

# Noeticus Counseling Center and Training Institute®

*Innovative Approaches to Counseling and Change™*



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## CLOSURES AND ENDINGS

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*Closure is the process of bringing completion to an experience, a relationship, or something else that has been a part of our lives or that has required some of our energy to sustain. When we make closure, we are able to release the energy (such as time, money, and other resources) that was formerly invested in something or someone else so that it once again becomes available to us to invest in new experiences and relationships. Many of us did not get the chance to make closure with significant people and experiences in our lives that deeply impacted us – either positively or negatively – and thus we may continue to invest energy in those things even though they may no longer be directly a part of our lives. The skill of making clear closures and defined endings is therefore an important one for many of us to develop so that our energy is free and available in the present rather than stuck in the past.*

### ***The Importance of Good Closure***

Making closure is an important psychological experience because it lets us tie up loose ends so that we are better able to move forward in our lives and focus on the things that currently will benefit from our attention and energy. When we don't have the opportunity to make closure, we run the risk of carrying unfinished business with us from the past into the future. Examples of unfinished business that we might carry with us include unspoken feelings such as anger, regret, sadness, appreciation, and care. It can also include unprocessed experiences and interactions we have had with certain people that continue to have an impact on us.

Taking the time to make clear closure is a way to get our relationships and experiences "up-to-date" and in the present moment. We can do this by saying what needs to be said and processing unprocessed feelings and experiences so that they don't weigh heavily upon us or drain our energy from us.

Even though many of us know that clear endings and good closure are important, we may avoid making closure when we need to because it often brings up awkward and uncomfortable feelings. We can avoid making closure in many ways, all of which distract us from the immediate experience of feeling the feelings associated with the closure. Some of the ways we may use to distract ourselves or even prevent ourselves from experiencing adequate closure include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Disappearing without saying good-bye (abandoning).
2. Saying good-bye over a lingering period of time (clinging).
3. Saying good-bye abruptly without dealing with the closure (severing).
4. Putting off saying good-bye over a long period of time (procrastinating).
5. Sticking around to take care of others even when it's not personally desired (care-taking).
6. Cracking jokes or using humor to deflect from the intensity of feelings (distracting).



7. Getting angry to avoid feeling other feelings like sadness, loss, or hurt (blaming).
8. Using substances or addictive behaviors to sedate our feelings (desensitizing).
9. Discounting our own feelings and needs (minimizing).
10. Creating crises and/or drama to keep the relationship or experience from actually ending (regressing/projective identification).

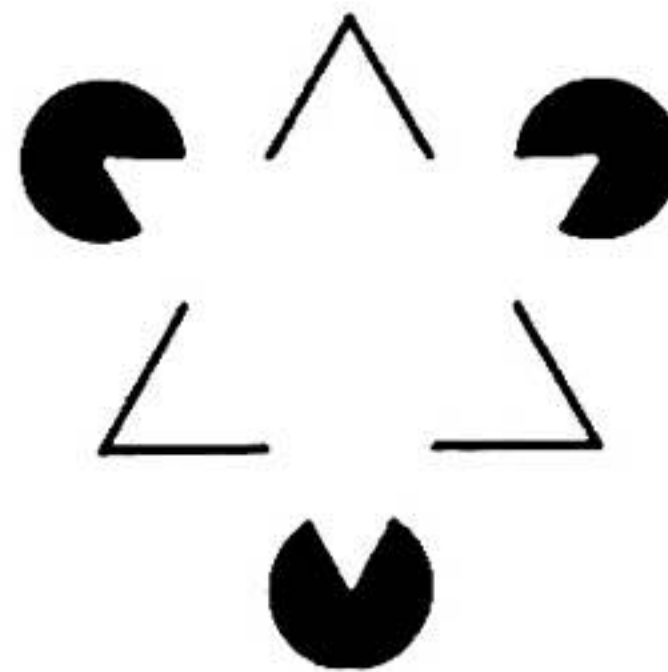
Although it is wonderful to be able to make closure with people and experiences when the time is right, we don't always have the luxury or ability to do so. This is because the people and experiences we need to make closure with are not always agreeable or available to participate in the closure experience due to death, illness, lack of interest, sudden changes, and other unexpected events. When this happens, it doesn't mean we can't make closure, it just means we might have to make closure in more indirect or creative ways. Some ways to do this include journaling, using art, writing unsent letters, or processing the unresolved feelings in therapy. No matter how we do it, the point is that we acknowledge the incomplete energy and give it a way to find some kind of resolution so that it doesn't have as much weight or impact on us.

### *Skills, Coping Mechanisms, and Action Strategies*

- Most things in our lives, including our experiences and relationships, have a natural cycle consisting of a beginning, middle, and end. Remembering that this rhythm is natural and necessary can help us enjoy our experiences and relationships as they are, in whatever part of the cycle they are in, without having to let go too quickly or grasp on too tightly.
- When closures come up in your life, take a few moments to ground and center yourself. Resource your body and your feelings so that you can speak honestly and from your heart about what you need to say to have a clear ending.

### *Discussion Questions*

- What feelings come up for you when you think about endings and closures?
- Do you tend to make closure, or do you wait for others to initiate closure?
- What are some important relationships in your life that didn't get the kind of closure you wanted or needed? How did this feel? What are some ways you might find a different type of closure now?
- What are some ways in which you have avoided closure in your life? How might you be using some of these same strategies in your relationships today? What would you like to do differently?





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## MAKING CLOSURE EXERCISE

Today I'm making closure with: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

As I remember this person or event: \_\_\_\_\_

The feeling I have in my body is: \_\_\_\_\_

The emotions I am experiencing are: \_\_\_\_\_

The thoughts and beliefs I am having are: \_\_\_\_\_

Some unfinished business I have is: \_\_\_\_\_

Use the "*Language of Responsibility*" to fill out the following quadrants:

|                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Things I Regret:            | Things I Appreciate:    |
| Things I'm Concerned About: | Things I'm Hopeful For: |

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