

## Growing up... and Going Away

Leaving home and going to university is a life changing experience that is exciting and challenging.

It can also be a lonely and difficult experience, especially if you are coming from far away to stay in a new and strange environment.

Feeling homesick and lonely is natural and common under the circumstances.

However, some of you may experience more intense feelings of "separation anxiety," and start to think negatively about the new environment.

If you experience disappointment in your new surroundings, longings of going home can surface.

It can even reach the point that you miss home desperately, have obsessive thoughts about returning, and idealize home and past relationships.

Homesick people also feel miserable and depressed. Various minor and major pains may be felt, such as stomach complaints, appetite loss, not sleeping well, crying and headaches. Separating homesickness from other related difficulties is often difficult, but you will soon realize that adaptation to the new situation is being hampered

People deal with big changes in their life in very different ways. Feelings of homesickness can be suppressed and denied, especially if there is pressure to succeed and fit in with the new surroundings.

Symptoms may include irritability and using substances like alcohol to numb feelings of loss and sadness.

### Tips in dealing with homesickness:

- Bring pictures or home movies of friends and family.
- Try to keep healthy routines and habits from your "former life" as much as possible.
- Join a sports club, church, etc. This will help you build a new support system and social contacts.
- Take action by exploring your new surroundings and walking around campus so that it becomes familiar.
- Stay in touch with home, whether it is by email, mail or telephone calls. These little connections can make a huge difference when you feel isolated.
- Keep a journal; writing down new experiences helps to process them on an emotional level.
- Talk to someone understanding about how you feel and what you miss about home.
- Counseling may relieve some of the anxiety and stress.

Trained counselors at Student Wellness Services are available to help you negotiate the transition and feelings of loss, as well as support you in making the experience at university meaningful and productive.

## Find us @

**Student Wellness Services**  
**28 Rhodes Avenue**  
**Mowbray**

**Telephone Numbers:**

- **021 650 1017**
- **021 650 1020**

**Hours:**

**Mon – Fri 08H30 – 16H30**

- be informed**
  - know the dangers**
  - make an informed choice!!**