



THE RISE OF 'LOW CONTACT' FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

When her mum called her, stress would ring through Marie's body like an alarm going off. So "I stopped answering the phone," she says. This was one of the "boundaries" she discussed carefully with her therapist three years ago when she reached a point of crisis in managing her maternal relationship. So, as well as stopping answering the phone, she decided that she, her husband, and her children would no longer visit her mother, who lives a few hours away.

In the world of family estrangement, the approach Marie is describing is known as "low contact" or LC. TikTok is awash with users proclaiming the benefits of no contact. Katherine Cavallo, a family and couples psychotherapist with more than 25 years of clinical experience, often works with clients experiencing family estrangement. She says low or no contact has become more prevalent in recent years, which some figures back up. She says that younger generations often do not share the same sense of duty towards their family as older ones do – which is not always a negative thing. But culturally, she describes "a growing trend towards emotional growth associated with individualism and a lack of tolerance of relationships that might interfere with that".

It is useful to remember that, not so long ago, lower contact between families was considered normal. Dr Lucy Blake, senior lecturer in psychology at the University of the West of England, explains that the mainstream view within family therapy from the 1960s onwards was that "a typical family relationship is one where people have infrequent contact". It is largely due to technological advances that people so often get in touch. Before mobile phones, the idea of calling a parent once a fortnight was seen as perfectly normal, and in some ways was healthier, she says.

While for some, low contact relationships can work, others experience pushback from relatives. Like families themselves, low contact is complicated. For Marie, in a difficult patch of her own low contact, her overriding advice is clear: build up your support. "I would definitely advise having therapy while you're doing it," she says. "And try to find people around you who matter, relationships you can pour your all into." As you attempt to reduce one bond, others become paramount.

Adapted from an article by Emily Retter, The Guardian, 5-02-2026

Part I. Reading Comprehension

1. Are the following statements true (T) or false (F)? Identify the part of the text that supports your answer by copying the exact passage on the answer sheet. (2 points: 0.5 point each)

- a. Marie decided to stop answering her mother's phone calls without any professional guidance.
- b. TikTok users encourage families to have contact when needed.
- c. According to Katherine Cavallo, younger generations tend to feel less obligation towards their families than older generations.
- d. Dr Lucy Blake believes that before mobile phones, calling a parent every week was normal.

2. Taking into account the information in the text, answer the following questions using your own words. Copying directly from the text is not allowed. (2.5 points: 1.25 point each)

- a. Why does Katherine Cavallo think that low or no contact with family members has become more common in recent years?
- b. According to the text, how has modern technology changed the way families stay in contact?

3. Taking into account the information in the text, answer the following questions using your own words. Copying directly from the text is not allowed. (2.5 points: 1.25 point each)

boundaries prevalent duty lack advice paramount

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

4. Choose a, b, c or d, in each question below. Only one choice is correct. (1.5 points: 0.5 point each)

1. Marie decided to reduce contact with her mother mainly because...

- a. she wanted to follow a social trend.
- b. her relationship with her mother caused her anxiety and stress.
- c. her mother refused to visit her family.
- d. her therapist asked her to move away.

2. According to the text, technology has influenced family relationships by...
- a. making families emotionally closer in all cases.
 - b. reducing the importance of face-to-face contact.
 - c. increasing the frequency of communication.
 - d. eliminating the need for personal visits completely.
3. What advice does Marie give to people who choose low contact with their families?
- a. To completely cut ties with all relatives.
 - b. To focus only on their personal independence.
 - c. To seek support through therapy and meaningful relationships.
 - d. To avoid talking about their decision with anyone.

Part II. Composition (130 to 150 words approximately) (3 points)

5. Choose one of these two topics and write a composition about it.

- A. Do you think reducing contact with family members can be a healthy decision?
- B. How have new technologies changed the way families communicate?