

Adjustment, Homesickness and Loneliness

Experiencing the new

When you move to a new place, even if it is by your own choice, you need to make adjustments. Tertiary education presents new routines and a new environment which may cause you to feel anxious, lonely, isolated and homesick.

Adjustment is a normal process. When you experience something new and different your mind and body takes time to adjust. Familiarity and routine help you feel safe, so when this is not there your mind and body often responds as if you are under threat. You may also experience grief for the loss of the place you have come from, and anxiety due to separation from the places and people care about.

Patterns of adjustment vary from student to student. You may find you are anxious from the start and this continues for a few weeks until you begin to settle into a new routine. Or you might find the first few weeks exciting and new, and then begin to experience loneliness and homesickness as you miss home and start to experience the stresses of University life.

Adjustment can be particularly difficult if you are from a different country and have to adjust to an entirely new environment, language and culture. Every one of your senses is being bombarded with new and different experiences and this can be overwhelming.

You may live on campus and have lots of people around you, or live in a small share house or on your own. No matter what your living arrangements you may feel lonely and isolated.

Adjustment can be hard, and will take time, but you're not alone. Behind other students smiles may be a person feeling anxious, lonely or homesick just like you. Some research has found that 35% of new students experience homesickness. Remember, it's not necessarily the situation or the environment that it is difficult, it may be just the way you are experiencing and perceiving things right now. With time things are likely to become easier.

Thoughts and feelings of adjustment that you may experience include:

- Getting irritated with new food, new smells, new sounds, and new scenery.
- Finding the values or behaviours of people around you different and possibly confronting.
- Strong feelings of missing home or longing for familiar people and places.
- Feeling like things will never be "normal" again.
- Getting anxious or upset about things that usually wouldn't bother you.
- Finding simple things more difficult than usual.
- Struggling to concentrate and remember things.
- Reduced confidence and self-doubt.
- Thinking thoughts like "Uni isn't for me", "I'm no good at this", and "people don't like me".
- Physical symptoms such as increased heart and breathing rate, muscle tension, headaches and nausea.
- Sleep and eating disturbances.

What can I do?

Connect with others

Making connections with other people can assist you with loneliness and homesickness. It can help you to feel more positive about yourself, your studies and make the adjustment to University a little bit easier:

- Check out the O Week program and attend as many information and fun sessions as you can.
- If you live on campus, connect with your Residential Assistant (RA).
- Join social, sporting or club society groups advertised through your residence, the Student Association or on student bulletins.
- Attend study groups such as Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) and tutorials and try to make some connections in your course if possible.
- Take opportunities to interact with other students and attend university events. Find out about events at www.jcu.edu.au/events or go further afield and attend events in the broader community where you can meet new people. Perhaps see if another student wants to go with you – see whatson.townsville.qld.gov.au

Adjustment, Homesickness and Loneliness

Seek support

Learn about the following University Support Services available on campus by visiting the [JCU Website](#) :

- Counselling and Wellbeing
- Chaplaincy
- AccessAbility Services
- Student Mentor Program
- Student Support Officers
- The Learning Centre
- Peer Advisors and Learning Advisors
- Student Association

Survival tips

- Remind yourself that missing what's important and familiar is part of being human - be self-compassionate.
- Allow yourself to be sad at times and have a cry when needed.
- Set your room or house up with things that are familiar from home.
- Make an effort to talk to someone new. Talk to other new students – they will probably feel much the same as you do.
- Try not to isolate yourself in your room - if you live on campus or in a share house try to leave your door open sometimes; someone might pass by and say 'hello'.
- Attend activities that help you to create new memories.
- Explore your new campus and city.
- Respond to invitations to places or events where you will meet people and have shared experiences.
- Connection with home is important, however don't let connection with home get in the way of

opportunities to connect with people and experiences here. Set up a balanced routine for contact with home, and stick to it.

- Write down thoughts, experiences and dreams in a journal. Each day try to write down at least one positive aspect of your new experience, no matter how small. Perhaps someone smiled at you, perhaps you saw a butterfly, or perhaps you found a class without too much trouble!
- Take care of yourself by eating well, getting enough sleep, making time for relaxation and exercising. Establish a routine as soon as possible and create a work, leisure balance. Avoid unhealthy coping strategies such as eating poorly, excessive TV or video games, or using drugs or alcohol.
- Get a calendar or planner and break up the University semester into smaller chunks. Mark in semester breaks and visits home. Set up a routine for Uni classes, study, assessment deadlines, and self-care activities.

If your feelings of anxiety, homesickness or loneliness are not getting better or are concerning you, seek help by contacting JCU Student Equity and Wellbeing. Alternatively, see your doctor, or other mental health professional. For 24 hour support call Lifeline on 13 11 14, BeyondBlue on 1300 224 636 or if you are aged 12 – 25 connect with headspace at the following link www.eheadspace.org.au/.

Student Equity and Wellbeing

James Cook University

Web <https://www.jcu.edu.au/student-equity-and-wellbeing>

Email studentwellbeing@jcu.edu.au

Phone Townsville (07) 478 14711 or Cairns (07) 423 21150

In person Level 1 of the Library in Townsville and Cairns, Mon – Fri 9.00 am to 4.00 pm

CRICOS Provider No. 00117J

- Wellbeing
- Counselling
- Accessibility
- Student Equity
- Multifaith Chaplaincy