

Separation Anxiety & Loneliness

One of the most difficult and challenging aspects of starting college is the process of leaving your family and friends behind and having to create a new social network. Some of the interpersonal issues that students encounter as they make the transition from home to college are:

Separation Anxiety

Even if you have been looking forward to coming to college wholeheartedly and with no apprehension, it is not unusual to feel somewhat anxious and uncomfortable once you are actually here. Particularly if you have never been away from home before for any extended period of time, you may find the prospect of not seeing your family and friends for several weeks to be somewhat scary.

Some Strategies for Coping:

- Be assured that separation anxiety always passes eventually, no matter how intense these feelings may be. If you allow yourself to get involved with campus life, they will naturally diminish over time.
- Sometimes it helps to talk about the uncomfortable feelings you are having. Speak to your Resident Assistant, Resident Director, or a friend in order to get support and reassurance.
- If your feelings of anxiety are very intense, consider calling the Counseling or Health Center.

Loneliness and/or Loss of Social Status

Even if you had a lot of friends in high school, unless several of them have come to college with you, it is inevitable that you will go through a period of feeling lonely. Loneliness can be a painful feeling that something is missing from your life or that you feel disconnected from friends and family. Similarly, you may have been very popular and involved in high school, which afforded you a great deal of social status. Sometimes, starting over in a new environment makes you feel as if you have lost that status and that you have to start all over again from the bottom of the social ladder.

Some Strategies for Coping:

- Know that experiencing feelings of loneliness is perfectly normal and to be expected while you are going through a period of change. In addition, being alone for awhile and having to cope with that can be a positive challenge that leads to personal growth and greater self-confidence.
- Don't send yourself negative and self-critical messages about your loneliness and/or loss of social status. There is nothing wrong with you; you are simply going through a transition in which you can and will meet new people eventually.
- Remind yourself that you have met new people and created a social network before and that you will certainly be able to do so again.

Source: Iona College Counseling Center