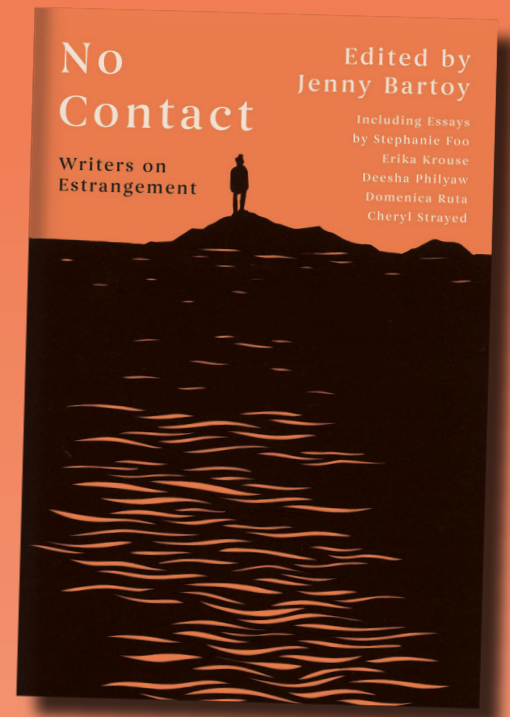


No Contact

Official Discussion Guide

- 1.** *No Contact* features 32 first-person accounts of estrangement, from both individuals who chose to cut contact with family members and others who had ties severed with them. Which of these stories spoke to you the most, and why? If you are estranged from an immediate family member, how did *No Contact* validate your experience or help you reframe it? If you are not estranged, did the stories in the book lead you to reconsider your perspective on estrangement?
- 2.** How can the sharing of stories help us process our trauma and grief? How does the chorus of voices assembled in *No Contact* create a new narrative of estrangement?
- 3.** Estrangement and going no contact with family have been labeled an “epidemic” and a “trend” in recent years. After reading *No Contact*, do you think these terms offer an accurate representation of estrangement, and why?
- 4.** After reading stories of estrangement from a mother, such as Emi Nietfeld, Cassandra Lewis, Anna Qu, or Erika Krouse’s essays, or stories of estrangement from a father, such as Tiffany Aldrich MacBain, Deesha Philyaw, Stephanie Foo, and Cheryl Strayed’s essays, do you think there are differences in the reasons why a person might choose estrangement from a mother or a father?
- 5.** Alyson Shelton’s essay “Water Is Thicker” and Nicole Graev Lipson’s “Weird Sister” both discuss an estrangement from an older brother with undertones of misogyny. Shelton chose the estrangement; Lipson was ghosted by her sibling. In what ways do these two experiences parallel each other or differ?
- 6.** Several essays in the anthology touch on language and land as a connecting thread to family, heritage, and self. How can language and land provide a sense of home that is lost in estrangement from family?
- 7.** Estrangement is surprisingly common among immigrant families. Why do you think that is? How does the rupture from one’s native country parallel and perhaps propel a familial rupture? How does one rebuild their identity in each case?
- 8.** Many of the stories in *No Contact* deal with abuse: sexual, physical, verbal, emotional, and financial; often family members’ refusal to acknowledge abuse leads to estrangement. How might the erasure of one’s truth or trauma pave the way for estrangement?



9. Estranged parent voices in the media often vocally reject the estrangement, blaming adult children for their choice, which tends to be described as selfish, ungrateful, and entitled. How do the parent stories in *No Contact* push back against this narrative?

10. Editor Jenny Bartoy said she hoped the book would “bring nuance and compassion to the conversation about estrangement” that tends to be black and white and often one-sided toward reconciliation above all other outcomes. In what ways do you think the voices featured in the book help to dismantle the concept that “blood is thicker than water”?

About the Editor:

JENNY BARTOY is a French American editor and critic. Her writing appears in several anthologies and in such publications as *The Boston Globe*, *The Seattle Times*, *Under the Gum Tree*, *Room*, *Chicago Review of Books*, *CrimeReads*, and *The Rumpus*, among others. She holds a master’s degree from Columbia University and lives in the Pacific Northwest.



Praise for *No Contact*:

“Grippingly vulnerable. For those who feel guilt after disengaging from family, this offers powerful absolution.” —***Publishers Weekly***

“Estrangement is a taboo subject, but as Bartoy mentions in her introduction, hearing true stories like these might help others feel seen and validated in their decision to cut ties.” —***Booklist***

“A search for compassion and conversation surrounding the decision to cut ties with family . . . The collection’s narratives and poems each articulate a severed bond and reckon with the grief, uncertainty, and potential healing that emerges from that estrangement . . . A noble amplification of under-heard voices.” —***Kirkus Review***

“A landmark work around a theme so prominent—and yet so thoroughly ignored—in modern life. This collection opens chasms beyond writing and testament—but braves toward a new vision of healing, self-dignity, and, most importantly, the possibility for life’s flourishing without closure.” —**Ocean Vuong**

“*No Contact* traces the subtle architecture of absence—echoes that linger in rooms never entered, the strange tenderness that survives even when love is withheld. . . This is a book that carries strength, insight, and self-compassion. The authors: warriors. Their words linger, unsettling and clarifying, offering a map for anyone who has ever navigated the delicate terrain of love and loss.” —**Mira Ptacin, author of *The In-Betweens***

