"I WANT TO GO HOME!"
TIPS FOR BATTLING HOMESICKNESS

The transition from home to university often involves major changes in a person’s life. It can be filled with excitement, expectation and adventure. It can also be marked by homesickness, which can sometimes make people quite miserable. In our conversations with people struggling to overcome homesickness, we often hear about ways they’ve discovered of making things better for themselves. One student’s ideas are presented below, followed by other people’s suggestions. We hope you’ll find these tips for battling homesickness helpful.

Here’s what one first-year student told us:

• Keep in touch with friends and family via daily phone calls.

• If you feel the need, talk to a counsellor about your feelings – they will listen objectively and be in your corner.

• Break up the school year into smaller parts by getting a year planner or calendar so that you can mark off the days until your first weekend home, next holidays, first assignment due date, etc. This helps the time go faster.

• Know your options in case the situation doesn’t improve. This includes HECS dates and transfer policies.

• Don’t worry about going home for weekends, even the first weekend. It’s easy to make up stories to tell people if you’re uncomfortable about admitting to homesickness. Bringing laundry home, picking up clothing you forgot, and going to a birthday party are all good examples.

• Keep busy – check out the gym program or the clubs market day for activities you might like.

• Pick and choose which college events to participate in – you don’t have to go to all of them, but it is helpful to go to one or two. Sports games and movie nights are good because you generally don’t have to make chitchat.

• Establish some kind of routine so that college life takes on a sense of normalcy.

• Go to classes – you never know, you might meet a friend outside of your college.
• Don’t pressure yourself into making friends immediately; make acquaintances instead so that you don’t box yourself into friendships.

Other people’s suggestions:

• Write down or remind yourself of why you made the decision to come to university in the first place – what made this an attractive option, what got you thinking this was the place for you, etc.

• If you sometimes find it’s hard work to overcome homesickness, think about what will make this hard work worthwhile in the long term – e.g. how this will take you on to the next phase of life, better employment prospects, etc. If you’re having trouble thinking about this, ask others who support your decision to come to university about why it’s worthwhile in their opinion.

• Make a list of the positive things about being away from home (e.g. freedom, etc.)

• Make your room your own! Create an environment that’s comfortable and familiar.

• Make a conscious effort to notice better times – times when homesickness is even a little less strong. What’s different at those times? Does this give you some clues about what you’re already doing to make things better for yourself?

• “Fake it ’til you make it” – go through the motions of being involved even if your heart’s not in it yet.

• As well as visiting home, have family or other loved ones visit you here so you can show them around.

• Remember the old adage “all things in moderation” – especially if you’re tempted to “drown your sorrows” in alcohol!

• Cut out some funny cartoons and pin them up. Read a humorous book or rent a funny video.

• Daydream about a positive future – in as much detail as you can.

• Imagining your family moving in with you can often help get things into perspective!

• Listen to upbeat music.

• Be kind to yourself – moving away from home is a big step and needs some time to adjust to.

• If it’s relevant, think about other times you’ve been away from home and what helped you get through.