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# Malibu guru leads amicable decoupling divorce ceremonies

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In happier times: Gwyneth Paltrow, and Chris Martin consciously uncoupled last year. (COLIN YOUNG-WOLFF/INVISION/AP)

Gwyneth Paltrow's marriage is still a trendsetter — even in its demise.

Inspired by Paltrow's "conscious uncoupling" from rocker Chris Martin last year, a Malibu minister is performing touchy-feely divorce ceremonies for spouses seeking an amicable closure.

Rev. Gillian V. Harris' ceremony — just \$250 a pop — includes a personalized mutual forgiveness ritual, the burning of aromatic herbs and a symbolic removal of each ex's wedding ring to let go of relationship baggage.

"This is the cleanest of clean breaks," explains Harris, a transdenominational minister with a masters degree in spiritual psychology. "You walk away with no animosity, no anger, no hurt, no pain."

She says she didn't steal the idea from Paltrow, as she's been consciously uncoupling clients since 2012, when she founded Bless & Clear Sacred Ceremonies.

"If you're holding on to anger and victimization, then that's damage you're taking with you as you journey out," says Harris. "This whole ceremony is getting two enlightened individuals to release all of that, and remember the foundation of their relationship.

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## Conscious Uncoupling

It is with hearts full of sadness that we have decided to separate. We have been working hard for well over a year, some of it together, some of it separated, to see what might have been possible between us, and we have come to the conclusion that while we love each other very much we will remain separate. We are, however, and always will be a family, and in many ways we are closer than we have ever been. We are parents first and foremost, to two incredibly wonderful children and we ask for their and our space and privacy to be respected at this difficult time. We have always conducted our relationship privately, and we hope that as we consciously uncouple and coparent, we will be able to continue in the same manner.

*Love,  
Gwyneth & Chris*

This was the "divorce" announcement on Paltrow's GOOP site last year. (GOOP)

"This is a return to love."

News of her uncouplings spread by Facebook and word-of-mouth, which is how a California mother recently decided to give the ceremony a shot in resolving her eight-year marriage after her ex-husband cheated on her.

"Yeah, it sounds weird for a divorced couple to have a decoupling ceremony," admits Jai, 38, who didn't wish to give a last name. "But we don't hate each other. We have two kids, so we're always going to be connected. So we had to find a way to work this out."

It wasn't easy. Jai was nursing a lot of resentment and personal blame about his infidelity that weighed her down. The decoupling ceremony three weeks ago lifted that weight, she said.

"To be able to sit down and have this conversation was the first time we could really each understand what the other person was going through," she says of the "very peaceful" ceremony.

Harris leads the closing ceremonies with purification rituals such as burning sage or lavender, lighting candles and aligning various healing stones and crystals to help clear away any emotional debris surrounding the couple.

She leads them in prayer before asking each person to state what they want the outcome of this ritual to be, and then they take turns forgiving each other for whatever hurt them and caused the romantic relationship to end.

And then it gets really personal. Harris leads them through a guided meditation before making them soul-gaze at each other: holding hands and looking deeply into each other's eyes to see the other's spirit essence.

Finally, they exchange their wedding rings, or gifts of jewelry that they have given each other, which Harris blesses before giving them back. Then the exes hug it out.

She recommends having kids and pets be present for the forgiveness ritual.



Rev. Gillian V. Harris administers decoupling ceremonies for former lovers who want to move to Splitsville without acrimony. (COURTESY OF GILLIAN V. HARRIS)

“It depends on the way the family operates, but it sets a great example for the kids on a healthy way to end a relationship,” says Harris.

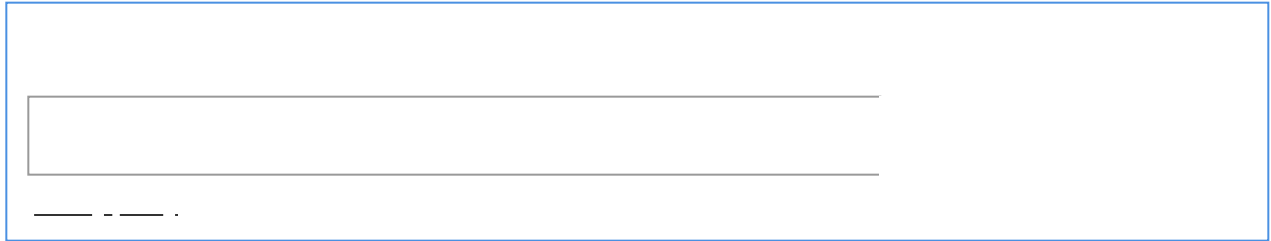
She says decouplings typically run about 20 minutes, although some pairs have become so tearful and emotional that the rites have taken as long as an hour.

Jai’s session took 45 minutes. “It was like unmarrying — taking away one title and one set of responsibilities — and exchanging them for another: being better people and parents,” she says.

Harris says there have been any angry outbursts or incomplete decouplings yet, since most pairs that approach her do so because they are still civil enough with each other to do so.

“It does seem a little bittersweet, but it’s kind of wonderful to face it rather than to go away and have a yelling match be the last time you saw your ex,” says Harris.

And it sets one up for success with their next relationship. “This is an opportunity to go off on your next Match.com date with positivity and blissfulness, feeling good about yourself and how you have evolved,” says Harris



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