

EXPLORING BEYOND DIVORCE

Coaching Guide • Topic 09 of 12

Saying Good-Bye to the Past ... and Meaning It

Closure is not something that happens to you. It is something you create.

About This Topic

Saying goodbye is one of the most emotionally complex tasks in divorce. It means grieving not just a person, but a shared life — memories, rituals, a version of yourself, and a future you imagined. This topic explores how to give yourself the closure you need, whether or not your former partner can participate in that process.

Why Saying Goodbye Is So Hard

Divorce means saying goodbye to many different things and memories at once. You may face painful losses — but you will also grow from them.

An Important Reminder

As you say goodbye to this chapter, do not let go of the emotion of love itself. You will re-learn how to nourish it — in fresh and meaningful ways.

Giving Yourself Closure

Reframe the Situation

Try to look at the outcome in a positive light — even if that takes time. Altering your way of thinking can help you channel your emotions productively. Just maybe this ending is for the best. Just maybe it will lead to a wonderful new beginning.

"Everything happens for a reason." When a door is closed, it is often closed because it should be. You will face painful losses — but you will grow from them too.

Feel Grateful Where You Can

While it is understandable to feel anger and resentment, try not to let animosity become your permanent residence. Where you can, appreciate some of the sweet memories you shared — without denying the pain. Rather than spending all your energy blaming, get ready to start a new life journey as you leave the old behind.

Allow Yourself Time to Heal

Giving yourself time to heal is one of the more difficult steps in this process. No one enjoys negative emotions. But allow yourself the courage to confront the pain — even to cry and sit with those difficult feelings.

Hiding from these emotions — or numbing yourself through substances — may provide short-term relief, but the source of the pain will still be present. It is better to sort through the hurt now, so it doesn't surface unexpectedly in a future chapter.

Close the Open Questions

One of the most painful traps in divorce is the game of "what could have been?" If you cannot obtain proper closure with your former partner, you must create it on your own — for the sake of soothing your heart and nourishing your soul.

The Goodbye Letter

One of the most powerful practices for creating closure is writing a Goodbye Letter to your former partner.

How to Write Your Goodbye Letter

Write a letter fully disclosing all your thoughts and feelings to your former partner about saying goodbye. Do not hold anything back. This letter is NOT meant to be sent — it is a piece of writing that will allow you to release pent-up thoughts and inner tensions. Many people find it meaningful to read the letter aloud privately, then burn it — watching the smoke carry it away as a final ceremonial act of letting go.

Reflection Questions

1. What specific things — beyond the person — do you find yourself needing to say goodbye to? (A home, a routine, a role, a dream?)

2. What memories from the marriage do you want to carry forward with you — and which ones are you ready to release?

3. What does closure mean to you? What would it feel like to have it?

4. What is getting in the way of fully saying goodbye? What would need to shift?

5. If you wrote a Goodbye Letter today, what is the first thing you would say?

A Closing Thought

Saying goodbye is an act of courage and self-respect. It is how you reclaim yourself — not by denying what was, but by honoring it enough to let it complete.

"You probably will face painful losses ... but you will grow from them. And as you say goodbye — don't let go of the emotion of love."

Additional Support Available

1-on-1 Clarity Sessions • Weekly Zoom Support Groups • exploringbeyonddivorce.org