

Hi. My name's Michelle Linmore, and I'm one of the counsellors from the ANU counselling centre. I'd like to start by welcoming you as a new international student to ANU and to Canberra. I hope you'll be very happy here. Today, I'll be discussing some tips to help you settle in and manage any homesickness.

Canberra is a lovely safe and very multicultural city. About a quarter of the population were born overseas, so you'll find many other people here who know exactly what it's like going through a period of adjustment and getting used to a new culture. Many international students describe feeling quite happy when they first arrive. Despite the jet lag, it can be exciting settling in, and hopefully, you'll find a lot of interesting activities on offer during orientation week.

There are many things to see and do off campus as well, including exploring the natural surrounds here, enjoying museums and galleries, or concerts, sporting events, and festivals. If you're interested in traveling outside of Canberra, the snowy beach or mountains are within a few hours drive.

Even though you might be pleased and grateful to have the opportunity to be studying here in Canberra, it's very normal, after the initial excitement of arriving, to have times of feeling a bit lonely and unhappy before you start to feel more settled, confident, and content. There's a lot to get used to at first, and it can be a bit overwhelming. So although Australia's official language is English, your first conversations with locals might be a bit confusing. It can be hard to keep up with Aussie slang and idioms as well as an unfamiliar accent, but don't be discouraged. Most people will be happy to explain more if you ask what they mean.

It can be challenging also getting used to different weather and food from what you're used to, and you might notice differences in etiquette, lifestyle, and values. For example, Australians tend to be informal, which can take some adjustment, especially if you're more accustomed to a culture where ritual's important and where levels of status and authority are more clearly distinguished.

You may find that in this unfamiliar new place there are times that you miss your home, your family and friends, your pets and routines. And when you find it a bit hard being here, the following ideas are suggestions that may help you to settle in more quickly and manage homesickness if you do experience it.

So number one, set aside time to get settled in. Keep your expectations realistic. You need time to adjust and adapt to your new environment. So don't worry if you're not able to manage your time and tasks perfectly from the beginning. Take the time to familiarize yourself with campus and with the support services available. You might like to start settling in by creating a comfortable environment and making your room feel like your own.

Number two, try to adopt an open minded, curious mindset. This means letting go of preformed ideas about what to expect or how you should feel, and being prepared for some moments of feeling overwhelmed, tired, or stressed, as well as the times of feeling confident and OK. It can help to make a conscious effort to notice the better moments, the times when homesickness is even a little less strong, and to be curious about what helps you. If it's relevant, think about other times you've been away from home and what helped you get through them. You might also find it helps to remember why you made the decision to come to ANU and what makes this an attractive worthwhile option in the long term.

Number three, connect with others and avoid isolation. It can require some courage to attend social events and try to start conversations, but this is worth doing, as connections with other people support success of study, as well as protecting you against loneliness and depression.

The Australian way of life promotes cross-cultural mingling, so where possible, try to meet a wide variety of people, including locals. You might like to join student clubs and societies, play some sports, or volunteer your time to meet people. It'll take time to create friendships, but making acquaintances is a great start.

Try to be brave and make the first move by introducing yourself. You could ask a new person where they come from, or ask them to explain to you the finer points of footy, cricket, or another aspect of Aussie culture, such as what happens during a barbie.

Try not to spend all your time engrossed in your smartphone. Instead, try to overcome any awkwardness by reaching out. And if you want to improve your English, try to use it in conversation. If making small talk feels too hard at first, you might try activities like a sporting event or a movie night, where you can mingle without too much pressure.

Meeting others from your own culture can be very helpful when you feel homesick, and at times, this will create an instant community that feels familiar. Linking in with multicultural groups can also provide a way of introducing new friends to your culture and heritage.

Staying connected to people at home is also important as you adjust to being here in Canberra. Look after your relationships by being interested in other people's news, as well as telling them about your experiences. Staying in touch with home is great, but be conscious you're not doing this so much that you miss out on connections here.

Number four, stay on track with study. You came here to study, so attending uni as often as you can is important. It'll help you keep up with the work, as well as creating opportunities to connect with other students.

Try not to skip classes. Going to lectures even if you haven't finished all your reading means you'll pick up more information than not attending at all. Keeping on top of your weekly assigned readings, homework, or lab work will help you be ready for assessment tasks and prevent you feeling overwhelmed later in the semester. Reading your course outline and writing due dates into a diary or calendar will help you manage your time effectively, and being on track with study will help you feel more settled and OK here.

Try not to study too long without a break, as this can lead to ineffective work time and stop you achieving a good work life balance. Rewarding yourself after a period of productivity will help you to re-energize and stay well.

Number five, maintain a good balance of activities in your routine. Looking after yourself by eating well exercising and getting enough rest as well, as by working and socializing, will help you to feel better. We know that physical activity often lifts mood, so try to move and get outdoors when possible, and avoid drinking too much alcohol or caffeine, which can negatively affect your mood.

Having fun is really important for creating balance. Hopefully you'll make good memories and enjoy pleasant events while you're here studying at ANU. Keeping occupied helps to

reduce homesickness, so consider going on some adventures and exploring parts of Canberra that you're interested in. This will also give you things to talk about when you socialize. If you need some time out from everybody else, consider relaxing activities, such as listening to music or watching a funny video.

The last tip is number six, ask for help. There are many campus services and resources at ANU. So if you're having problems or difficulties, there's always a staff member or fellow student around to answer questions and provide support. It's good to ask for help early, as many problems can be easily dealt with early on. The ANU counselling centre is available for students who'd like to come and talk about issues around adjusting to university, homesickness, or any other topic you might want assistance with.

Thanks for listening, and I hope that your time here is very satisfying. Please do reach out for support if we can help in any way. You can call us on 6125 2442, or go to the ANU counselling centre in person. And you can also visit our website, which has the mental health resources online, where you can find information on this and other topics.