
Saying Goodbye with Love, Forgiveness, and Peace

A Time for Everything

There is a season (a time appointed) for everything and a time for every delight *and* event *or* purpose under heaven –

A time to be born and a time to die;
A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted.

A time to kill and a time to heal;
A time to tear down and a time to build up.

A time to weep and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn and a time to dance.

A time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones;
A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing.

A time to search and a time to give up as lost;
A time to keep and a time to throw away.

A time to tear apart and a time to sew together;
A time to keep silent and a time to speak.

A time to love and a time to hate;
A time for war and a time for peace.

– Ecclesiastes 3:1-8.

Write a goodbye letter to one another and then sit with it for a day or two before planning and having a “Separation Ceremony,” together. During that ceremony, read your letter to your partner. Take turns. You are welcome to do that with me in my office or together without me.

You may wish to light a candle, and light two separate ones from it. You may wish to burn incense. You may wish to pour wine from a single cup into two separate cups. You may wish to choose a favorite song to listen to together before beginning. You may wish to create a small altar with flowers, photos of your children and yourselves, together as well as individual photos of you. You may wish to put your wedding rings in a small special dish. You may wish to *cut a copy* of photo of you together in two at the end of the ceremony (keep the original for your children, if you have them). You may wish to anoint each other’s foreheads with oil at the end, blessing each other. Be creative.

Be sure to include in your letter:

*What you will miss most about your partner

*What unique characteristics about their personality that you will always remember

*Your most cherished memory of the two of you

*What you are most grateful for – the greatest gift(s) (not material) your partner gave you

*What your partner taught you about life and your self

*What lessons you will be glad to take with you

*What goodbye means to you and why you know it is now necessary

*What you wish for your partner in the future

Do not rush the letter-writing process or the ceremony. Allow time, and go SLOW. This is an important part of your journey. If feelings enter, make space for them for each other. Schedule a time for this just like you made time for your marriage. Make time for your Separation Ceremony. Let it be meaningful.

When you know it's over, and you can't say goodbye, remember the Dalai Lama's words:

“So many of the causes of suffering come from our reacting to the people, places, things, and circumstances in our lives, rather than accepting them,” he says in *The Book of Joy*. “When we react, we stay locked in judgment and criticism, anxiety and despair, even denial and addiction. It is impossible to experience joy when we are stuck this way. Acceptance is the sword that cuts through all of this resistance, allowing us to relax, to see clearly, and to respond appropriately.”