

## Homesickness Tips for Families

College can be an exciting experience for students. It can be a time of making lifelong friends; exploring new places, ideas, and identities and a time where students grow into their unique persona. Besides being challenged academically, one of the most significant hurdles to overcome is often the experience of homesickness.

Most students experience some degree of homesickness when they first arrive on campus. After some adjusting to the new environment, most will be enjoying this new phase of life. For others, however those feelings of missing family, friends, and the familiar environment of “home” may still be lingering. Often it can distract the individual from both the social and the academic opportunities of being a student at USF. Below are tips for you as family members on how to help your daughter or son combat a seemingly paralyzing sense of just not wanting to be at college and wanting to be back home.

### **Tips for families to help students deal with Homesickness:**

- **Tell your daughter/son/ sibling:** IT'S COMPLETELY NORMAL TO FEEL HOMESICK! And let them know: They are NOT ALONE! Explain that it is better to let him/she feel sad, miss family, friends, pets, etc. Writing in a journal can help and talking to a roommate or Resident's assistant can help curb the loneliness.
- **If the student wants to come home right away:** Explain that going home too soon could set up a precedent for going home more often than is practical or healthy for the college experience. He/she is setting him/herself up to have significantly fewer opportunities to meet new friends, maintain existing relationships, and be involved in extracurricular activities, all of which are vital to helping him/her adjust to college and feel like you are making USF your own. Try Skype! It is an exciting way to keep in touch!
- **Provide something from home.** Simple things like putting together a photo album, a recipe for their favorite meal, or a DVD with the family favorite can help in those moments when the longing is overwhelming. Provide some items from home. Decorating their room with things from home can help the student feel like he/she has brought a little bit of home into this new environment.
- Encourage the student to **get active and get involved!** There are opportunities to join clubs, campus organizations, or there are opportunities to volunteer off-campus...it is important that he or she puts him/herself in the position to meet new people while doing something that they intrinsically enjoy. Additionally, encourage physical activity. It is proven to raise endorphin levels, combatting feelings of sadness and it can provide additional opportunities to meet fellow students.
- **Encourage the student to explore the city!** Exploring is most fun when a few people get together and go see what this city has to offer. Taking advantage of the rich experiences can help to feel more connected to the new place and it is a great way to make new friends.
- If you feel that a little extra support is needed in implementing these tips, recommend making an appointment **at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**. The staff at CAPS is here to support students and help them to have an amazing college experience. Many clients leave a session saying “It helped to just talk about it.”

Of the points made above, one of the most important things to remind the student of is that [it is completely normal to feel homesick](#). Encourage him or her to take action and work through missing family and friends. Remind him/her that if he/she puts in the effort and takes some risks, the college experience can be one of the most transformative experiences of their lives!