

Transitions

Starting university, whether for the first time or for a new academic year, represents a time of transition or change. This time can be exciting and full of possibilities as well as some challenges. Transitioning to university can mean experiencing a number of differences that may require making adjustments as you adapt to a new environment.

Adjustments You May Experience Transitioning to University

New environment/geography

New living situation

Not knowing people/new people

More independence

Different food

New routine

Leaving family, friends, pets

Fitting in/belonging

Long-distance relationships

Cultural differences

Different academic culture

Homesickness

Feelings Related to Adjusting During Times of Transition

Sadness

Loneliness

Nervousness

Overwhelmed

Insecurity

Excitement

Hopeful

Uncertain

Anxious

Happy

University Transition Tips

1. Familiarize yourself with your surroundings: this will help you to feel more comfortable and settled in.
2. Bring familiar items with you from home: having comforting items familiar from home can serve as a bridge to so many new and unfamiliar surroundings.
3. Be open to new experiences: try to avoid of openness to your new surroundings and find things you can appreciate even if they are different.
4. At the same time, you may want to table other big life changes if possible so that you are not overwhelming yourself with too much change at once.
5. Realize you are not alone: others are also transitioning and adjusting as well, whether as a first time student or returning student to a new year.
6. Explore activities: MSU and the Bozeman community has a lot of opportunities available; explore and attend different clubs and organizations that pique your interest.
7. Invite others along on your explorations: getting to know and connecting with others can help with feelings of loneliness and build a sense of belonging. Inviting classmates, roommates, etc. to explore new activities, clubs, places, etc. with you can be a great way to initiate new connections and community.
8. Stay in touch with already established relationships: keep in touch with family and friends whether via phone, Skype, text, or Facebook.
9. Make plans to visit home: finding a balance in visiting home and spending time in your new community can take some time, but a trip home can be something to look forward to and may ease some feelings of homesickness.
10. Give permission to experience your feelings: having some time to attend to your reactions and feelings to this time of transition can be helpful so that you don't become overwhelmed by stored up emotion. Expressing your feelings can take many forms: talking to someone you trust, journaling, writing poetry, singing, drawing, beading, painting, praying, etc.
11. Give yourself time: transitions are a process of change that occur over time. Allowing yourself to have the time to adjust through utilizing some of these tips can aid in alleviating some of the pressure and stress that sometimes accompanies change.

Signals To Seek Additional Support

If you continue to struggle in your transition to MSU and these tips do not feel like they are sufficient, you may need additional support. Some signs to look out for:

Intense or long-lasting sadness/depression

Frequent nervousness or social anxiety

Low energy or motivation

Trouble sleeping

Increases or decreases in appetite

Feeling like you just "don't care" about anything

Having difficulty attending class

Not completing assignments

Increased drug or alcohol use

Suicidal thoughts

Lack of interest or involvement in new surroundings

If you experience any of these warning signs or just feel like you are not adjusting as much as you would like to, it may be helpful to talk to someone. Talking to friends, family, an RA, or someone from NAS may be a good starting point. If you think you need something more, you can receive free and confidential counseling services at **Counseling & Psychological Services (CPS)**. To schedule an appointment, you can call **994-4531** or stop by at **211 Swingle** (above Student Health Services).

