

12 Rituals to Reopen Your Life

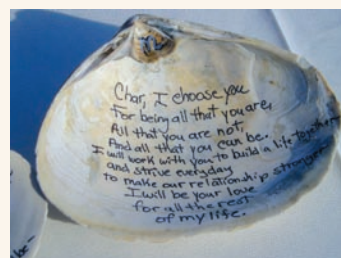
By CHARLOTTE EULETTE

“We the people”

are conditioned to focus on the positive and not dwell too long on the negative. We share our triumphs but keep our tragedies to ourselves. When we experience emotionally difficult or devastating times in our lives, we are strongly advised to “get past it,” “get over it,” or—my very favorite—“move on,” even though, in many cases, it would be impossible to know how to “move on”—or where to move on to; there is simply no map for us to follow and no set mechanism through which to process the experience, as an individual or a community, so that we may have the closure everyone tells us we should seek.

Collectively, we are guilty of sputtering this useless advice to each other because modern Western culture is no longer accustomed to the meaningful ritualization that allowed our wise ancestors to mark life’s transitions in healthy ways.

When we focus solely on getting closure and putting the past behind us, rather than fully processing an event or life change, our human experience is minimized. Even our language encourages us to make less of things. For instance, our culture



commonly refers to the psychologists who help us work through our experiences as “shrinks.” Why don’t we use the term “expansionist” instead, to promote the concept of opening rather than closure of our conscious self? If we opened ourselves to our

experiences, good and bad, how much more could we learn from them, as individuals and as a society?

Carl Jung, founder of analytical psychology, teaches that ceremony and ritual are essential for people to mark the

important transitions of life. Without meaningful ritual, he tells us, people suffer. Ritual and ceremony can bridge our past and our present elegantly, making it possible for folks like you and me to travel through life, honoring the good and bad times we’ve been through. They can help us become human “well-beings,” ready to take on more life and liberty and ready to pursue our happiness.

Do This Mini-Ritual Right Now!

Rather than closure, I propose a new focus on “opening” and offer a mini-cleansing ritual to eliminate our focus on closure. I ask you to imagine a window, and open it wide. Then, pack the word “closure” and all the pressures to reach it into a tight little ball with



your hands, like a snowball, and toss it out the window.

Good job! You’ve now crossed the threshold and entered into a new enlightened space of your own creation, where you and others can experience “opening,” or *anexi*, the ancient Greek word that also refers to

the beginning of the spring season.

Through ritual and ceremony — small ones like this mini-cleansing or more elaborate ones — you can create for yourself, your family, and your community a special time and space to meditate and marinate with an experience that either has made a simple ripple in your life or has truly rocked your world.

Ceremony is a noble and life-affirming way to mark rites of passage. You don’t have to worry if anyone else would consider what you’re honoring worthy of ceremony. What is important is its significance to you. We are used to typical womb-to-tomb ceremonies for birth, marriage, and death, but there is so much more to pay homage to between these events, and even these classic ceremonies have become commercialized rather than ritualized. Thoughtful ritual can give optimal meaning to life and guide you on a golden path to your new status in a life-affirming way.

Here are a dozen kinds of rituals that you might want to bring into being, or use this list as inspiration to create a dozen more.

Through ritual and ceremony you can re-create yourself, your family, and your community.



1. **Healing and Transition Ceremony:** This can be used for military personnel coming home to their families from the war, to honor and acknowledge their experiences and create a path on which they and their family can begin to reintegrate their lives together.

2. **Bond-Strengthening Ceremony:** A friendship weaving and/or a family mending ceremony can be used to restore friendship and bonds that have been weakened by actions, events, or just time and distance.

3. **Rite of Passage for a New Teenager:** A ceremony for an adolescent as he or she crosses the threshold to young adulthood. The ceremony can emphasize the teen's journey, highlight work he or she has done (for example, volunteering in the community) to show readiness for this new status, and be a point at which the teenager is formally given new rights and responsibilities.

4. **Whence We Came Ceremony:** This ceremony is created to honor our ancestors—the people who made a lasting impression on our lives—and to pass their stories from one generation to the next.

5. **Baby Naming/Welcoming Ceremony:** This ceremony welcomes a new child into the family and the community. The ceremony honors the little one's life. Family and friends



attending and participating in the rituals state their intentions and promises of commitment, love, and support. The ceremony may be used to welcome babies or older children joining the family through adoption.

6. **Tree-mendous Ceremony:** A ceremony for the tree in your backyard that once stood tall for 100 years and is now being cut down. Dedicate and plant a new tree in its place, and celebrate the important moments your family shared beneath its branches.

7. **Dwelling or Safe Haven Ceremony:** Many people are familiar with housewarming ceremonies. This ceremony is to pay homage to a more temporary living space, to make it our own for the duration of our stay. This can include dwellings such as a new apartment, hotel room, prison, or college dormitory, as well as places in which we find ourselves in times of need, such as a temporary shelter.

8. **New Beginning Ceremony:** To celebrate a new year, business, or organization, or a new way of living, such as going back to school or starting a new career.

9. **Wisdom Ceremony:** To honor the elders in our community and to pass on their knowledge and experience.

10. **Uncoupling Ceremony:** A ceremony to honor, with dignity and compassion, divorce, separation, or disbanding of a group, team, or organization.

11. **Animal Companion Ceremony:** To honor the animals in our lives—pets at home, working animals, sporting animals, or those in zoos or in captivity.



12. **Survivor Ceremony:** To commemorate surviving an illness or tragic event and to help the survivor's or victim's transition to "normal" life by giving him the opportunity to shed light on his experience and to thank those whose support helped him through it.

You can find more information on setting up rituals at spiritualityhealth.com/rituals.

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