

13. Homesickness

Coming to university, starting life in a new place, involves going through a period of rapid change and adjustment. Homesickness is a natural reaction to this upheaval and even those who didn't expect to be hit by homesickness can find themselves missing familiar places, people and routines.

We feel homesick when we are suffering the loss of the familiar before we have become accustomed to our new environment. Sometimes these feelings can be overwhelming and can get in the way of doing what you came to university to do – studying, making new friends, trying new activities etc.

Adjusting to change is a process: feelings of homesickness will subside as you become more familiar with your surroundings and the pattern of your university life. The activities below will help you do this.

- **Acknowledge and accept** that your homesickness is a natural response to change. Believe that it will pass. It almost always does.
- **Establish a routine as soon as possible.** This will help regulate your sleep and eating patterns to support your general wellbeing, and the more active your days are, the less time you will have to feel homesick.
- **Get used to your surroundings:** Walk around and explore the area around where you live, the campus, and Leeds city - either alone or with new friends,

- **Pace yourself:** don't start lots of optional new things all at once.
- **Be kind to yourself:** plan things into your day that you enjoy doing and can look forward to – whether it's socializing, reading a book, having a hot bath, watching a favourite film. What would be on your list?
- **Volunteer some time:** whether to directly help others or by joining a campaigning or other voluntary organisation. This is a distraction-from-homesickness strategy with lots of other benefits.
- **Keep in touch – but not too much:** Think carefully about how much time visiting or contacting home is helpful or unhelpful to you. If you spend more time communicating with people back home than you do with people at university then the process of adapting to change will take longer and you need to be going out and about doing things in the new place so that you've got something to talk about!
- **Keep expectations realistic:** Work out ways to improve your experience if it's not quite what you wanted. Talk to others to help you adjust your expectations and/or clarify your needs....
- **....Ask for help:** The jump to a new learning and living environment can be tough - there's no shame in asking for help so don't suffer in silence...talk to those around you and/or use the Student Counselling and Wellbeing Service - that's what it's there for!

See the Counselling and Wellbeing website for helpful online resources on Homesickness: students.leeds.ac.uk/counsellingandwellbeing