

SYBIL HOLLOWAY

Coping with change

You're getting ready to leave home for the first time or have transferred to a new school and are feeling a bit unsettled — and sad.

It is finally hitting you that you will soon be in an unfamiliar environment and are uncertain about what the future holds.

Feelings of being overwhelmed, confused, stressed, and depressed begin to emerge if they haven't already prior to coming to campus. Relocation is hard for lots of people — even adults — but it can be particularly difficult for the adolescent college student for whom this may be the first significant chunk of time away from parents, siblings, extended family, friends, romantic partners, co-workers, pets, and others who were once a part of your daily life.

Now you're here, at college, and may feel sad, scared, and somewhat alone.

There may be so many feelings that you are having trouble sorting them all out. You are trying to adjust to this major transition in your life.

Realize that much of this is normal and to be expected. Also realize that you are not alone. There are many other new students who are going through the same adjustment process.

So, how will you get through this? Adjustment is a process that will take some time, but there are several things you can do to ease the transition and cope effectively.

First, accept the reality of the situation and acknowledge your feelings (writing in a journal may help). Then, engage in activities that help you adapt to your new environment, stay connected to your old environment, and promote good health.

Seek out new friendships with dormmates, classmates, and other peers.

Also consider joining clubs of interest and getting involved in activities on campus and in the surrounding community.

The more you immerse yourself in your new environment, the easier the transition will be.

Think of how you adjusted to and survived your first day of school as a youngster, a junior high student, and a high school student. You've been through similar processes before.

The major difference is that now you lack the comfort and security of a familiar home and familiar faces. Establish connections on campus and decorate your living space to reflect your personality and create "homey" surroundings.

Maintaining relationships with loved ones is extremely important.

These individuals care about you and are an important aspect of your social support network.

They are there for you now and they will be there for you even after you graduate and go on with the rest of your life.

While the nature of these relationships will change as you continue to change, grow, and develop more independence it is worthwhile to continue these long-term connections and not let

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them fall by the wayside. Find time to phone, write, or visit.

With the abundance of computers on campuses and the great interest in technology, many students are finding e-mail and instant messaging to be very convenient and low-cost ways to stay in touch with family and friends.

Good health is essential for making a smooth transition and setting the stage for academic success.

The course work in college is time-consuming and demanding so the sooner you can adjust to being away from home the sooner you can place more emphasis on your studies.

