


SECOND EDITION

The Unsent Letter

A portrait of a woman with long, wavy blonde hair and blue eyes, looking slightly to the side with a gentle smile. She is wearing a vibrant red, textured knit sweater. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

*Release pent up thoughts and feelings by
writing them out so you can begin to move
forward and heal.*

By Anoushka Marcin

The Un-sent Letter
Published by Balance Psychologies
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SECOND EDITION 2019

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Please also note that this guide is the [British] English, not US English, which means that there may be a 's' where you expect a 'z' and other differences.

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FOREWORD



Through her work, experience and passion Anoushka has enlightened countless individuals aiding them to add value to their lives by achieving health, happiness and inner fulfilment. With tour dates coming out later this year and plans for a retreat too, Anoushka is also in the process of writing her first book. She is paSSionate about spreading knowledge and helping others recover from toxic dynamics.

From a young age Anoushka has had the determination to achieve something great. Anoushka is the vlogger and blogger behind the popular wellness and lifestyle blog: Balance Psychologies. She started her psychology career working in low/medium secure mental health hospitals working with individuals with a forensic background and Axis -1 disorders as a trainee psychologist. Alongside this experience Anoushka started writing her blogs.

Since then her blog has turned into a brand, YouTube Channel and an incredible community of wonderful human beings. As well as live shows and a growing social media following which connects her with her followers, listeners and readers around the globe. Featured on BBC Radio and well known industry psychology magazine 'The CC Magazine' where Anoushka has frequently contributed to the field of Narcissism. Anoushka has also found a deep love for writing, manifestation and spirituality. She uses her psychology background connecting science and spirituality in her work and this fusion has become highly sought after with her community and clients.

Anoushka attributes her success in her ability to step outside traditional training and integrate theory in such a way that helps individuals gain a better understanding and insight into their situation.

Anoushka lives in the UK, at the moment she is writing her doctoral research and producing content for various social media platforms. Anoushka is due to travel around the UK later this year speaking at various events (details are to follow). Using her own experiences and knowledge to educate other individuals, Anoushka is also in the process of writing her first book.

Part One

Understanding The Power Of Writing An Un-Sent Letter

Working with individuals to help them become unfrozen from the traumatic experiences that they have encountered I am a big supporter of writing to understand your emotions and understand the pain associated with it. It has been writing my blogs, research, articles, video content and sharing my thoughts with thousands of people around the world that has helped me experience personal growth. Organising your thoughts can lend perspective and help you to gain closure or, at the very least, greater understanding and self-compassion on issues that you may believe are long buried but are actually still impacting you now. In order to process your past, you need to find peace and closure by breaking up with and, where possible, forgiving the people who still have a hold on your heart, mind and feelings.

That said, the most important person you need to forgive is yourself...

When you hold onto toxic thoughts and emotions by not expressing and processing them, the person most impacted is you. Often when we are angry with others, we are also very angry with ourselves, as if we failed in some way and caused whatever it was to happen. Sometimes holding onto all of these feelings and thoughts becomes a security blanket that stands in the way of us having to take responsibility for ourselves. It gives us a purpose and often an excuse for why we're not stepping up. Unfortunately it can end up feeling like a never-ending punishment and very often, people who don't feel their feelings and process them end up experiencing depression and other health issues, plus there's a likely knock-on effect in terms of how they feel about themselves (self-esteem) and the types of situations that they engage in.

It's understandable to feel hurt and angry when someone has wronged or hurt you, but there comes a point when you have to question what you're gaining out of holding onto these thoughts and feelings. I hear from others who are still going over hurts that happened to them when they were a child and experiencing this sense of injustice that their parents didn't step up. They've possibly devoted most of their lives to trying to 'make' these people be different. It's not that certain people haven't hurt and wronged us or that they couldn't do with changing, but there comes a point in our lives when we have to evaluate why we're still trying to get these people to change. We cannot change another, what we can do is change the way we look at the situation and in turn our mindset. The trouble with holding onto anger and the other myriad of negative thoughts and emotions, is you end up with this mistaken impression that until you or others are held fully accountable for these, you cannot do anything. Other people not changing shouldn't stop you from getting on with your own life and doing what you need to do for you.

