Are You Emotionally Ready to Contact Your Estranged Relative?

A short self-test. It takes about 10 minutes.

When a family member has cut off contact, it's natural to want to reach out and set things right. But how ready you are on the inside often decides whether that contact opens a door or closes it further. These questions can help you see where you stand before you write, call, or send anything.

Nothing you answer here is sent anywhere. It's just for you, so answer honestly. Feel free to print or save your completed form for your own records.

For each statement, choose your points in the box:

Yes: 2 points · **Somewhat:** 1 point · **Not yet:** 0 points

The 12 Questions

1. **Empathy:** I can describe how my family member would explain the estrangement, in their words, without adding my side of it. ☐
2. **Accountability:** I can name at least one thing my family member might be right about. ☐
3. **Listening:** If my family member told me what hurt them, I could listen for ten minutes without interrupting, correcting the facts, or defending myself. ☐
4. **Patience:** If my family member said "not yet," or didn't answer at all, I could wait without sending follow-up messages. ☐
5. **Motivation:** I want to reconnect because I value the relationship, not mainly to be proven right. ☐
6. **Family dynamics:** I'm not using other family members to carry messages, pressure my relative, or persuade them to take my side. ☐
7. **Boundaries:** I'm prepared to respect any boundary my family member has set, even one I disagree with. ☐
8. **Resilience:** If my family member responds with anger or accusations, I can remain calm without becoming defensive or arguing back. ☐

9. **Openness to change:** I'm willing to look at my own behavior and change what I can, even if I believe my family member also needs to change. ☐
10. **New terms:** If we reconnect, I can accept that the relationship may look different than it did before, on terms my family member helps set. ☐
11. **Support:** I have people in my life I can lean on, so my well-being doesn't depend on how my family member responds. ☐
12. **Expectations:** I can work toward rebuilding the relationship without requiring my family member to acknowledge my hurt or apologize first. ☐

Total score: ☐ **out of 24**

Your Score

- **18–24: You're in a good place to take a next step.** Your side of things looks ready, though there may still be a few issues to work out first. A family member who has pulled away often finds an invitation from a neutral third party easier to accept.
- **9–17: You're partly ready.** This is where most people land. Your "Somewhat" and "Not yet" answers show where the work is. It may be better to wait before reaching out.
- **0–8: Not yet.** That's worth knowing. Reaching out now would probably repeat what happened before. The first step is with you, not with them.

Whatever your total, any "Not yet" answer is worth a closer look, especially on Boundaries or Resilience. Your score is a guide for reflection, not a prediction. If your family member has asked for no contact, don't reach out yourself. A single respectful invitation from a neutral third party may be appropriate. If they decline, that answer stands.

One More Thing to Try

The purpose of this exercise is to see how your words may come across to your family member. Reread the last few messages you sent them. Or, think back to your last conversation. Did you mostly explain or defend yourself? Or, did you acknowledge how the other person felt? Messages that defend usually push people further away. Messages that listen help open the door. Do you see a need to change your approach today?

To discuss this self-test and more, call me at **561-490-4991**. The first 30 minutes are free.

Ken Newberger, Ph.D., Conflict Analysis & Resolution
Newberger & Associates, LLC · www.MarriageCounselingAlt.com · 561-490-4991