

The Lost Art of Letting Go

We live in an age obsessed with acquisition.

We collect followers, possessions, experiences, achievements, and opinions. We are encouraged to build personal brands, document every milestone, and optimize every aspect of our lives. Success is measured by accumulation. More visibility. More certainty. More control.

Yet the most important lessons of my life arrived through loss.

Not the kind of loss we choose, but the kind that chooses us.

The death of loved ones. The end of relationships. The collapse of dreams we once built our identity around. The realization that a version of ourselves that carried us for years no longer fits.

No one teaches us how to navigate these moments.

We are taught how to achieve, but rarely how to release.

As a child growing up in the 1970s, I was surrounded by a world that felt far less controlled than the one we inhabit today. We disappeared for entire afternoons without our parents knowing where we were. We fell out of trees. We made mistakes. We got lost and found our way home again.

Somewhere along the way, our culture began to believe that uncertainty itself was the problem.

Technology promised solutions. Data promised predictability. Algorithms promised answers. But life remained stubbornly uncontrollable.

The people we love still leave.

Our bodies still age.

Careers still change.

The future still refuses to follow our plans.

And perhaps that is where the real work begins.

As an artist, I have learned that creation itself depends on letting go. Every sculpture begins with surrendering the certainty of what it will become. Every photograph captures a moment that can never be held. Every meaningful work emerges from a willingness to enter the unknown.

Nature understands this instinctively.

Trees release their leaves.

Snakes shed their skin.

The tide retreats before it returns.

Only humans seem determined to grip tightly to what is already gone.

The paradox is that what we resist often remains with us longest.

Grief cannot be hurried.

Change cannot be negotiated.

Healing does not happen because we force it.

It happens because we eventually stop fighting reality.

Letting go is frequently misunderstood as giving up.

It is not.

Giving up is abandoning hope.

Letting go is abandoning the illusion of control.

One closes the future.

The other opens it.

Some of the most beautiful chapters of my life arrived only after periods I would never have chosen. Looking back, I can see that what felt like endings were often beginnings disguised as losses.

This is not a comforting idea when life is breaking apart.

It is only visible in retrospect.

But perhaps that is why stories matter.

They remind us that transformation rarely announces itself as transformation. More often, it arrives as disappointment, heartbreak, uncertainty, or change.

Only later do we recognize that life was asking us to release one version of ourselves so another could emerge.

We live in a world that constantly tells us to hold on.

Maybe what we need now is the courage to let go.

Not because loss is beautiful.

But because freedom begins where resistance ends.

Micky Hoogendijk