

The Importance of Endings and the In-Between

By Penney Peirce

Imagine a time when you were at the end of something. You completed an essay you needed to write, a relationship broke up, you lost a job, finished school for the year, returned from a vacation, your parents got divorced, or you had to move to a new city. It might even be something as simple as the end of the day when it's time to sleep and dream or the end of the night when daily life appears again. Do you take time right then to notice what's happening in your mind and body? Do you feel the flow of energy making a smooth transition?

Most of us don't notice the more subtle dynamics around completions. Most of us don't like endings; they are something to be "gotten through" and on to the next thing. Or, if emotional and traumatic, they are to be avoided, suppressed, or mourned. Avoidance is a key word here—*a-void*: basically, it means to resist emptiness—stay away from the Void! So often we try to leap over the imagined chasm of nothingness to a new involvement. For most of us, endings are choppy, disruptive experiences in which we invest very little true attention.

The other thing that happens, especially when something big or fairly long-lasting ends, is that we jump to the conclusion that "something must be wrong with me." Relationships change and people move into new connections and configurations, and "something must be wrong with me" because I'm unlovable or not good enough. You were super-invested in becoming a veterinarian and one day you realize you've lost interest in it, that it doesn't seem quite right anymore. "Something must be wrong with me" because I can't maintain my focus; I'm too shallow or not smart enough, or I'm just totally clueless and I'll never make anything of myself.

MAKING THE ROUND TRIP

The truth is: life doesn't move from thing to next thing, from stuff to more stuff. Life is not all in the physical world! We oscillate, or rock back and forth between the physical reality of form and the nonphysical reality of energy and consciousness—of thought, feelings, sensations, intuition, imagination, and inspiration. We're here, then "not here," then here, then seemingly gone again. You focus, then space out, then pop back in again. When you space out, you're really shifting the focus of your mind to a higher frequency so you can enter the imaginal realm—much as you do when you dream or daydream. Why do we do this? To access new ideas, check with our higher self/soul to see if we're on purpose, and allow our energy to be repatterned and renewed.

**"Honor the space between
no longer and not yet."**

—Nancy Levin

If you pay attention, you'll notice you do this all day long. In and out, up and down. When you space out, you allow yourself to expand and spread out, to be uncontained by your head, brain, and body. You access freedom and the source of joyful creativity and all knowledge. When you come back, you bring some of it back with you. And if you stay conscious and observant, you'll soon notice what you've brought back. So we make what I call *the round trip* over and over.

If you need an answer to a problem, you may notice that you blank your mind and open to being receptive. Answers don't come when you use will power to force them. That's why we often get inspiration in the shower, from dreams, or when



we least expect it—when we’re “absent-minded.” When a period of form ends, we naturally move into spaciousness and mind-expansion, and when we’re filled up again, we re-emerge with new motivation and ideas. We go through creative cycles of having “stuff,” then space, stuff, then space. Life actually *never* stops!

The experience of moving into the “space” part of the creative cycle is actually very pleasant. People yearn for time on a beautiful beach, or at a quiet cabin in the woods. We need decompression time—it’s so soothing! And yet, sometimes we resist entering that open experience where the mind, as we know it, cannot be in control. The mind doesn’t want to stop. But under that chattering experience is a huge world full of endless possibilities, and it is so much fun to fly and swoop and play there. This is where all the genius ideas come from, where artists go to find inspiration, where your intuition originates.

ENTERING LIMINAL SPACE

I went through one of these cycles recently, where I blanked out, and wasn’t sure if I still wanted to do what I’ve always seen as my “life work.” Life

seemed flat. I realized I must need to pay attention to something deeper, something only reachable through stillness. One part of me pushed restlessly against the walls, while another part sensed that behind it all was a wave coming to lift me, and all of us, into a new kind of lit-up self-expression. But I needed to wait. Perhaps I was cocooning, preparing, gathering myself.

I learned from a science documentary that the caterpillar, when it enters the pupa stage, liquefies itself before the raw material of its body reformulates as the butterfly. That’s what I felt I was doing internally—melting down. I realized this melting process was a key part of transformation, of becoming more of my true self. I recently learned about the concept of *liminal space*—and the term intrigued me. “Liminal” relates to the idea of the threshold, as in a doorway. In fact, it pertains to the space on either side of a threshold.

**“I have a thing for doors.
I always think of them as a
threshold to something new.”**

—Jada Pinkett Smith

↓ It's interesting to begin to feel what comes immediately after something ends. You have entered liminal space, the phase that comes before crossing the threshold. You may feel in-between, that you don't know, that the old way is boring or damaging to your body and soul, and that you are out of your comfort zone. You haven't found an answer yet, can't seem to imagine your future, the Flow seems to have stopped, and you're losing meanings and security.

Your logical, task-oriented mind may go nuts in this undefined state. It wants to know what to do, what to emphasize, what to plan for. It wants to figure something out. It does not tolerate anxiety and ambiguity but wants facts. It may throw you into irritability, reactionary behavior, panic, avoidance, addiction, hyperactivity, numbness, or depression—just to have something to do. It might fill the liminal space with drama, trauma, or an accident or illness—anything but nothingness! You may think you're crazy, incompetent, unevolved, unworthy, or a failure because "life isn't working." You may feel stuck. Of course, this all goes away when you allow yourself to simply *be*, and stop all the internal dialogue and resistance.

If you are open, you may experience liminal space as an important pause, a chance to be with the moment as it is, knowing there is wisdom to be had by paying close attention and feeling into your experience. Then, waiting doesn't cause impatience. Being quiet doesn't feel like the Void. Feeling spacious and full of potential is downright pleasurable. This is the you-the-soul perceiving liminal space.

ENJOY THE DISSOLVING!

In liminal space you are being directed into the nonphysical world to clear old patterns so you can receive a new set of instructions, new imaginations, and more of your true self. In liminal space you are being asked to occupy the present moment fully, to be comfortable being timeless, still, and transparent. Liminal space acts like a magnet. Its very openness and peacefulness can catalyze the experiences you need next. If you choose to trust what emerges in liminal space, you can actually enjoy the dissolving—or in caterpillar terms, the liquefying that is the pre-threshold experience. You won't make judgments about how what comes is "bad" or that you are failing somehow.

The great thing about liminal space is that it contains the good stuff and it knows what it's doing. Somehow, those melted down caterpillar particles know how to recombine into the butterfly. It's an amazing sort of intelligence! All we need to do is clear the clutter and negative thinking. Be willing to be. Welcome the surprise of the new arising, the threshold crossing, the new curiosities and motives, and the new baby-like state of the fresh self. We are not stuck except for adherence to old thinking habits, doubt, and lack of imagination. What shape will my liquefied self be magnetized to take? I have faith that I will discover it as it occurs. The new physical world will soon appear on its rebooted, refreshed screen, and it will show us what to do. We'll know because it will feel fun, it won't exhaust us, and we'll be motivated without willpower.

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