

## September Article 2 – Homesickness Revisited

Now that we are a few weeks into the academic year here, we're starting to see a funny thing on campus in regards to homesickness. For many of our students, homesickness reached its peak during Orientation and the first few days of school, and by now they are experiencing a gradual to near complete decline in homesickness. According to the Patrick Bartos, Psy.D., a counselor in the Health Center, "It's common for us to see freshmen students at the counseling center during the first week of school for homesickness issues who report they no longer need counseling by the third week of school." For those students, settling into the "new routine" of college life has begun.

For other students, however, homesickness is only now just beginning to rear its head. This may be surprising to the student, and to you as the parent – you may question, if my daughter was fine a few weeks ago, why is she now beginning to be homesick? For these students, the initial excitement of Orientation and stimulation of new people, new classes, and in some ways, a new life, has worn off. Instead of a new routine helping to make the unfamiliar seem familiar (and hence calm anxiety), it instead just shows how different the new routine is from the old routine (and hence may increase anxiety). For these students, homesickness will also begin to gradually decrease over time; Patrick emphasizes that homesickness is "a normal experience and can come and go over the course of the fall semester. Usually students start to feel more 'at home' at college and no longer homesick once they return from a break, be it fall break or Christmas break."

So what should you as a parent do to help with your student's bouts with homesickness? It may come as no surprise, but the most important thing is to be supportive. Be available to listen, send care packages, and assure your student that these feelings are normal no matter when in the semester they pop up. However, it's also very important that you provide your students with encouragement to explore their new home here at UP. According to Patrick, "When freshmen are experiencing homesickness, their natural tendency is to use parents and friends from home as security blankets, which is normal and can be helpful, but if done too much can run the risk of prolonging homesickness and their adjustment to the new environment." So keep having those Skype sessions with your students as they experience homesickness – but don't be afraid to challenge them to join a club, attend a residence hall event, or say yes to an invitation to the Commons from a new acquaintance.

We also know getting those homesick emails and calls from your students isn't easy for you as a parent. If you'd like to let someone know what your student is experiencing and see what can be done to help, please feel free to call the Shepard Academic Resource Center at 503.943.7895 or email us at [sarc@up.edu](mailto:sarc@up.edu).