



## Fort Hays State University – Health and Wellness Services

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# Homesickness

## What is Homesickness?

Many of us will feel homesick at some point in our lives. It can be overwhelming. Beginning life at college can generate both excitement and anxiety. For some, adjusting to college happens quickly; for others, the transition takes longer. Homesickness comes about when there is a preoccupation with home-focused thoughts. There is longing for and grieving for what was familiar and secure. It can be about the loss of people, pets, places, routines, or culture. It can also be about the secure feeling of familiarity that home represents.

If you experience homesickness you might notice an increase in low moods, anxiety, obsessive thoughts, and minor physical ailments.

Vulnerability to feeling homesick can be affected by:

- The distance from home.
- A sense of anti-climax at finally arriving at college after working towards it for so long.
- Whether you or someone else was responsible for the decision to come to college.
- Unhappiness due to expectations of college not being met.
- Workload and adjustment to university requirements.
- Whether family members at home are well and happy.
- Finding college to be a very different lifestyle.

## Transition to College

There are two tasks involved in starting college:

1. Leaving familiar things, people, and places
2. Adapting to new things, people, and places

We all have different levels of tolerance to change and have learned different ways of coping with new situations. In unfamiliar surroundings our usual methods of coping and working are challenged. Tasks that we would normally take in stride can suddenly seem like a huge challenge or impossible. Our self-esteem and confidence can drop.

## What Might Help?

Homesickness is not unusual and can become easier to manage with time and effort. Here are some tips that can help:

- Talk to someone. Try visiting with a professor, co-worker, partner, college staff member, or counselor.
- Stay in contact with the people you have left behind, but also give yourself time to get involved with people on campus or in the community.
- Encourage friends or family to come and see you in your new setting.
- Remember that many other people will be sharing similar feelings even though they look “fine.”
- Enjoy your time in college. You are allowed to feel sad and homesick, but you are also allowed to enjoy yourself.

- Be realistic about what to expect from student life and from yourself. Establish a balance.
- Remember to get enough sleep and food. They are important parts of self-care.
- Try to make contacts and friends through shared activities such as sports or other interests.
- Give yourself time to adjust—you don't have to get everything "right" immediately.
- Consider whether or not you really do want to be at this university, studying this subject. Most people come through times of homesickness and go on to do well and enjoy their time in college. But for others, it may be right to leave and go another direction. It could be useful to visit with an advisor or counselor for advice.
- If you struggle to do normal social/academic routines, seek out professional help from a medical doctor or a Health and Wellness Services counselor. Don't wait until the problems have grown too large.