

Beating Home Sickness and Settling in

A terrible cliché:

Now this is the one that you've been told a million times. As it's Durham, you're starting late and I could bet that for the last few weeks your Facebook has been plastered with pretty intimidating photos of your friends' Freshers' weeks. Seeing them living it up and always surrounded by people doesn't mean that they too aren't secretly missing their parents and pining for their Nan's cooking. The story is the same in Durham, too. As much as this phrase is a cliché, it really is true: *everybody is in the same boat*. But it takes talking to your friends about Freshers' later in the term to really appreciate this. Most people haven't been away from their parents for this long either so feeling a little lost doesn't mean that you're doing Freshers' *wrong*. Try not to feel as though just because you don't immediately love everything and everyone, that it's just you. It might take a little time but honestly the awkward missing-everything-about-home phase fades pretty fast.

Getting busy whilst here:

Homesickness tends to creep in when we're not doing much; it's easy to feel lonely when you're stuck in your new room! This is where Freshers' week becomes the perfect way to fight off homesickness. In Freshers' week there is always something going on, from the poster fares to nights out to signing up to a few societies is a pretty good way to keep yourself busy. Don't worry about there not being an activity that interests you. For starters, there are just so many clubs and societies in Aidan's (and Durham as a whole) that you will find something suitable. In the case you don't find your perfect fit, you can start your own society! For example, the 2015 Freshers' started groups like the Disney Society and Middle Earth Society. Alternatively, if you're someone who likes to just sit around and chill, our JCR is ready made for that. You can always play pool, table tennis, board games, video games, or literally just sit in the comfortable bean bags. The shop is a fountain of joy providing toasties (toasted sandwiches), sweets and games. Music sessions and quizzes in the JCR, corridor and bar games, and nights out will ensure you have plenty to do in college.

Another good idea might be to explore Durham. There's always the Durham Cathedral and Castle, the Botanical Gardens, and plenty of warm and cosy cafés and nice eateries.

Not so many four hour skype calls: Less FaceTime, more face time

When you're homesick it might be tempting to spend a lot of your free time on the phone or video chatting with your parents. But, whilst this might seem tempting, all this time spent in this way might actually stop you from making new friends. It may be comforting but the more time you can spend with the people around you the easier it is to settle in; don't let what you've left behind hold you back. A good idea might be to arrange a time to go home a few weeks after Freshers' week or even just arranging a planned activity in the holidays. However, we understand that going back frequently may not be possible for some students. Perhaps you can reach a compromise here; weekly skype calls back home, to family and friends, could help you

strike the (near) perfect balance between staying in touch with loved ones and getting used to your new life.

A good idea for internationals might be to join Aidan's International Society, and/or the many different international societies in Durham, such as the Indian, Chinese, Spanish (etc.) societies. Meeting people from the same country, sharing the same customs and traditions and foods(!) is a great way to feel settled here.

Not feeling guilty:

Now this is a little bit of a strange one, but it's one that quite a few people mention feeling in Freshers' week. This is the odd feeling of guilt for *not* feeling so homesick. Remember that this is a very normal feeling, especially if you expected to feel very homesick and have actually very quickly become caught up in Aidan's life! Remember that your loved ones want you to have fun and will only be glad that you're having such a great time! Maybe just remember that odd text to them to fight off the classic "they could be dead in a ditch!" mother worry. If you've reached this stage, it's safe to say that you've actually settled in well and found your feet, and are on the way to a great first year at Durham.

Coming to us:

As part of a collegiate system we're lucky enough to have truly excellent pastoral care. And I'm not just saying that because I'm part of the best welfare team. We've all experienced that tedious lull in conversation after having established what subject others do and where they're from. Talking to any of us on the Welfare Team about homesickness and settling in doesn't have to be reserved for big occasions. Welfare is here whether it's for the big problems or as an outlet for the smaller worries. From missing your parents to talking over your Freshers' antics we're always here. After all, with nobody to come to see us our welfare hours would get very lonely. We mean it; if you just want a conversation about anything under the (lack of) sun, we're happy to sit and chat as well! Talk about college potatoes if you want, we'd love for you to come and see us. (We've got tea and biscuits. 'nuff said.)

We've been where you've been. We know that feeling of freefall right before coming to Uni, fretting over what to take and what not to take, worrying over forming a good first impression, stressing over whether we'll be fed properly or not, being anxious about leaving home and diving into this vast ocean of independence and *change*, so when we say Everything Will Be Alright, we're not just quoting Bob Marley. We're there to hold your hand as you find your way around here (excuse the pun), and will be as present through the year as the 85 stairs to Aidan's / Heaven.

It won't be long until you refer to Durham as "home" and your parents threaten to disinherit you. Have a wonderful summer. We'll see you in Freshers'.

Welfare loving.