

## Necessary Endings

As much as we would love to live in a world of lollipops and rainbows in which everything is bright and cheery, and the skies are not cloudy all day, the realities of life and leadership catch up to us all. In essence, in every life, a little rain must fall. Necessary Endings is Dr. Henry Cloud's work on navigating those tough moments in life, when a parting seems like the most beneficial way forward for everyone.

When I was a kid I left the east coast of Canada and headed to southwestern Ontario to start my post-secondary education. I didn't know it but at the time I had been through a process of necessary endings. Much more obvious to an outside observer, I didn't see clearly that relationships, habits, and being a dependant kid were all things about to end, as was my living in Nova Scotia! At the time, the decision to leave was full of promise, new adventure, and excitement. My mother wasn't so thrilled with my leaving but she eventually came to terms with it. Looking back, it was time for me to end a phase of my life and enter a new one. There was some pain, and I missed my friends and home fiercely, but I also knew that unless I was to start a new phase of life, I'd go stagnant and unfulfilled.

Moving out and pursuing a university education is in some cases a rite of passage, and it's obvious to us that big change is coming; we are pretty much ready for it. On the other hand, without such stark life milestones marking the moment of a necessary ending, it can be difficult to recognize when an ending becomes...er...necessary. In the business world we wonder about the company we work for, is it time to go? When leaders agonize over the continuation of employment for a certain staff member, they are evaluating the necessity of the ending. It can be very difficult to see the benefits on the front side of the decision and Necessary Endings allows for a framework to make decisions in ways that most benefit the organization. In many cases, a necessary ending is beneficial for everyone involved, even if they don't realize it in the moment. We've seen underperformers released from employment, feeling like they had been betrayed, only to turn around and find higher levels of success in their new life than before.

Essentially, the beginning realization with necessary endings is simply that something must end in order for something new to come to life. If you're making a decision that includes a parting with a family member, friend, employee, or organization, Necessary Endings will be of extreme value providing an opportunity to frame and make decisions with clarity regarding what to expect on the other side of the decision.

One of the most unfortunate circumstances surrounding tough decisions regarding the ending of employment, or a relationship is that we have a tendency to allow things to remain status quo long after we know it's time for a decision. Part of this is our tendency to want to give people another chance to get things right. Unfortunately, while merciful in intent, this delay hurts those involved. Cloud helps us see a new way to look at people with whom we are considering an ending and how long to hang on for.

Cloud also provides some advice on having the tough conversations, dealing with the grieving process that can accompany some of these decisions, and how to pick up and move forward in a new direction.

At one time or another, it's likely that all of us have delayed or avoided a necessary ending only to regret the delay later. Necessary Endings clarifies both the criteria, the execution, and the benefits of following through with a necessary ending.

*(Credit to Dr. Henry Cloud, Necessary Endings, Harper Collins, 2010)*

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