Coping with Homesickness

Many students coming to university, and maybe leaving home for the first time, feel homesick. Even those who didn’t ever expect to be hit by homesickness can suddenly find themselves missing the familiarity of home and friends, and don’t know quite how to cope with the resulting emotions. This is entirely normal and passes, usually in the first term, and often within the first few weeks.

It is really important to realise that you are not the only one feeling homesick and that it doesn’t in any way mean you are inadequate. Suddenly, you find that, instead of being a central person in a small unit with plenty of peripheral activities and friends, you have become an anonymous member of a twenty five thousand plus community, where you know no-one. Understandably you feel shaken and lonely and you long for the secure and the familiar. Sometimes the emotions can feel completely overwhelming.

What Can You Do to Help Yourself?

- Most importantly: acknowledge your feelings and accept them. Believe that they will pass. They almost always do.
- Decide whether the best policy for you is to have frequent contact with home (because contact makes you feel better), or little contact (because contact makes you feel worse). Think carefully about whether or not to go home at weekends (if this is possible). Some students find it helps to ease the transition; others find the constant readjustment makes them feel worse.
- Make your room “your own” as soon as possible. Think about displaying some photographs of special people, places or pets. Bring or buy a couple of mugs so you can invite new friends/neighbours in for a drink. If you’re in shared accommodation, make use of any communal areas, or while you are in your room, prop the door open to welcome new neighbours.
- Try to establish a routine as soon as possible. The fuller your days are, the less time you will have to feel homesick or lonely.
- Familiarise yourself with the Student Union. Apart from all that it offers it is an excellent way to meet people in the early days before lectures and social events are really underway. Take a book and sit in a corner and read if you are afraid of seeming conspicuous.
- Make a real effort to join societies/activities and to make at least one or two friends. This might feel very difficult, but the more you feel part of campus life, the less homesick you will feel.
- Volunteer to help with something. There are plenty of groups looking for volunteers. The Student Union will put you in touch with them, if you tell them you are looking for ways to get involved.
- Get to know a few people well by spending some significant experiences with them, for instance an all-day shopping and movie together, rather than meeting a lot of people only once at parties.

Getting Involved

The Fringe is a line-up of alternative events and activities to kick start the year. These events will be welcoming and friendly with lots of student assistants to help you get involved.  
http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/the-fringe

One World Café is a weekly event where you can meet new people from all around the world! 
http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/international/globalcampus/owc

Sheffield Volunteering helps staff and students at the University of Sheffield to find the perfect volunteering opportunity within our city.  http://www.shef.ac.uk/union/get-involved/volunteering/

Give it a Go is full of activities for you to try while you are a student here in Sheffield. It gives you the chance to try new things, meet new people, learn new skills and visit different places.  
http://www.shef.ac.uk/union/get-involved/give-it-a-go/

Remember, if it doesn’t get better in a few weeks, think about registering with us again, for an appointment with a counsellor http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling/register, you’d be very welcome.