

The Estranged Anniversary Planner

12 dates – and what to do instead of dreading them

Plan the Day Before the Day Plans You

Estrangement gives you a second calendar – one made of dates that used to mean family. Mother's Day. Father's Day. Their birthday. Your birthday. The anniversary of the break. The holiday they 'should' have shown up for.

The strategy is simple: you don't wait for the day to decide how you feel. You decide how you'll spend it, weeks in advance. A planned day is a day that can't ambush you.

The date	The trap thought	The planned move
Mother's Day / Father's Day	Everyone else has a parent who shows up	Spend the day with chosen family – or make it a 'treat yourself' day with zero guilt
Their birthday	Maybe THIS year I should reach out	Write the message you'd send. Don't send it. The writing empties the urge.
Your birthday	They should be the ones to remember	Pre-plan the celebration with people who DO show up – don't wait for their call
The break anniversary	I should be over this by now	Name it: 'This is the anniversary of a loss.' Grief days are allowed forever.
The holiday	The empty chair is my fault	Murder the thought with a plan: who, where, what – book it early

The 12 Date Cards

Twelve dates on the estrangement calendar. Each card gives you a low-effort plan that honors the feeling without letting it run the day.

Mother's Day

Trap thought: Everyone else's mom shows up

Planned move: Call someone you love who isn't your mother – chosen family counts

Father's Day

Trap thought: Maybe I should try again

Planned move: Write the unsent letter, then do something that fills YOUR cup

Their Birthday

Trap thought: Today is the day to reach out

Planned move: Light a candle for the relationship you wish you had – then go to dinner

Your Birthday

Trap thought: They didn't call. I'm not worth remembering

Planned move: Pre-book the celebration with chosen family. Don't leave the day empty for their call

The Break Anniversary

Trap thought: I should be over this by now

Planned move: Treat it like a real grief day: low plans, comfort food, one soft activity

The First Holiday

Trap thought: The empty chair is my fault

Planned move: Book your holiday plan early – friends, volunteering, or a day of nesting

The Anniversary of the Cut

Trap thought: What if I was the problem?

Planned move: Re-read why you left. Boundaries are allowed to stay closed

Their Birthday + 1

Trap thought: The next day is a letdown

Planned move: Plan a Monday-pick-me-up so the day after isn't empty

The Wedding You Weren't Invited To

Trap thought: They chose a family without me

Planned move: Spend the day with your own people. Comparison is the thief – be somewhere you're wanted

The Birth Announcement

Trap thought: A grandchild I'll never meet

Planned move: Name the grief, then redirect – 'I grieve what I don't have, and I protect my peace'

The Expected Holiday

Trap thought: Family is supposed to be together

Planned move: Redefine: family is who shows up. Book your table with the people who do

The New Year

Trap thought: Another year I'm not in their life

Planned move: Make it a year of YOUR goals – write 3 things you're building, not enduring

You don't have to do all twelve. Pick the ones that bite, and plan those.

The Day-Of Survival Loop

- **Morning:** name the day out loud – 'today is Mother's Day, and I'm spending it my way'
- **Mid-morning:** do one planned anchor (call a friend, book the dinner, do the craft)
- **When the trap thought hits:** read the planned move card out loud
- **Afternoon:** one physical movement (walk, stretch, dance to one song)
- **Evening:** reflect – 'I planned, I survived, I did not let the day run me'
- **If the urge to reach out spikes:** write the unsent message and close the app

Script 1: The 'Are You Seeing Your Family?' Answer

"I'm not seeing my family this year. It's the right call for me, and I'm at peace with it. I'd love to spend the day with you instead – what are you up to?"

Script 2: The Group-Text Decline

"I love that you're gathering. This date is hard for me, and I need to take care of myself this year. Please don't take it personally – I'd love to see you another time very soon."

Script 3: The Self-Reminder

"I did not choose this day to hurt myself. I chose it to protect my peace. Estrangement was a boundary, not a failure – and I am allowed to keep it."

Your Calendar, Your Rules

The dates will keep coming every year. That's not a verdict – it's a rhythm. And every year, you get to decide the plan. Planned days can't ambush you. From The Unadulging Society · sfwagere.com