

## Strong Bonds Fact Sheet:

# Handling the Situation : **When there is no Relationship**

You may feel that you don't have a relationship with your young person at the moment.

The young person may or may not live at home. If living at home, they may not communicate with the family at all. If living away, they may never make contact. This can be extremely sad and hurtful for parents.

Other parents may feel a mixture of relief and sadness, or they may feel guilt for past events. Some parents feel that if they never made the effort to call their child, there would be no contact.

For others, there has been no contact for several years. If you don't know where they are at the moment, you may not be able to do much to build the relationship at this time. Or you may be able to track them down somehow, and send them a letter.

Even if you have little or no contact with your young person at this time, the suggestions in the "Building our Relationship" help sheet are still relevant. If you are able to hold in mind these ideas, they may help you to approach your child in the most useful way when the time arises.

### What are they feeling?

If a young person is choosing to have no contact with family, they may be feeling frustrated by family members' efforts to help them or tell them what to do. They may be asserting their right to be independent and separate. They may be 'enjoying' the new independent life they are leading.

A young person may have anger and resentment towards family members for past events. They may not feel safe to be in contact with their family. Trusting family members to treat them with respect and as an independent person might be difficult for them. They may feel a lot of guilt for their own behaviours, which have hurt or harmed family members. They may feel shame because they have not lived up to 'family expectations'.

### How to make a start

Sometimes when a person withdraws from family relationships it can be very hard for them or for family members to begin to connect again. You may not know where to start. You may feel a bit defensive, or worried that if you contact them, they may reject you.

There are different ways to communicate:

- in person
- phone or SMS (written phone messages)
- letters or cards
- emails

Consider showing them that you care for them and your commitment to the relationship by sending them letters or cards or phone messages. Let them know you would like to build a relationship again and would like to work on this together.

Tell them that you would like to have more fun and relaxed times together again one day.

Let them know about the positive feelings that you have towards them. Emphasise the good character traits or abilities you see in them and hopes that you have for them. You may want to share treasured memories of when they were young.

Let them know if you are sorry for anything, or if you realise that you need to change something to make the relationship work better.

It is still okay to let them know any behaviours which you found difficult and what you would prefer, but use gentle and kind language if you are able to. Make suggestions about ways you may be able to support them, but also what you may not be able to help them with now.

Let them know about other family members or other people they can build a relationship with if they would like to try.

Send them inspirational poems or stories. Remember their birthday or Christmas.

Continue to get help for yourself, to deal with your feelings, and to keep working on other relationships, and living your own life. This will make it easier for you to have a positive relationship with the young person when they are ready.



### Tips from this Help Sheet

- It can be very hard for families and young people to begin to connect again, due to hurt, guilt or fear about starting a new relationship.
- Show them your care and commitment to the relationship by sending them letters or cards or phone messages.
- Continue to get help for yourself and living your own life.
- Even if you have little or no contact with your young person at this time, the suggestions in the "Building our Relationship" help sheet are still relevant.



### Related Help Sheets

- Building our Relationship
- Feeling Guilty
- Feeling Blamed
- Dealing with Past Hurts and Traumas
- Keeping Calm
- Helping them Start Over



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