

Letters You Do Not Send

Writing gets past a shutdown that talking cannot. There is no face to read, nothing to interrupt, and no requirement to produce an answer while your heart rate is up, which is why a letter often reaches an avoidant partner when four attempts at a conversation did not. The trouble is that the letter written at eleven at night, in the state that made you want to write it, is almost never the one that should arrive. Three of these are for you. One of them is for posting.

Who this is for: You have tried to say it out loud twice, it came out wrong both times, and you have a notes app full of drafts you have never been able to finish or delete.

The four templates

1. The unsent letter to an ex

For the conversation that never got a proper ending.

"What I never said at the time was ____."

"The thing I keep going over is ____."

"What I wanted from you and did not get was ____."

"I am stopping waiting for ____."

The sentence in here that is trying to win an argument:

2. The unsent letter to a parent

Written to the person then, not the person now.

"When I was ____, what I needed and could not ask for was ____."

"What I learned to do instead was ____."

"The thing I have never said to you is ____."

The excuse for them I keep inserting. Cross it out and read it again:

3. The letter to yourself six months ago

Written backwards, to the version who did not know yet.

The exact week I am writing to:

"What I want you to know is ____."

"The thing you are certain about that turns out to be wrong is ____."

"It does not go the way you think. What actually happens is ____."

4. The one you send

To a current partner, with a forty-eight hour rule.

"There is something I find hard to say out loud, so I am writing it."

"What I want you to know is ____." One thing only.

"What I would like is ____." One thing, and a possible one.

The third I am cutting after forty-eight hours:

Written at _____. Earliest it can be sent: _____

5. The send test

Three questions, answered before it goes anywhere.

Does it ask for anything? If so, what, in one line:

Does it need a reply to have been worth writing?

Would I be all right if there were no reply at all? Honestly:

What I will do on the third day if there is silence:

6. What to do with the ones you keep

Kept, destroyed, or filed. It matters which.

Which letter I wrote, and on what date:

Kept, destroyed, or read again in three months?

If kept, where exactly, and why there:

One line on what changed by writing it:

This worksheet is free to print, photocopy and share, including with clients. It is self-reflection material, not a diagnosis, an assessment or a substitute for professional support. If a relationship involves fear, control or coercion, or if working through this raises more than feels manageable, please speak to a doctor, a therapist or a domestic abuse service.