

Parenting Tips for a Homesick College Student

According to the Jed Foundation, 94% of college students will experience homesickness in their first 10 weeks of college and many throughout different times of their education. Below are some tips to help support your child when they may be homesick:

1. Listen before trying to fix it.

When your student says, *"I hate it here. I want to come home,"* the instinct may be to reassure them or immediately offer solutions. Instead, try:

"That sounds really hard. I can understand why you're missing home. Tell me more about what you're finding difficult."

Sometimes being heard is more helpful than advice.

2. Normalize homesickness.

Remind them that missing home doesn't necessarily mean they chose the wrong college.

"You can love parts of college and still really miss home. Those two things can exist at the same time."

Avoid saying things like *"Everyone else is having fun"* or *"You just need to give it time."*

3. Encourage—not force—campus involvement.

Gently encourage them to do things that create opportunities for connection:

- Eat meals with someone rather than alone.
- Attend one club or campus event.
- Go to a residence hall activity.
- Talk to a roommate or classmate.
- Join an intramural sport or campus organization.
- Spend time in a common area rather than staying in their room.

One small connection can make a huge difference.

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4. Help them establish a routine.

Homesickness can become worse when students spend long periods alone in their room.

Encourage regular:

- Sleep
- Meals
- Exercise/movement
- Classes
- Study time
- Social activities
- Time outside

A predictable routine gives a sense of stability.

5. Be careful about coming home every weekend.

Going home can feel wonderful—and sometimes that's exactly what a student needs. But if they're leaving campus every weekend, they may have fewer opportunities to develop friendships and a sense of belonging there.

Instead of automatically saying “*Come home!*”, you might ask:

“Would going home this weekend help you recharge, or do you think staying on campus and trying something new might help you feel more connected?”

6. Don't make every phone call about how they're doing.

If every conversation starts with “*Are you okay? Are you making friends? Are you still homesick?*”, students can begin to feel monitored.

Talk about normal things, too. Send funny pictures, ask about a class, tell them what the dog did, share something from home, etc. **Let home continue to feel like a safe place—not a daily wellness check.**

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7. Send a little piece of home. ❤️

Care packages can be wonderful. Sometimes something as simple as “*Saw this and thought of you*” can make a student feel connected. Consider:

Consider:

- Favorite snacks
- A handwritten note
- Photos
- A favorite meal
- Something funny from home
- Their favorite coffee

8. Help them identify what they're actually missing.

“Homesick” can mean very different things. Ask: “What do you miss most about home?”

It might be:

- Family
- Friends
- A romantic partner
- Their pet
- Their bedroom
- Familiar routines
- Feeling known
- Their high school identity
- Having someone to eat with
- Feeling successful or competent

Once you know **what they're actually missing**, you can help address the underlying need.

One of the most important things parents can say:

“You don't have to decide right now whether you made the right choice. Let's just focus on getting through this week.”

Students experiencing homesickness can sometimes jump from “*I'm lonely tonight*” to “*I chose the wrong school and need to transfer.*” Help them avoid making a major decision while they're in the middle of an emotional low.

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9. When parents should encourage professional help.

- Depression or hopelessness
- Significant anxiety or panic
- Inability to attend classes
- Major changes in sleep or eating
- Isolation from everyone
- Frequent crying or emotional distress
- Substance misuse
- Statements such as *"I can't do this anymore"* or *"There's no point."*

Help is available at Grand View University at no cost to all students through peer support (other students who are trained and ready to support their peers), the counseling center on campus, or through telehealth. You can find more information at: Grandview.edu.

Due to confidentiality, a campus counselor cannot share information with parents. However, parents can share concerns with the counseling office and calls or emails are welcomed at the information below. Students can easily find direct scheduling options for counseling by going to MyGVU and typing in "counseling". MyGVU is only accessible to students (not parents).

A 24/7 crisis number is also available for students at 833-646-1526.

Heather Thomas, LISW, CADC (*she/her/hers*)

Director of Counseling Services

Office hours M-F 8am-4pm

515-263-2986

Student Life and Success Suite | Henning Student Center

HThomas@Grandview.edu