

Adjusting to Uni

Homesickness/Culture Shock/Change/Longing For Country

For some students starting University can be both an exciting and terrifying experience. Students may travel long distances away from home to attend University and this can sometimes result in students facing difficulties in adjusting. Adjusting to a new place like university is a very personal experience and some students may find it harder than others to get settled. As individuals when we are in an unknown or unfamiliar environment and away from usual supports sometimes personal coping becomes affected.

Students who are a long way from home may experience cultural shock resulting from being immersed in a culture very different to their own. Students may be dealing with an unfamiliar setting, new climate, different accommodation, financial concerns, transport, unfamiliar food, language difficulties and personal safety concerns. Cultural norms, values and beliefs may be different and some students may feel socially, culturally and racially excluded in their new environment.

Feelings you may experience

Expect to feel both 'up' and 'down' at times. On the 'down' side you may experience worry, confusion, sadness, loneliness, self-doubt, vulnerability and a yearning for home. On the 'up' side you, may feel exhilaration, joy, freedom and excitement.

Thinking a lot about home

At times, it is possible you may have physical symptoms like difficulty sleeping, trembling, loss of concentration, headaches, difficulties with eating and feeling unwell. Don't worry! Others have gone through the same emotions and gotten through it.

It's normal to feel some of the effects of adjusting to uni however, over time these feelings should become less intense as you begin to settle in. If you find the feelings are very distressing and are not easing please make an appointment to see a Student Counsellor.

Some things that may impact on a student's adjustment

- Distance from home – the further away a student travels for study the more difficult the adjustment to uni life may be.
- Change in culture (city to country, interstate, overseas, secondary to tertiary education).
- Expectations of uni or location – the experience is different than what was expected.



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- An increase in workload or juggling study and part-time work.
- Not feeling connected to environment and feeling a lack of control over the situation.
- Feeling different due to culture of origin and not feeling connected to new culture.
- Been a victim of crime or the experience of been treated badly in the new environment.
- Family at home are unwell or facing personal difficulties.

What may be helpful for students

Allow yourself to miss home or feel homesick – it is normal to miss home at any age.

Stay busy and be active, do enjoyable activities. Try to do some of the things you would normally do back home (play sport/yoga/gym, go to church, join creative groups).

Be open to trying new things.

Make friends – say yes to social invitations and attend university events to meet people.

Stay in touch with home on a regular basis.

Decorate your room to make it comfortable, develop a new home away from home. Consider decorating with a rug, throw or pillow from home.

Don't make hasty decisions. Take some time to consider options before making any major life changes.

Give yourself time to settle in. Think of this as adjustment time and a process for you to work through.

Look for the positives in the new environment (freedom, independence, growth, travel, life experience).

Explore new positive ways to cope with change through talking with others.

Seek help from Student Health Services (student counsellor, GP, chaplain).

You are not alone in your experiences.

Southern Cross University Student Health Service, Counselling

Lismore: 02 6626 9131

Coffs Harbour: 02 6659 3263

Gold Coast: 07 5589 3252

The Hotel School Sydney: 02 8249 3200

Southern Cross University Out of Hours

Crisis Line: 1300 782 676

All other areas: 1800 111 890

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