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DO-IT-YOURSELF CLOSURE

Love the show *Man Vs. Wild* on the Discovery Channel. In it, former British Special Air Serviceman Bear Grylls puts himself in all sorts of hostile environments to see if he can survive unassisted. He means business, too. Under the relentless heat of the Australian sun, the man pulls off his jocks and wears them as a hat to prevent heat stroke. And, in Africa, he shows us (the uninitiated) that you can survive by drinking water from elephant poo.

While I may personally opt for the sweet embrace of death over ingesting bodily waste of any kind, I like to think Grylls' astounding self-sufficiency has a place in navigating tricky emotional terrain in real life. For example, many of us may think the only way to move past a break-up or a major emotional hurdle is when someone provides us with the life-saving nectar of "closure". But, instead of relying on a person for a resolution, why not just create it for ourselves?

DEFINING CLOSURE

According to clinical psychologist Lucy Blunt, the term "closure" refers to the attempt to accept and come to terms with a situation. "When people are talking about closure, they're basically looking to understand what has happened to them and achieve resolution," she says.

What's more, there's a proven psychological basis for our need for closure. Research has shown that when a class of students was split into two

groups and given a test, those who hadn't completed the exercise could remember the details and circumstances of the test over time, whereas those who did finish it had greater difficulties recalling the same information.

Renowned psychologist Fritz Perls calls this phenomenon "unfinished business" - where human beings are emotionally driven to resolve any incomplete past experiences. "The tension arising out of the need for closure is called frustration, while the closure is called satisfaction. With satisfaction, the imbalance ... disappears and, eventually, the incident is closed," he writes.

So how do we take charge and work towards creating our own closure?

LOSING A LOVED ONE

Andrew Griffiths, author of *The Me Myth* (Simon & Schuster, \$29.99), acknowledges that facing the sudden death of a loved one can be one of the hardest emotional hurdles to overcome.

At 33, Griffiths had lost his only sister through a heart attack and had to find a way to deal with the untimely loss. "Wendy and I were orphans together and that was terrible for me. What got me through the grieving process was to turn the sadness into a sense of appreciation for what she had given me," he says.

Griffiths suggests writing a list of all the things your loved one has contributed to your life. While this may evoke feelings of sadness at first, it can help transform

Do we really need to rely on someone to release us from a bad break-up or the loss of a loved one?
By Candice Chung

"you must try to accept their reality, even if it's not yours."

the pain you're experiencing into gratitude. Likewise, releasing our emotions in an open letter may also help bring about closure. Thus, this is an especially powerful tool to deal with feelings of repressed hurt and anger.

Griffiths also points out that it's important to be able to talk honestly and openly about the deceased with other family members. "It becomes a bit of a taboo subject when someone dies. Or we feel like we can only say good things. Well, it's not really true - maybe they didn't act as well as they should have at times, but, often, it's important to acknowledge that, too."