We're creatures of habit and what people do is about them not others and their '*worth*'. They may be stuck in long-term habits that they gain some sort of payoff from, even if it's at the expense of others. People do what they do due to their own habits, thoughts, fears, motivations, assumptions etc., which means that blaming you for their inadequacies and judging you as inadequate is grossly unfair, especially if you blame you for what happened to you as a child or for abuse you may have experienced as an adult.

The goal of the Unsent Letter is to release anger and other pent up emotions by writing out your thoughts and feelings on the issues that have a hold on your heart, head and emotions.

While a certain amount of satisfaction could be derived from letting your exes, parents, friends etc., know exactly what you think, not only am I pretty sure that they don't want to hear all of this from you, but, more importantly, it actually won't achieve the overall objective, which is to move on. In fact, if you send the letter, it's a bit like passing the baton of your pain under the guise of believing that you're being 'helpful', but actually you're being hurtful. You'll be prolonging your pain and the drama that results from the dynamic that exists between you both, whether it's directly in a confrontation or indirectly by still being angry and continuing to allow the issues to impact you. Another unwanted side effect of sending the letter is that it will inadvertently legitimise whatever reasons they think they have for whatever they've been or done – basically, don't go there. You never have to feel like this if you validate your feelings and thoughts and work through them on paper.

Of course one of the biggest objections I get to the concept of unsent letters is, 'But it won't be closure unless I let them know exactly how I think and feel!' You know what? Not everybody has the option of being able to pull people aside and get them to help with their closure work, whether it's because they've passed away, they're difficult to locate, or because they've moved on to someone else. Also, if you do send the letter what's to say that they will understand the content of your words. Some may not understand the message that you are trying to convey in your letter, the result, leaving you suspended in the air and I don't want that for you, I want to initiate your process of moving on.

Closure is something that can be achieved on your own without you having to sit down with the parties involved or call them up because, ultimately, a lot of what you're thinking and feeling is not just about the situation and the person, but also how you're judging you or struggling with disappointment.

More often than not, when you seek answers, closure and remorse from others, they tend not to meet your hopes and expectations, possibly creating more questions than answers if you continue

to rely on these people to provide you with the ‘definitive’ truth. Sometimes when you seek closure from others it’s the equivalent of ‘Tell me that what I know or think is true’, but you can do this. Validate you, because putting it all on another person to validate you is giving them too much power and you can find many of the answers within you and make peace, if you process your thoughts and keep your feet in reality. Making peace with you makes it easier to manage the impact of these people in your life – as long as you know what’s up, you don’t need to worry about whether they’ve seen the light yet or experienced what you believe is appropriate karma, and instead can ensure that you now live your life with boundaries and values.

You could go from here to eternity trying to make sense out of other people’s nonsense and letting these thoughts and feelings circle your mind, or you can let it all out and gradually make peace and feel happier.

I also hear from a lot of people who don’t ‘do’ anger as if it’s a ‘bad’ emotion and beneath them, when, in fact, anger is healthy and necessary for letting you know when you feel wronged, offended or that you’ve been denied something that you expected to happen. Anger lets you know that you need to check in with you and examine where these feelings come from. If you carry on as if anger is only for abusive people, you are ridding you of a vital opportunity to understand your own boundaries and those of others. You will also find that you not getting angry won’t stop others from expressing their opinions and anger.

Anger is a very valid emotion that many people have negative associations with due to previous experiences of somebody else’s anger, or feeling that they experienced negative consequences as a result of expressing their own anger. Particularly when you’re a people pleaser suppressing your needs, expectations and wishes, or you’ve been trained since childhood to invalidate your own feelings and perspective, it’s likely that when you have expressed anger, it’s erupted due to repeated suppression.

What you will learn from the unsent letter process is that not every experience of anger looks like or has to be like what you’ve previously experienced. Rage (uncontrollable anger) is extremely

different to anger. Unsent letters not only give you the opportunity to say what's on your mind, but, by clearing out and giving a voice to your feelings, the next time you feel angry, you will understand where that anger comes from and be able to deal with it in a better manner.

