you're getting enough sleep. Exercise releases chemicals into the body that promote feelings of wellbeing, whilst eating well and staying hydrated can significantly boost your mental health. Remember to treat yourself at times too!

Take some time for yourself

Setting aside some time to relax can help you reflect on your new experiences and better understand how you are feeling. Designate some "me time" to do things that make you happy, such as reading, writing, exercising, watching a movie, painting etc. You could also consider making some time to learn a new skill such as cooking or a language. This is a great way to nurture a positive view of yourself - by focusing on your positive aspects.

Focus on home comforts

Get out any items that remind you of home, such as photos or decorations, and spend time looking at these or put them out in your room. These can be comforting - especially if they are familiar items from your own room at home. If you have any favourite recipes that your family make, ask them to send you the instructions so you can try them yourself and have a taste of home.



Reach out and get involved

Join events and activities that interest you - this way you'll find others who share your interests, and it will be easier to get chatting. Whilst it isn't always easy to meet new people, lots of students will be in the same position and will be happy to make friends. Keep in touch with people from home, too - but give yourself time to settle in before visiting, as it may make your homesickness worse.

Access support

You might wish to spend some time looking through self-help resources to learn some techniques to help with your wellbeing. Sometimes it can help to talk things through with someone, especially if the way you are feeling is affecting your studies or your university experience.

Congratulate yourself!

Facing change and the unknown is difficult for anyone, and it is natural to feel anxious and emotional at first. It takes a lot of courage to try new things, especially when you are away from your usual support network. You should take pride in your initiative, resourcefulness, and determination.

Further resources

If you're feeling homesick and want more advice and support, or would like to speak with someone in depth about what you're going through, the University has free and confidential support resources to help:

- Wellbeing Hub
- Counselling Support
- International Student Support

For support

International Student Support
contact ua.edu.au/iss

Counselling Support
phone +61 8 8313 5663
web www.adelaide.edu.au/counselling
email counselling.centre@adelaide.edu.au