



## Top Tips for Students

We live in a society that values family, but what about people who have difficult family situations, or have lost or broken contact with parents and/or other family members i.e. they are **estranged** from them?

**Estrangement** — often society misunderstands and attaches shame to it. Many estranged students feel unable to speak openly about difficult family situations at university for fear of judgement or rejection.

**Whether you know someone who has experienced estrangement or not, you can step up as an ally and make a great big difference!**

### 1. Normalise talking about estrangement:

Estrangement is often unfamiliar to people because it's not talked about very often. By explicitly talking about estrangement, you can let estranged students know you are including them whilst also making the concept more familiar to other potential allies.

**2. Mind your everyday language:** We talk about families a lot, which can be uncomfortable for students experiencing estrangement. Sometimes even seemingly innocent questions can put estranged students in a position where they feel excluded. Ask open questions and be led by the individuals you're speaking with.

Instead of asking **'What are you doing for Christmas?'**, ask **'What are you looking forward to over the next few weeks?'** This also keeps the conversation inclusive of students who do not celebrate Christmas!

Read Sam's open letter to those wishing to become allies to estranged students:

<https://bit.ly/3mG30RP>



I don't have a "safety net" if something goes wrong with studies / work and I can never really just take break. I think that makes me more anxious about the future and generally more stress-prone.

I'm currently homeless as my accommodation at uni has expired and I move into the next one in September.

I have nobody to turn to for help as I was living in a hostel before I moved to my university.

It's been embarrassing that I haven't left to go home and live with my family like the rest of my friends have. I feel ashamed and it's awkward when people ask

**Estranged students**

**'Be an ally to estranged students,**



**3. Talk to your peers:** If someone tells you they are experiencing estrangement, be led directly by them on what you can do to make their lives easier. If you're not sure about someone's experience and they have opened the conversation, it's ok to ask politely! Small actions can go a long way, and there may be things they need that are specific to their environment and/or their own personal experiences.

**4. Lead your Student Group:** Are you part of a student group, club or society? Run events over university/college breaks so that everyone can socialise and be supported during this time. These can be digital or in person — anything to stay connected!

**5. Do the work:** Thinking about holiday and university/college closure plans can be exhausting and stressful for estranged students. If you have a friend who is estranged, what could you do to help them with their plans? Could you host someone for a holiday? Schedule regular online calls or return to campus early to meet up in person? Help your friend find out what celebrations your university is putting on for students on campus, for Christmas and other holidays throughout the year, and maybe even join in yourself!

**If you or any student would like further support, please contact your University/College Student Services or Health & Wellbeing services.**

#### Where to find more information:

- <https://www.standalone.org.uk/reports>
- [www.standalone.org.uk/students](http://www.standalone.org.uk/students)
- [www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk](http://www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk)

#### Stand Alone Podcast: Voices of Estrangement

<https://bit.ly/2HrTuBF>

Share your thoughts, experiences, comments on twitter and follow what else is going on during Stand Alone ESS Week  
**#WithEstrangedStudents**

<https://bit.ly/3mL9Qp8>



**Please be aware:**  
estrangement can be a sensitive issue for some and talking about it might be uncomfortable for them. Please make sure you use content warnings appropriately.

**‘Be an ally  
to estranged  
students,’**