'Do I have to forgive?' is a nagging concern that lingers when people embark on this process and my answer is: the primary goal is not about forgiving others, but you will find that you achieve the same outcome and primary goal by forgiving you – letting go and moving on. You're not God, a higher power, a supreme court judge, – you just need to show that you've let go by forgiving you, and this in itself takes care of the whole process. If you forgive you, that resentment you may feel towards them or any expectations that they 'should' do such-and-such will fade away. I've never thought or written 'I forgive you' about any of my exes for instance, but I have forgiven myself and moved on, so what did or didn't happen no longer has a claim on me.

It's critical to write an unsent letter or few if you're struggling with grief, a sense of rejection, festering anger, a sense of injustice (like the other person is 'too happy' while you're suffering), or are possibly avoiding dealing with a recent hurt or loss due to knowing on some level that facing your pain resurrects a previously unresolved wound. If you continue to suppress your feelings and thoughts, or you let them ramble around while responding to them with unhealthy thoughts and behaviour, you'll end up feeling far worse, possibly with more issues to add to your list.

If you don't believe how toxic and 'all over the place' your thoughts are, the next time your thoughts spiral, sit down and literally write whatever comes into your head. It's not an editorial process, so don't worry about sounding 'correct' – just write whatever is on your mind. You would be amazed at the amount of mumbo- jumbo and seriously nasty thoughts that are reverberating in there on a day-to-day basis and you will see these on paper. Suddenly it becomes clear why you can't concentrate or you feel sluggish and burdened, or you feel like you're a terrible person – because you hate the thoughts.

It doesn't have to be like this or stay like this.

You will also find that if you give voice to your thoughts, that not only can you calm feelings which you might currently be soothing with unhealthy responses (e.g. you're feeling sad and rejected, thoughts rambling around, call up ex or stuff yourself with food until you feel ill, you feel sad, bad and rejected and lather, rinse, repeat), but you will also feel lighter and start rebutting some of these thoughts and coming up with solutions or conclusions to a thought process. Treat unsent letters as an opportunity to unburden and connect with the real you. It's easy to think that you are your thoughts and feelings, but it's only that you become your thoughts and feelings if you allow them to wreak havoc all over your life without you consciously stepping in. Not every thought is a fact and your feelings are yours and valid but they don't necessarily mean what you think they do. Change the meaning, change the feeling.

Part Two

Getting Started

This could end up being one of the best gifts that you ever give yourself, so while you don't have to be doing a jig, get behind the process instead of being afraid of it.

You might find it easy to launch into writing a letter as you may have a boatload of hurt waiting in the wings, but, equally, it can take several attempts or a switch to story mode, which is basically telling the story of your relationship or the chain of events. It might sound like a fluffy fairy tale initially, but as you write and tap into your feelings, you won't be able to avoid the truth and you'll probably be able to switch to letter mode.

Imagine that you had the chance to say exactly why you were angry, frustrated, disappointed, hurting, confused etc., what would you say? Imagine that they're listening - say it.

Make the time to sit down and write (it's more cathartic and expressive than typing) a letter to each of your exes, plus, if you have parental issues, write a letter to each parent, too. You can do it in chronological order or in order of pain, but sit down and write a letter to each of your significant exes (or all of them if you have the time!) and anyone else who impacts on your sense of self. If you still feel upset and angry or if you are judging you about something or if you're still holding out hope that somebody will spontaneously combust into a different person or swoop back into your life, those involved should be on your letter list.

When you're finished, read the letter out loud a few times with emotion and conviction and when you're done, burn it. No need to create a house fire... but certainly extinguish your negativity and set yourself free. Or get rid of it – a shredder is very handy! With exes that you feel distraught over now, you can always hold onto it for a few months and read it back further down the line when things are less raw - you'd be amazed at how the passage of time and some genuine focusing on you will mean that when you look at the letters a few months down the line, you may even laugh. Try not to keep them at home if you can though as mentally there will still be a sense of these thoughts, feelings and this person occupying a great deal of space.

It might be that you need to write several or even a hundred or more letters, possibly to the same person – this is totally normal and as you detox, you'll neutralise the effect of these feelings and gain a clearer head. You may be surprised though – sometimes you think you might need to write for the next fifty years and then you write a few and it has a domino effect and you feel miles better very quickly. It helps if while writing these letters, you support you with some self-care, so basically be kind to you.

