

'I followed my dream and now I feel homesick! What is wrong?'

YOU DID NOT MAKE A MISTAKE, you are adjusting.

Adjusting to a new environment can be quite overwhelming and although you consider yourself adventurous and flexible it is important to realise that homesickness is a normal emotion and there's no need to feel embarrassed about it.

When you decide to emigrate you often raise expectations from yourself and from others, this can cause feelings of failure when you become a bit overwhelmed. That is contra-productive.

It is much better to look at what you are feeling with kindness towards yourself.

Be patient with yourself and others. This does take time.

During the initial phase, people are captivated by the new culture, the people, the natural beauty of the country and the buzz of the new job. The thrill of excitement to explore every new part of a completely new life can be exhilarating.

Very similar to the honeymoon phase.

When reality strikes, it tends to hit from all directions at once. In this stage it is quite normal to feel uneasy and irritable. It is important to understand that this is a very common reaction.

It doesn't really matter if you are relocating to the other side of the world in a new culture or just move houses to another city of your home country. It can be just as unsettling.

Try not to panic, it is a symptom of you adjusting to your new environment.

We are all creatures of habit. Our food, the way we go about our day, the way we communicate, the cultural norms, how we get things done, the way we switch on the stove... all these things are routines. We don't have to think about them because we have been doing it in the same way forever. When one of those things changes it can be a bit disruptive but when all of that changes it can be quite overwhelming. This makes us long for the comfort of what we have known all your life. We are homesick.

Stay connected.

These days it is easy to connect with the homefront.

Set up meetings on a regular basis. Talk regularly to close friends so you don't feel left out when something important happens in their life like a birth or an engagement. The pandemic has thought us how celebrate from a distance.

Share photos and experiences with your friends from home. Photos are a great way to explore your new surroundings and to familiarize yourself with them and recognise them as your new home.

Seeing your surroundings through a lens can you appreciate why you came in the first place, and it will help your friends and family understand it too.

It can help to bring some comfort of home with you, a specific scented candle, a cosy blanket, a photo of your friends anything

Allow yourself the time to establish new routines.

Rebuilding your sense of control often takes some time. In the meantime acknowledge your accomplishments, no matter how small they may seem.

Vocalise them to your new friends, you will see that they have gone through the same.

Try to look at it from a bigger perspective.

Don't take the feeling too seriously,

When you start realizing that what you are experiencing is completely normal and every ex-pat has had these emotions, you will be able to look at it in a more positive way. This will pass.

When you give in to the negative feeling and begin to think you are the only one going through this, you will wrongly start blaming the environment for what you feel.

Find your tribe

When relocating to a new country, you might feel you don't fit in because of language or cultural differences. Being the new kid on the block can also feel quite isolating. A good way to tackle that is to engage with other ex-pats, whether they are from your home country or elsewhere you are all in the same boat.. Making friends within an ex-pat community is often easier than in your home country, as people are eager to connect with like-minded people.

Join a sportclub, find a bookclub, maybe now is a good time to take those photography lessons you always wanted to do?

Social media can be a good platform to find like-minded people and clubs.

Accept invitations, show interest in other peoples experiences, you'll see it will open many doors.

Engage beyond the expat community.

Remember why you came here. A big part of that was because you know you are curious about other cultures.

Embrace the adventure. Ask questions about your new country, show interest, talk to your colleagues, have fun with local cuisine...

This will help you understand the culture better, to see things through the eyes of the local community. Not speaking the local language can make you anxious of being misunderstood. Getting involved will help you navigate the non-verbal communication of the culture you are now part of. You will learn to understand subtle values and norms much easier.

My last advise to you is

REMIND YOURSELF WHY.

Write down the five main reasons why you want to go on this adventure to keep you reminded of your initial goals and dreams.

Allow yourself all the TIME you need. Keep going, you will be fine.

Be kind with yourself and others.

The rewards are plenty

Nathalie