

### Start of college life: how I coped with fear

For the last two years I've been working really hard to pass all my exams successfully and to get accepted to college. And yet college seemed to be the scariest thing that I could think of. Whenever I thought about it, my stomach would immediately begin to spin in circles. Although I was ready to go off and be by myself and meet new people, I was scared to death at the same time. I pictured hard classes that I wouldn't be able to keep up with, people that wouldn't like me, long hikes to get to my classes, and horrible food. I couldn't imagine leaving the security of my own room, my own stuff where I want it, my friends that I've spent practically my whole life with, my family who put up with all my little quirks.

Everyone else that I talked to, however, didn't seem to have this problem. They all were thrilled at the thought of being on their own and not having to worry about their parents telling them what to do or not to do all the time. And, sure, the thought was extremely exciting to me as well, but how would I survive without my family and friends and the things that had taken me eighteen years to get used to?

The summer before I came to college was probably the most fun my friends and I ever had. We all knew that in September things would never be the same again and we had to make the most of it while we still could. As the end of August rolled around we knew that it was time to say goodbye and be on our way to our own independence. I packed up the memories of the last eighteen years of my life into about five suitcases and was ready to go. I still didn't feel like I was just as mature as my older college friends and I thought that I still looked like I was twelve years old.

We finally made it to the doors and began unloading my clothes and the eight million bags of food that my mom had packed for me. I still was unsure about sharing my room and not being able to have the privacy that I had back home. I was worried that the little habits that I had might annoy my roommate and that my roommate might have just as many annoying little habits that I might not be able to handle as well.

After I had all my things unpacked and put exactly where I wanted, my roommate and I decided to go around our hall and see whom we would be living with for the next two semesters. As we went around to different rooms and met different people my nervousness seemed to diminish. I began to realize that not everyone here knew everyone else and most were just as anxious and nervous about being here as I was. It worked. I started to feel better and was actually kind of excited about living here all by myself.

I still miss the security of living at home (and I wonder who would blame me for this feeling) and, most of all, home-cooked meals that are nonexistent here and the friends that I grew up with. But I know that we've all changed and those memories are just that — memories, no matter how pleasant they might be. And when times get too tough, my mom is just a phone call away. But I'm not too quick to call her and have her solve my problems. I've learned that I can usually work things out by myself. I'm glad that I've gone through these changes in myself and it makes me realize that I don't need to fear change, that it's just a part of life that everyone has to go through sometime.

What does the word "nonexistent" refer to in the last paragraph?

1. Home meals.
2. College security.
3. Memories.
4. Old friends.