The whole unsent letter process is similar to cleaning out your closet. You'll pull out everything and discover stuff that you didn't even know was there. Your job is to examine the contents, fold up and tidy away what you can and throw away anything useless (unhealthy beliefs) so that your body, mind and spirit has room to breathe and be there for you. Over the next few pages I've put together

some questions and ideas which act as prompts to get your writing juices flowing plus there's an additional worksheet to help you.

good luck!

Part Three

Ideas for what to include in your letter

If you're having difficulty knowing where to start, then start at the beginning.

You can take most of the elements of what is needed for the ex letter (see next section), but what is important is listing the things that you believe about you as a result of your interactions with this person as a child and adult.

Where possible, note the main incident or what was said to trigger that belief.

It may be useful to consider whether this incident contributed to a negative association that you still currently have and the effect that it's had on you. For instance, it may be that they said something highly critical, maybe there were other negative consequences and now, as an adult, you are still afraid of disappointing people and getting things 'wrong' because you associate it with disapproval and not being 'good enough', when, in fact, getting things 'wrong' is how we learn to get things 'right' and there's nothing wrong with this.

Express every unexpressed and previously expressed feeling and pour it out because what you are seeing on paper is you.

What was your earliest memory? Explain how you felt and try to capture as much as possible.

Note events that stand out and say why you remember them and how you felt as a result of each one.

Don't hold back and if you get upset, sad, or experience a range of grief emotions, you're on the right track. Try to listen to how you feel without judgment. Don't give you a hard time for the feelings that come up, acknowledge their presence, let them pass, give you a hug and write whatever springs to mind.

Did you feel vulnerable, unloved, abandoned, sidelined, disrespected, ignored, disregarded, unappreciated, unacknowledged, second best, third best? What did you feel?

If these have been recurrent feelings, note where else you have felt these in your life as it will help you to connect the dots between old pain and where it's showing up as a pattern.

What were the hopes and expectations that you had of your mother/father/caregiver and what did you believe were their reasons for not meeting them?

If you blamed you in some way, explain this and consider whether this is still the perspective that you hold or whether you now feel differently – this may reveal itself over more than one letter.

Are you trying to right the wrongs of the past?

If you drew very negative conclusions about you based on these experiences or you took the blame for certain things, are you now trying to 'correct' these in your present day and/or in some of your past relationships and experiences? How have you been doing this? By recognising where you've judged you far too harshly and even blamed you for other people's inadequacies, you can see where you've been trying to 'make up' for this and then acknowledge that you've felt badly about responsibilities that you shouldn't have taken on or been landed with in the first place.

What have you learned about your mother/father/caregiver as a result of confronting your feelings?

Acknowledge how you feel about them today, accept your realisations and if you feel ready to say it or want to, say that you forgive them and what you're forgiving them for. If you don't feel ready or want to, that's fine and include your reasons why in the letter – self-validation.

Grieve the regrets.

It's very important to acknowledge all of the things that you'd hoped for your younger self, which may be the childhood that you didn't get to experience, or the person who you think that you could have been now if only certain things had been done differently. What are the opportunities that you think that you missed? What type of person do you think that you would have been? Why do you feel sad for that child within you that has still sought their approval, love or change in some way? Why does it hurt so much? What are you going to do for you now that will help to nurture and help you to be the best that you can be? Acknowledge who you are – you are not a heap of flaws. There are good and great things about you that you may not even recognise.

What do you forgive you for?

What do you realise now that you've been doing this exercise? What have you been hard on you about? What do you forgive you for, even if it wasn't your fault? Many of the people I hear from who are struggling with their feelings have been blaming themselves for as long as they can remember. A good place to start in this area is to imagine that a child was telling you this chain of events or what they felt responsible for - would you blame him/her? Would you expect this child to be punished for years on end? Would you think that it was appropriate that they even felt as if they should have this responsibility in the first place? If you have your own child, is what you've been thinking about you, what you would think about him/her? It's highly likely that you wouldn't, so why are you being so hard on you and what can you say to forgive you and let go? How can you take the first steps towards letting go and moving away from it? Stop doing the equivalent of going back to rub your face in your sick! Forgive you for what you didn't know or do at the time, even if in retrospect you realise that it would have been ridiculous to expect someone of that age to have had that responsibility or knowledge in the first place.

