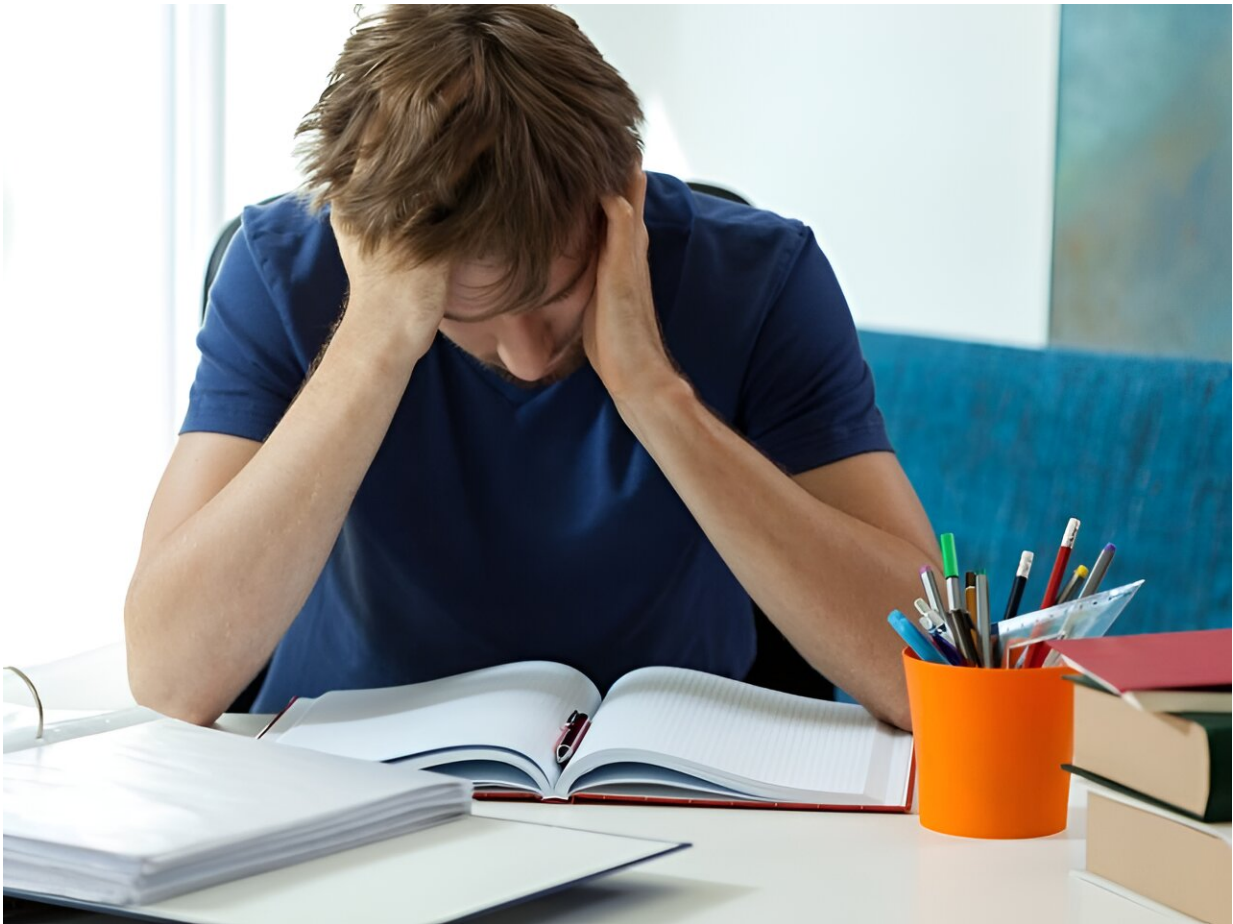


Homesickness is common for college freshmen: A psychologist offers tips to cope

September 4 2023, by Cara Murez



It can be hard for new college students, or those returning after summer

break, to be away from home.

Homesickness is a normal reaction. About 30% of all students and 70% of first-year students experience it. Though it can happen at any time, it's most common in the first few months away.

Stephanie Marcello, chief psychologist at Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care in New Brunswick, N.J., offers some suggestions for making it a little easier.

"Homesickness tends to decrease after the first semester, but how fast a person overcomes it varies," Marcello said in a Rutgers news release.

Physical signs can include disrupted sleep, lack of appetite, headaches, dizziness and increased risk of infection, especially gastrointestinal.

A student might be consumed with thoughts of home or returning home, feel pessimistic about their new environment or have difficulty concentrating.

Other signs are feelings of depression, anxiety, irritability, sadness or feeling isolated or alone.

Some people may be more prone to these feelings, including those with other stressors or a lack of social support.

Risk factors for feeling homesickness include the ability to warm up to new people and situations; whether a person wanted to move out from home; how friends and family back home are experiencing their move; and their overall attitude toward the experience. Expecting to feel homesick can bring on those feelings.

Marcello suggests that homesick students acknowledge their feelings and

don't stress out about controlling them.

"Remind yourself this is a common, normal experience for students leaving home for the first time," she said.

Talk to friends and family back home. But also focus on building new connections and [social relationships](#).

Figure out how to re-create what you miss at home, such as playing a sport that you've always loved.

Maintain an active, [healthy lifestyle](#) with new routines to get out of the dorm, eat healthily and exercise.

Talk to someone about your feelings.

Don't miss class, stay in your room or skip campus events. Do get involved.

Parents and roommates can help by urging [students](#) they suspect are homesick to get involved. Remind them about what they enjoy at home. Offer suggestions for how they might create some of these activities on campus.

Support them, but don't encourage them to go home too often, Marcello said.

"Homesickness can lead to depression. Pay attention if you notice the [homesickness](#) is affecting their [daily life](#). If a student remains disconnected, rejects opportunities to meet people and if the above-mentioned symptoms persist, reach out to a professional for help," Marcello said.

More information: The American Psychological Association has more on [college mental health](#).

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