

## Ending Well

It is important to end seasons of our lives well. That can include relationships, events, transitions, jobs, small groups, etc. This process can be similar to grieving in that there can be a loss of something we enjoyed or a place we found rest. It seems healthy to end well and be intentional in how we do it.

One of the hardest parts I have found is being intentional in allowing myself to end well. That takes time, honesty, dialogue, messiness, space, creativity, and probably a number of other things. I guess the big picture is finding what works for you. A paradigm that I often use to end seasons well is a past/present/future guide. It's nothing formal, just directing my thoughts to be intentional.

I'll spend some time finding ways to think about the past. I recommend using creative ways to connect with my experiences. For example music, writing, drawing, and talking are different ways to express what you feel. But I focus on the past: what it was like, what I miss, how it felt, what hurt then, what was good then, questions like that. Sometimes I will make a timeline of the things that impacted me and spend time going through each one. I usually encourage others to go through their timeline with someone else. But one important part is to be aware of what you are feeling as you think and share your thoughts about the past.

Then after awhile, maybe a few hours, days, or weeks (whatever you need) I move into the present. How does it feel now? How does it feel to end this season or relationship? I try to be honest about the present and ask the same questions as the ones I did about the past. It is important to stay in the present while you engage with your feelings. It is possible to feel the whole spectrum of feelings while in the present. One day you can feel sad and another you can feel excited. Many people find journaling during this stage of ending helpful. Allowing yourself to experience the spectrum of emotions is a healthy preparation for closure.

Then after some time I move into processing future. What will I miss about this season as I look into the future? What do I hope for in the future? This is when I spend time doing some dreaming. I try to think about what could happen in the future. How my time during the season that is ending will impact my future. Having a vision of what direction you are heading in is very helpful. When you have some clarity about the future(at least to the extent we are capable of) it is possible to find rest in the transition.

Overall, this process works best if you invite someone into the journey with you. Ending alone has it's place but walking with someone through the emotions and thoughts brings a healthy dynamic that will allow closure and the ability to move on. This structure helps focus our thoughts and feelings as we intentionally end a season of life well. When this is done well we capture the changes that have happened deep within and the new, changed heart has the opportunity to guide us into a future of restful hope.