

Letting Go of a Relationship with Gratitude

Lifetime Connections

Bring the gift of thanksgiving to even difficult endings.

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Gratitude Lists can be helpful even when you are ending a relationship.

If you are moving towards the end of a relationship, particularly a friendship, you can create a journal entry that is focused on the positive aspects or learning experiences that arose out of the relationship. In friendships, as in all relationships, there are benefits that are derived from even negative interactions. By exploring and deconstructing the satisfaction and former appeal of these toxic relationships, you will be better able to know what your personal needs were that were met in such a difficult situation.

For instance, social acceptance by others can sometimes be so valued that we allow ourselves to experience significant humiliation and pain. Whether you are pledging a sorority in college or being assigned the most menial tasks in an elite civic organization, you may be willing to pay institutionalized "personal dues" for acceptance in the group. In one-on-one relationships, you may allow yourself to be treated poorly, just for the crumbs of friendship that are offered. While these are somewhat extreme examples, when you feel yourself on the losing end of a friendship and resentment is building towards the toxic friend -- and perhaps towards yourself for allowing the relationship to go too far -- it is a good time to engage in a Gratitude Review.

- 1) Label the journal page: *Gratitude for (Former Partner/Friend's Name)*
- 2) Write the following prompt: *"I am grateful for the experience of this relationship because I learned that I enjoy the following activities:"*
- 3) List the new things you learned you enjoyed as a by-product of this friendship. These things can include new experiences you had; did you try new activities because of the friendship such as singing karaoke or swing dancing or hang gliding or dining on Vietnamese fusion cuisine? Did you explore a new part of town? Did you meet over a classroom project and discover how much loved saltwater marine biology? List all of the new experiences that you experienced and found to be pleasurable.
- 4) Write the prompt, *"I am grateful for the experience of this relationship because I learned that I do not enjoy the following activities:"*
- 5) You may list things such as having learned that you actually do not like singing karaoke or Vietnamese cuisine.
- 6) Write the prompt, *"I am grateful for this relationship because it taught me that I do not like being treated in the following manner:"*
- 7) List the negative experiences within this friendship that have created disappointment, unhappiness, or other negative emotions and responses. This list may include such things as "I learned that I do not like being stood up by a friend because she gets a better offer." Or "I learned that I do not like being around a friend who brags about her accomplishments, but would not care if I won the Nobel Peace Prize."
- 8) Write the prompt, *"I am grateful for this relationship because it taught me that I expect the following behaviors from true friends:"*

9) List all of the important things you now recognize as essential in a satisfying relationship. By creating a list of expectations, you will be more consciously aware of what you need from relationships. Unless we know what we are seeking in a relationship, we will have difficulty determining if a relationship is, *or is not*, a good fit.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/lifetime-connections/201411/letting-go-relationship-gratitude>