There Is No Closure

And why that’s the best news you’ll hear all year

A short guide for the person who has done everything right—and still lies awake relitigating the past.

You were promised closure.

Somewhere along the line, you were told that if you analysed it enough, talked it through enough, or journalled deeply enough, the past would quietly click shut. The file would close. The knot would untie. You would finally wake up unburdened.

You have waited years for that day. It hasn’t arrived.

I am not here to tell you to try harder. I am here to tell you why that day is never coming—and why that is the most liberating realisation you will ever have.

Closure Is a Counterfeit Promise

I spent thirty years in international conflict resolution and frontline mediation. Not in polite seminar rooms, but on streets where history was raw and volatile. In my doctoral research and field work, I sat with people few others ever encounter: families of murder victims, men sentenced to hundreds of years in prison, and ordinary witnesses caught in the crossfire.

If closure were real, I would have seen it there. I never did.

What I saw instead was a quiet tragedy: the people who suffered the longest were often the ones waiting for a feeling that does not exist. They were told to “get closure,” “find peace,” and “move on.” When it failed to happen year after year, they assumed they were broken.

They weren’t broken. The instructions were broken.

Here is the plain truth: **some things never resolve.** There is no treaty that makes the loss of a loved one acceptable. There is no insight that erases an injustice. Anyone telling you otherwise is selling you an illusion.

That might sound brutal at first glance. But it is the doorway to your real life.

The Waiting Room Trap

As long as you believe closure is coming, your life remains on pause.

You are stuck in a waiting room, waiting for the past to issue an apology, to make sense, or to grant you permission to move forward.

It won’t. And the moment you stop waiting for it, your leverage returns:

You stop waiting to be cured, and you start learning how to govern.

You do not need your history to behave before you can live fully. You do not need the memory to stop hurting to decide what tomorrow looks like.

The question is never: *How do I make the past go away?*

The question is: **Who runs the rest of your life?**

The event? The person who failed you? The younger version of you that made a choice you regret?

Or you?

This isn't therapy. It's a craft. It is the exact same discipline used to negotiate durable treaties where peace seemed impossible—turned inward toward the friction of your own mind.

The One Pivot: From Healing to Governing

Traditional self-help asks:

"How do I heal this so it stops hurting?"

That keeps you in the role of a patient—indefinitely waiting to be fixed.

Self-governance asks:

"Given that this happened, how do I govern myself today?"

That restores your authority immediately.

Consider two people carrying the exact same heavy memory:

- **Person A** encounters the memory and asks: *Why did this happen? When will I get over it? What is wrong with me?* The memory sets the terms. The memory governs.
- **Person B** encounters the memory and says: *This happened. It was unfair, and it cannot be undone. Given that fact, what will I build with the time I have left?* They set the terms. They govern.

Same event. Two completely different lives. The only difference is who holds the gavel.

Try It Now: The Three Governance Questions

Bring to mind one unresolved issue or memory that still pulls at you. You do not need to solve it. Just hold it clearly.

Replace the old waiting-room questions with three governing inquiries:

1. What is actually true here?

Strip away the emotional storm and name one bare fact without cruelty.

(e.g., "The relationship ended badly, and they will never admit their part.")

Truth is the ground you stand on to govern.

2. What will never change?

Acknowledge the permanent reality. This is not surrender; it is refusing to spend another day fighting an unwinnable war with yesterday.

3. Given all that, what is the rest of my life going to stand for?

This is the governing decision. You stop asking the past for permission and choose your direction.

Write your answers down. Not to fix the past—the past is done. Do it to feel, perhaps for the first time in years, what it feels like to hold the pen yourself.

That calm, steady sense of command is the entire point. It does not require yesterday to cooperate.

Stop Handing It Over

You do not need a cure. You do not need closure.

You are fully equipped to govern a complex, imperfect life toward meaning, integrity, and purpose—regardless of what happened before this afternoon.

The past gets to keep what it took. It does not get your future unless you sign it away.

Don’t sign it away.

Where to Go Next

This guide is simply an opening. The discipline of self-governance isn’t something resolved in an afternoon; it is an ongoing practice of meeting your own mind with clarity rather than conflict.

I publish occasional essays, practical frameworks from thirty years in peacebuilding, and developments on *Your Civil War Within* on my website. You are welcome to explore the writing at your own pace, and to connect with me directly on LinkedIn.

Explore the writing

Essays, frameworks, and updates from thirty years in peacebuilding.

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If working through these questions stirred something you needed to articulate, you are always welcome to reply to the email that delivered this guide. I read every note.

No pressure. Just the work.

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