



MANAGING HOMESICKNESS

What is Homesickness?

Feelings of longing, distress, grief, and/or anxiety associated with being away from home or from an object of attachment or importance.

Why Am I Feeling Homesick?

Feeling homesick is a very normal reaction when separated from a place you hold dear, such as your home, your city or your country. But homesickness isn't just about being away from home – it can also mean being away from anything that is familiar and brings a sense of comfort such as family, friends, pets or even a favourite restaurant.

Homesickness can happen to anyone that has been separated from their “normal” lives. Even when this separation is full of exciting opportunities, such as leaving home to go to school, experiencing homesickness is normal and natural. Being homesick does not mean you've made a bad decision, but simply that you are missing all of the things you've found important.

How Do I Know I'm Homesick?

Each person may have a different response to feeling homesick. Here are a few common symptoms of homesickness.

- ✓ Changes in sleep patterns (inability to fall asleep/stay asleep)
- ✓ Changes in mood (increased irritability, anger, sadness)
- ✓ Feeling of helplessness/hopelessness
- ✓ Feeling lonely/isolated
- ✓ Loss of appetite
- ✓ Changes in weight (not eating enough/overeating)
- ✓ Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed
- ✓ Low motivation
- ✓ Loss of energy (feeling tired or physically exhausted)
- ✓ Difficulties with concentration/focus
- ✓ Physiological symptoms associated with anxiety (e.g., increased/rapid heart rate and/or breathing, increased sweating, headache, dizziness, digestive issues)

TIPS FOR MANAGING HOMESICKNESS



Acknowledge your feelings

Feelings of homesickness are common; you are not alone. An important step is to acknowledge that these feelings are not strange and that there are several different ways to manage them. Remember, different things work for different people – there is no “one-size-fits-all” strategy to combating homesickness.

Stay connected

Ensure that you keep in touch with friends and family as best you can. It is important, however, to manage this appropriately. Phoning home several times a day may increase your feeling of loneliness, making your homesickness much worse. Instead, set one time each week to connect, giving yourself and your loved ones something to look forward to.

At the same time, begin to connect with people locally. Find a favourite spot to walk or a place to eat. Join a sports team, take a yoga class or engage in the many activities your school puts together.

Establish a sense of familiarity

Try to incorporate certain home-traditions into your new life. Try to cook the same food or use the same spices. Incorporate smells and scents into your home. Even using the same smelling laundry detergent can bring a sense of familiarity and, with it, a sense of calm.

Engage in a hobby

Engaging in an activity that brings you a sense of enjoyment and excitement can help keep your mind active. Consider scheduling time in your day to pick up an old hobby or activity or consider trying something new.

Utilize mindfulness as a “way of being”

Mindfulness can be a specific activity or practice, such as meditating, but can also be incorporated into your daily activity as a way of being. When engaging in a daily activity, such as doing the dishes, focus all your attention on that task and pay close attention to your senses (what you can hear, see, smell, touch and taste). If a thought or feeling comes to mind, don’t chase it away. Ponder over it for a moment without judgement or worry. Then, gently, return your complete attention to the task at hand. For example, you might say to yourself: “I am aware that I am having this thought, however, I am washing the dishes and will remain focused on this task.”

Stay positive

Like building muscle through repeated exercise, you can develop your skill at being positive and optimistic through regular “exercise.” Try to reframe your negative thoughts and feelings by looking for the good. Also be sure to take time, every day, to do something that makes you laugh and brings you joy.

Establish a daily routine

Having a daily routine can help you manage homesickness. Set specific times for sleeping, exercising, connecting with family and friends and finishing your schoolwork. Even a casual schedule can help you feel productive and provide a sense of certainty and security in what you decide to do with your time.

You’re not alone! Remember, Yorkville University/Toronto Film School CARES. If you would like to speak to a mental health and wellness counsellor, schedule an appointment using the following links.

For Toronto Film School: tfs.janeapp.com

For Yorkville University: yorkvilleu-bc.janeapp.com