

HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness is a normal reaction for some students as they grapple with the issue of separation. It usually affects those who are away from home for the very first time. At Avon, we work hard to make every new student feel at home. Faculty advisors and student monitors help to provide a friendly face and a listening ear during the first few days and weeks of school, and most students respond by developing friendships and exploring interests which quickly make them feel a part of the Old Farms community.

Inevitably, despite our best efforts, a few boys find themselves homesick. How can you tell if your son is homesick? Usually, the first sign is frequent phone calls. A homesick boy may call home as many as two to three times a day, usually with a variety of minor complaints or problems—no friends, nothing to do on weekends, need to change room. School food frequently heads the list. It is our experience that these complaints are merely an excuse to make contact with home (although we are certainly aware that real problems can and do develop and must be dealt with accordingly).

If you begin to suspect that your son is homesick, you should know that your response could make a tremendous difference. For many parents, the most appropriate form of support may run counter to your initial instincts. First, help your son to realize that he must face the situation head on. Encourage him to work through each problem or difficulty and to keep as busy as he can with a variety of activities.

At the same time, we feel that it is important for parents to discourage repeated phone calls, perhaps by pre-arranging a specific calling time each week. It is also our experience that allowing your son to come home, or visiting the campus yourself during this initial adjustment phase can frequently exacerbate or prolong a case of homesickness. Ultimately, the best way for you to show your love and support for your son in this situation is to convince him that he is the one, ultimately, who must learn to face the situation and adjust to his new environment.

You might wish to discuss the possibility of homesickness with your son before he comes to school, assuring him of your support and outlining to him steps he can take to prevent homesickness or minimize it.

If your son is homesick, learning to deal with it now may be one of the most important lessons he will learn in life. And while you may be tempted to take control of the situation and assent to his desire to come home, we would caution against this path. Homesickness, when not dealt with properly, usually rears its head again later in life, and is then that much more difficult to confront and overcome.

For the vast majority of students, homesickness is not a major issue. For those few that do experience significant homesickness, be assured that it is completely curable. In some cases, a “relapse” of sorts can occur following a major vacation, and we would encourage you to handle such a situation with your continued firm support.