

Lifestyles

Catherine Cojocar: 'Home becomes more than just the house'

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As I and millions of other incoming college freshmen prepare to leave our hometowns this fall, we have many things to do and consider.



There are placement tests to take, schedules to finalize, dorm supplies to buy, and we have to figure out how to arrange our lives into the very small space that is half of a dorm room. Banks and credit unions solicit us, countless back-to-school sales call for our attention, and we are ever-aware of the news stories circulating about how tuition rates are climbing, along with the unemployment rate.

But despite this flurry of excitement about the beginning of our new chapter of life, doubt can creep into our minds, particularly late at night.

One specific, common fear among new college students is becoming homesick. Moving away can be scary, especially if one's university or college is out of state, and if one has never moved before.

But what does "home" really mean?

This past year, I had the privilege of interviewing one of my favorite teachers for my high school's news magazine. One question I posed was to ask her favorite book, as she teaches literature. Her favorite classic novel is Homer's "Odyssey."

"It examines what it really means to be home," she explained. "Because I have lived in so many places,

home becomes more than just the house."

I mention this quote here because it has stuck with me. As someone who already moved many miles away from her hometown, and is planning to do so again in a week, the concepts of home and "feeling at home" are important to me. And I'm sure that many college freshmen and their families wish there was a way to hold on a little bit longer.

So what is there to do? It is the truth that some things must end when others begin, but that doesn't mean that we can't be sustained differently. And while according to Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros, "Home is wherever I'm with you," the definition of "home" can be debated.

Home can be found when you're walking to class and a certain song comes up on shuffle that reminds you of a musical in which you participated. Home is in your mother's voice when she calls to see how your first day of class went.

The smell of a favorite food in a dining hall, a friend's smile during a Skype chat, the first snowfall on campus — all of these can feel like home. When you're by yourself in a student lounge, anxiously watching your peers mingle and laugh, desperately wanting to join them but still holding back, and someone notices your hesitance and asks you to come over — then you will begin to realize, that yes, you can indeed "bloom where you're planted."

Catherine Cojocar graduated from Lourdes High School last month. To respond to an opinion column, send an email to life@postbulletin.com