

Do You Need to Get Relationship Closure With an Ex?

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"I just need closure." We've all been there.

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Breaking up is hard, but the period of time following a split can be especially brutal. Early on, you might find it difficult to cope with the pain. You might flip-flop between angry resolve ("eff it, I can do better") and a numbing sadness ("I'll never love anyone like that again"). And if you're like a lot of newly single people, you may start to believe that getting answers from your ex will help you get over the breakup and feel better.

"I just need closure," are the all too familiar words that flash through your mind. The end of a relationship can leave a dog pile of emotional baggage, as well as blunt questions about why things fell apart the way they did. No matter what part you played in ending it, you might still have the urge to tie up the relationship in a neat bow—in other words, get closure—before moving on to someone new.

A friend recently confessed to me that more than a year after breaking up, she met with her ex so she could get closure before she relocated across the country. That made me wonder if we really need come face-to-face with our exes. Is it crucial to have a conversation with a past partner in order to feel good about ourselves and move forward? Is it healthy to seek relationship closure at all?

We reached out to therapists for their take, and the answer was a wholehearted yes. Here's what they told us, and how to get the kind of closure that allows you to truly move forward.

Why closure is crucial

The main benefit of getting closure is that it helps you work out powerful or conflicting feelings that might be putting your life in stall. Terri Orbuch, PhD, a professor at Oakland University in Michigan and author of *5 Simple Steps to Take Your Marriage From Good to Great*, tells *Health* that it's important to let go of any strong emotions connected to your past relationship, negative or positive.

"If you don't let go or get closure, you're probably dragging these memories around with you every day, and from relationship to relationship," she says. Orbuch is the author of a study on closure, which found that singles who were able to say "I don't feel much of anything for an ex"

were way more likely to find a new love and a long-term relationship than the singles who were still grappling with feelings of love or hate.

Rachel Needle, PsyD, a psychologist in West Palm Beach, Florida and co-director of Modern Sex Therapy Institutes, is also onboard with getting closure—but proposes that it doesn't have to come from your ex. Needle tells *Health* that many people won't get the answers they are looking for or will not hear them in a way that is helpful from their former partner.

"While it would be wonderful to have an insightful ex who can also effectively communicate what went wrong and why, we can also take responsibility for understanding our role in the relationship ending, and thus provide some closure for ourselves," says Needle.

How to get it so you can move forward

If you do decide to meet with your ex to get closure, New York-based sex therapist Sari Cooper, founder and director of the [Center for Love and Sex](#), recommends using the "speaker-listener" technique. "If the couple can remain calm, listen, and reflect on their partner's viewpoint, it could offer them peaceful closure," she tells *Health*. This technique lets both partners "express their feelings, and feel witnessed and heard even if they don't necessarily agree with one another," says Cooper.

A word of caution: When you listen to your ex, be prepared to hear things that may not exactly make you feel good—like that your ex found someone new, or they blame you for the breakup. Your ex's thoughts on the relationship might also be wildly different from how you think things went down. Don't let what they say leave you feeling hurt or bewildered. Take it as proof that you two were never a solid match and had such different viewpoints, things could never have worked out.

And if your ex doesn't want to talk? Get closure without them. Orbuch suggests looking at the relationship objectively and finding an outside perspective. "You may have to ask friends or family because they know what it was really like," she advises. Getting their take and seeing the relationship for what it was can help you understand that it was not right for either party—and you're better off without them.