

# IDENTIFYING HOMESICKNESS

## WHAT IS HOMESICKNESS?

*Homesickness is a psychological reaction to the absence of significant others and familiar surroundings (Archer et al, 1998).*

MAP-Works identifies homesickness by the degree to which students respond to the following criteria:

- (Separation)**: Missing family back home, missing old friends or significant others who do not attend ISU
- (Distress)**: Regret leaving home to go to school, think about going home all the time, feel an obligation to be at home, feel that attending college is pulling you away from your community at home.

## MAP-Works Data

- ◆ Over 70% of ISU first-year students reported feeling moderate to extreme levels of homesickness (ISU 2012)
- ◆ Those who felt 'Homesick Related Distress' were 11% less likely to persist to the Spring semester than those who were not feeling distressed (National 2010)
- ◆ Those who felt 'Homesick Related Distress' also had a G.P.A. which averaged .21 less than those who were not distressed (National 2010)
- ◆ We have twice the number of distressed homesick students at ISU as the national average (National 2010)

## Identifying Homesickness

Feelings of homesickness can happen at any time, but significant stressors and breaks can result in peak periods.

At ISU, this includes events such as Family Weekend, Mid-Terms, Homecoming, Fall Break, and Finals.

### *Symptoms:*

- ◆ Yearning to go home
- ◆ Constant loneliness
- ◆ Feeling sad for no apparent reason
- ◆ No motivation or confidence
- ◆ Depressive thoughts
- ◆ Frequent mood swings
- ◆ Simple tasks seem challenging

### *These Symptoms Can Lead To:*

- ◆ Physical changes
- ◆ Academic changes
- ◆ Anxiety
- ◆ Lack of motivation
- ◆ Doubt of belonging at college
- ◆ Emotional changes
- ◆ Social isolation/concerns  
i.e. no feeling of belonging, not connected, etc.

## When Stress Becomes Distress

Homesickness is a normal part of transitioning to college life, but severe changes can negatively impact student behaviors and attitudes. Some identifying characteristics that a student might be distressed are:

- ◆ Significant academic changes
  - ◆ Poor academic performance
  - ◆ Changes in attitude towards class, or in class
  - ◆ Absent for class
  - ◆ Late to class
  - ◆ Ready to drop out of school
- ◆ Trouble focusing
- ◆ Expressed unhappiness
- ◆ Change in sleep habits
- ◆ Behavioral Changes
  - ◆ Attention-causing actions
  - ◆ No concern for well-being

## Places to Refer

- ◆ **Residence Hall Association**  
(Cromwell Hall Mezzanine, x4286)
- ◆ **Union Board/Student Activities**  
(HMSU 521, x3830)
- ◆ **Intramural Sports**  
(Student Recreation Center, x4095)
- ◆ **Student Organizations**  
(HMSU 615, x3820)
- ◆ **Fraternity & Sorority Life**  
(HMSU 608, x3852)
- ◆ **Student Counseling Center**  
(3rd floor, Student Services Building, x3939)
- ◆ **Student Advocate/Ombudsperson**  
(Al Perone, HMSU 814, x3829)
- ◆ **Residential Life Staff**  
(Rhoads/Mills Lower Level, x3993)

## What YOU Can Do

- ◆ Listen and show you care
- ◆ Create a welcoming environment
- ◆ Invite them to campus activities or to lunch
- ◆ Let them know it's ok to be sad every now and then
- ◆ Connect them with other students with similar interests
- ◆ Encourage them to join a student organization
- ◆ Refer them to the Student Counseling Center
- ◆ Encourage them to stay on campus on the weekends
- ◆ Keep an eye on them—follow up