

Life Transitions and Homesickness

College is an exciting time of life, one filled with many profound transitions in preparation for a fulfilling future. One thing is likely true for all first year students: beginning college provides countless opportunities for growth, newly emerging challenges and an accumulation of rich interpersonal experiences. However, homesickness, academic challenges, difficulty fitting in, managing expectations and many other issues can take their toll. Sometimes, the challenges of adjusting to college can be stressful and require new life strategies.

Symptoms

Homesickness may relate to decreased motivation, sadness and a perpetual negative outlook with a desire to escape and go back home. You may become overwhelmed with nostalgia, extreme loneliness and social disconnectedness.

Causes

All transitions by definition include going away from something towards something else. Within these transitions there is often a feeling of loss. The feelings of missing home and a sense of loss is valid. The transition to college is an experience full of change and new adventures. Some examples of these new experiences include:

- Increased personal freedom and responsibility
- Different kinds of academic strategies needed for success
- Greater levels of difficulty of academic demands
- Greater complexity of time-management responsibilities
- New friendships at college that differ from high school friendships
- Much more (or much less) racial and cultural diversity than what you experienced in your home community — or similar diversity but less socializing among people of different races
- A greater range of values and morals in college than in your home community
- Being surrounded by many peers who are also high achieving
- Changing relationships with family members and friends from home
- Maintaining a long-distance romantic relationship while beginning a new life that may not involve your partner from home

What to do

- Acknowledge these feelings
- Reach out to friends and family from back home
- Reach out to others. Start conversations and trust the process of forming new friendships
- Focus on your personal health, exercise, sleep, eat well and take a chance to connect with someone in your class or dorm
- Become aware of the many activities and organizations that you can join
- Adjust your expectations if things are not working out as you planned. Perhaps, what you planned wasn't going to offer as much as what is actually happening

- Make use of the services and resources to keep you on track academically. Avoid the common mistake of avoiding help just to prove you don't need help. At this phase in your life, not using available resources is likely to prove a much more costly than simply needing assistance from time to time
- Connect with the team of support in your residence halls
- Get support from the GCU Office of Student Care. Whether your struggle is something you've been facing since before you came to GCU or something that has emerged as you've been adjusting to college life, meeting with a counselor is an effective way of getting through the challenging time and continuing toward a successful and fulfilling career at GCU and after you graduate > [Link to how to make an appointment](#)