



rwtech.com

## HOMESICKNESS: THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

<http://www.hablemos.samhsa.gov/new/homesick.aspx>

Living in the United States is a blessing for people from all over the world. However, even with all of our blessings, the holidays can make us miss the special customs and traditions of our homelands. We miss the familiarity of our local tienditas and tortillerias, the warm and loving homes of our familias, the delicious holiday foods, homemade hot chocolate, and unique beverages. Most of all, we miss the calor humano that comes from being surrounded by Latino people.

People who immigrate to the United States can experience culture shock, feel homesick, or become depressed because of the drastic change in lifestyle. It can be traumatic to leave close family members and friends. Learning another language, developing relationships, communicating effectively, and adapting to a new environment can be overwhelming. Many immigrants speak little or no English when they arrive in the United States, and this is usually the first challenge they must overcome. Other challenges include adapting to the culture and systems in the United States, and maintaining family customs while living in a society that places so much importance on obtaining individual goals.

The good news is that you're not alone. There currently are an estimated 35 to 40 million Latinos living in the United States. As the Latino population in the United States continues to grow, local governments and organizations are addressing language and cultural barriers by sponsoring training and events promoting cultural diversity, translating materials into Spanish, and hiring employees who speak the language.

### Here are some things you can do to help yourself and others through this transition:

**Talk the talk.** One of the most empowering steps for anyone who moves to a new country is to learn the language. This enables you to maneuver the systems like a native and also comes in handy when helping your children with homework and other school matters. Check with your local community center, community college, police department, or school for English as a second language (ESOL) classes. Some communities have "parent centers" that give parents access to English learning resources such as the Internet. You also can trade knowledge—teach someone Spanish and have them teach you English!

One important thing to remember is to never compare yourself to anyone else, especially your children. Learning a new language is an individual experience and everyone learns at

**[www.ParentingInformation.org](http://www.ParentingInformation.org)  
[www.InformacionParaPadres.org](http://www.InformacionParaPadres.org) [www.mhatexas.org](http://www.mhatexas.org) • [www.txpat.org](http://www.txpat.org)**



## Mental Health Association in Texas

---

different rates. Children tend to have greater ease in picking up new languages. Also, though learning English is very important, do not lose your traditional language. Having a good command of Spanish will be invaluable to you and your children's future opportunities in the job market. It is well worth the effort to raise your children bilingual.

**Meet the people in your community.** Attending community events and celebrations is a good way to make new friends. Create a support network of amigas who share the same interests as you. You'd be surprised at how much you have in common with other newly arrived families—no matter which countries they came from.

**Find things that are familia.** Sometimes having a local panaderia, tiendita, or libreria where they sell all the Latino goodies that you miss makes a big difference. Look for your favorite telenovelas on TV and invite some friends over to watch them with you.

**Get involved in your children's school.** Meet their teachers; join the PTA. This is the perfect way to help your children's transition, as well as your own. Never underestimate the power of a parent!

**Sign up to help a cause.** Schools and community organizations always are looking for motivated people to help them in their work. This is a great way to meet people with whom you have something in common. You can offer your bilingual services to charities, organization, schools, or community centers.

**Keep your hobbies.** Don't give up what you love the most! If you love to read, sew, or paint, find ways in which you can keep on doing the things that give you the most pleasure and satisfaction.

**Stay Active.** Don't forget to exercise. Sports are a great way to meet people (not to mention stay in shape and release tension)! You can turn on the radio and do a little Salsa while you are making meals too!

**Keep in touch with the people back home.** You can call from time to time, but you also can write and send pictures and audiotapes. Let them know you'd like to hear from them, too.

**[www.ParentingInformation.org](http://www.ParentingInformation.org)  
[www.InformacionParaPadres.org](http://www.InformacionParaPadres.org) [www.mhatexas.org](http://www.mhatexas.org) • [www.txpat.org](http://www.txpat.org)**

*Material from the Hispanic/Latino Initiative of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA),  
within the US Department of Health and Human Services. (2006)*