

ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE

Starting college brings exciting changes. Classes have started, and freshmen are adjusting to college and possibly to living away from home; their parents, to them being gone. Upperclassmen and their families are re-adjusting to the same. Resident students may be adjusting to new roommates. All these changes can be stressful and overwhelming.

Homesickness

Homesickness comes from missing that sense of security and belonging which most of us associate with home. But it's not just missing specific things about home, it's the lack of feeling a comfortable sense of belonging in a new place that leads to feeling homesick. From this perspective, it's easy to understand that while freshmen may be at the greatest risk, transfer students starting at a new school, returning students, and even commuters adjusting to a new environment can feel homesick too.

It's hard to receive sad phone calls asking to come home, and it's tempting to come to the rescue, but the best way to cope with homesickness is to tough it out. The more you can encourage your student to stay on campus the first few weeks of this semester, the easier it will be for her/him to fit in socially. Everyone is a little homesick at first, so everyone is eager to make new connections. If your student comes home during this time and misses that period where everyone is reaching out, it may be harder for her/him to make those connections later on, when other students have already begun to form friendships.

One good compromise, if possible, is to come to campus and take your student out for a meal, a movie or some other activity. It gives you both some together time, but allows your student to stay the night and connect with peers.

Living with Roommates

Living with a stranger can be intimidating, and if roommates don't become best friends it can be disappointing. Encourage students to address conflicts before they become crises and to express themselves respectfully when problems arise. Remind them that while their roommate may not be their best friend, it can still be a good living arrangement, and there are other students who will become good friends in time.

For Commuters

Fitting in can feel especially challenging for commuter students. Encourage commuter students to stay on campus between classes, study in common areas, join a club, and attend evening events. Remind them that Pitt Greensburg's student body is over 50% commuters – they are not alone! As with residents – the more commuter students stay on campus early on this semester, the more likely they are to develop a sense of belonging here.

If your students is having more difficulty with these adjustments than what is normal for him/her, please encourage a visit to the Counseling Center. Always feel free to contact the Counseling Center yourself with any concerns. We can discuss your individual situation and determine if additional assistance is appropriate.

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