How to Handle Homesickness

Homesickness is a normal response to separation from people, places, and things that give you a sense of belonging. Most people experience homesickness at some point in their lives, from moving to a new town, starting a new job, going away to college, or studying abroad.

People who have never experienced homesickness before may suddenly feel overwhelmed. It is important to know that homesickness is normal and it does pass.

There are some things you can do which may help you get through some of those sad and lonely feelings. For example, it may be helpful to:

- Admit that you are homesick. Much of what you know and find comforting is back home. Homesickness is a
 natural response to this sense of loss. Dr. Will S. Keim notes that you may go through stages of grieving, similar
 to Elizabeth Kubler Ross' Five Stages of Grieving. At first you may feel shock and denial, then anger, then
 bargaining ("I'll give it another week and then I'm leaving."), depression, and finally acceptance. This is a process
 of letting go of the past and taking up a new direction in life.
- Talk about it with a family member or friend who has had a similar experience. Seek out other people who may be having the same experience right now (If you are a freshman in college, you can be assured there are others that feel the same). It takes strength to accept the fact that something is bothering you and to confront it.
- Bring familiar items from home to your new location. Photos, plants, even stuffed animals help create a sense of continuity and ease the shock of a new environment.
- Decide whether the best policy for you is to have frequent contact with home (because it makes you feel better) or little contact (because it makes you feel worse).
- Familiarize yourself with your new surroundings. Walk around. You will feel more in control if you know where buildings, classes, services, etc. are located.
- Invite people to explore your new surroundings with you. Making friends is a big step in alleviating homesickness.
- Establish a routine as soon as possible. The fuller your days are, the less free time you will have to feel homesick or lonely.
- Examine your expectations. We'd all like to be popular, out-going, well-adjusted, but we're not. Don't let setting your goals too high or being perfectionistic create more trouble for you. Remember you are learning. Laugh at your mistakes.
- Seek new opportunities. Seek out activities you are interested in where you might meet people that you would like. Remember there are other people out there experiencing the same feelings that you are.
- Write family and friends. This can help you feel connected. It is also comforting to receive mail and know that you
 are missed. You may want to keep a journal as well. This can be a good way to get your feelings out rather than
 just ruminating about them.
- Do something! Don't wait for homesickness to go away by itself. Trying to ignore it only increases the chances that it will resurface as fatigue, a cold, or a headache. If you feel none of your efforts are working, seek professional help.

Cabrini College's Office of Counseling and Psychological Services offers free counseling and referral service to all Cabrini students. Just call 610-902-8561 for an appointment or further information.