Dear _____

I'm writing to you because I feel _____

I wish I could tell you _____ but I know that I can't/shouldn't because _____.

For

example: I wish I could tell you how hurt and angry I am with you but I know that I can't and shouldn't because I have already tried many times and you don't react in the way that I would like you to, which only leaves me feeling more hurt and angry. It would also be useful to include examples of those reactions so that you can validate what you know and stop expecting this person to make you the exception to their rule of behaviour.

I am feeling _____.

I am angry because _____.

I am disappointed because _____.

I wish I could change _____ [the event that happened], but I accept that I can't and have learned that _____

.

I've always wished that you'd be _____ but I accept that you're not this/ you're that _____ and as a result I know _____.

When I was a kid I wished that you'd _____. The thing that I'm most angry with you for is _____.

I need to let this all out because _____.

You could write out the specific events/incidences that have led to you feeling this way:

Do you remember that time when _____?

I remember back in _____, I was _____ years old and _____. I've been angry with you for the longest time because of _____.

I never got over _____.

I could never understand why _____ happened.

Take each and every thing that is bothering you with respect to this person and your relationship with them, inspect it, ask yourself how it changed your perception of you, give it some perspective and make peace with you about it. You'll find that after you've done a few that you may not even feel the need to do all of them because setting these things to right has a domino effect on the others by altering your perspective and perception of you and those events.

AND/OR

Write about an event or incident that you're upset/hurt/angry about:

What happened? What did you believe about you as a result? Ask yourself if what you believe as a result of what happened is an absolute, indisputable truth – the strong likelihood is that it isn't.

What did having these beliefs cause you to do? What do you know the truth to be?

Who are you really? Who are you planning to be when you change your beliefs? On reflection, when you challenge these beliefs, what do you now know?

What would you do differently, if anything? This tells you how to deal with this person next time and gives you an idea of the types of boundary that you need to have or how to conduct yourself in future.

E.g. I wish that I had said from the outset that I was annoyed instead of letting you think that I was OK as you took this as your cue to keep doing it. I gave you the wrong message and assumed you would know it was wrong. In future, I will be clear on what I do and don't expect, plus, if and when you overstep the line, I will make it clear that you have crossed the line.

The thing I've been giving myself the hardest time over is _____. I just keep wishing that I _____.

I hate that I _____.

If _____ happened again, I would _____.

I would never accept _____ ever again.

I've learned that _____.

I realise that I have the need for _____ and that I cannot ignore this.

What could they have done differently?

E.g. You could have acknowledged what I'd said to you and taken an interest instead of putting me down and laughing, but I realise that this just isn't you and I'm going to stop wishing for you to be different.

I wish that you'd _____

It's a shame that you didn't _____.

It still upsets me that you didn't _____.

I don't understand why you didn't/couldn't _____.

Have you been denying anything? If so, what is it (make sure you put down everything).

E.g. I've been totally ignoring how awful you are to me. The way you patronise me when I try to tell you something new, the way you laugh at my attempts to better myself, and how you tell a lot of 'little lies' and keep changing your story. I continue to want to believe that you're better than you are, but I have to acknowledge that I can no longer ignore how you've been treating me because it's cruel and disrespectful, plus I quite simply cannot trust you.

It pains me to admit this, but _____.

I've really not wanted to believe that _____, but the truth is _____. I've been pretending that _____ didn't happen/matter.

Who did you think they were? When you write about them as they are, who are they?

Why didn't the relationship work? Why were you incompatible? Why were you unhappy? List and acknowledge the reasons.

Our relationship didn't work because _____.

I thought that we had _____ in common, but I have to admit that the fact that we didn't have _____ in common made this unworkable.

I really liked _____ about you, but I couldn't continue to ignore that you are _____.

I really hoped and wanted you to be _____, but the truth is you're _____.

I was so unhappy in our relationship because _____. I miss you because I thought that you were _____.

It hurts that you promised _____, but you didn't and instead you _____.

I loved you, but I have to admit that in the relationship _____ and this just wasn't sustainable in the long-term.