

Adjusting to a New Environment

Starting or leaving college can create different emotional reactions from everyone. Any new environment can lead to anxiety around what to expect and having to learn how to navigate new places and requirements. You are not expected to have all the answers. Relying on others for support during any life changes, will assist in managing newness and emotional reactions.

Students have expectations about college life long before they leave home or when transferring to a new school. Some look forward to college or leaving college, eager to experience more freedom and adventure. Others may be enthusiastic initially but then find that the experience falls short of their expectations when they don't feel happy, comfortable, or secure in their new environment. Nearly every student encounters obstacles they didn't anticipate during transitions. Even positive life changes produce stress, and certainly the changes leaving an environment you enjoyed and new demands can lead to feelings of sadness, loneliness and worry. These feelings are typical and part of the transition to any new environment. Here are some tips to manage the transition:

1. **Stay engaged.** Take part in college activities or first year experiences to build your connection to your new life on campus and make new friends. If leaving college, seek information for new professionals within the city or work environments you are transitioning in to.
2. **Establish a personal routine.** Finding your rhythm and keeping each day as consistent as you can will help you get rest and feel more relaxed in your new role. If you are someone who goes to bed early and everyone's staying up late, it's OK to go to bed early.
3. **Talk to someone.** Seek out people who either understand what you're going through or have similar feelings. There is probably a student group on campus or community organizations that are full of people who share your interests and/or background and have felt how you feel.
4. **Explore.** Look online for new places nearby to check out, or just go for a walk. Asking others about their favorite places to eat or hang out is a great icebreaker, too.
5. **Move.** Even just a 20-minute walk can improve your mood, reduce anxiety, and help you connect to your new environment.
6. **Refrain from comparing yourself to other people.** It's tempting to assume that you're the only one struggling with adjusting to college life or beyond, but beware of comparing your internal experiences to others' external appearances. Lots of people find college challenging, but not everyone talks about it.
7. **Consider utilizing counseling services.** If your concerns are starting to interfere with your ability to live, laugh, love and learn, it may help to talk to a professional. CAPS is here to help. Call 570-422-3277 to schedule an appointment. If you have graduated check *Psychology Today* for local providers or contact your health insurance provider to get a list of therapists in your area.

Handouts/Websites

Adjusting to College Pamphlet
First Generation College Students Pamphlet
Cross Cultural Journey for International Students Pamphlet
Center for First Generation College Students
Adapting to Change Tips
10 Tips for Adjusting to New Surroundings
For Students: Getting Ready for College
For Students: Transitioning Out of College
For Families: Helping Your Student Get Ready for College
For Families: Providing Support After College
Set to Go: Jed Foundation Transitioning Program

Podcasts/Videos

Podcast: Adjusting to College Life
Podcast: Collegehood Advice
TED Talk: Freeman Hrabowski, “Four Pillars of College Success in Science”
TED Talk: Michelle Jones, “How to do College Better”
TED Talk: Kurt Clements, “Senior in College, Freshman in Life”

Books

The Freshman Survival Guide, by Nora Bradbury-Haehl, Bill McGarvey
The Naked Roommate and 107 Other Issues you might run into in College, by Harlan Cohen
They're Ready. Are You?: A Parent's Guide to Surviving the College Transition, by Liz Yokubison
How to College: What to know before you go and while you are there, by Andrea Malkin Brenner & Lara Hope Schwartz
Five for your First Five: Own your Career and Life After College, by Allison E. McWilliams, Lauren R. Beam, & Nathan O. Hatch

Apps

