

Is it humanity's fate to make the same relationship mistakes forever?

Although we have advanced so far as a society, our progress with love hasn't been as progressive. It seems like we struggle with jealousy, cheating, and heartbreak, even more than before. The marriages in the US are 50% likely to result in divorce. What is the matter? Why do humans fail to have unproblematic relationships?

Actually, our predecessors may teach us about love. This summary explores the ways ancient Buddhist philosophy guides us when it comes to our relationship problems. However, despite being ancient the Buddhist teachings about life and love are surprisingly relatable to our modern life. These reflections have helped the author's relationship a few times, and you may learn a few things from them as well.

The goal of these chapters is to guide you to change your bad habits and false expectations which have been hindering the growth of your relationships. They also challenge your approach to sex, relationships, and romance. You can use these mindfulness practices to bond with your partner, accept your relationship, and accomplish in your love life.

## Chapter 1 - The Four Noble Truths comprise the basis of Buddhist philosophy.

Buddha taught about The Four Noble Truths over 2,500 years ago. The first thing he taught after his enlightenment was these truths, which are regarded as the foundation of Buddhist philosophy.

Siddhartha Gautama, also known as the Buddha, was born a prince. Thanks to this, he was not exposed to those who were elderly, sick, or dying until he was an adult.

Surprised by these revelations, he rejected his extravagant life. He was hoping to understand the essence of existence and an end to suffering. He spent many years fasting, begging, and practicing other forms of chastity. His final resolution was to sit under a Bodhi tree until he found the truth. It is thought that he spent 49 days before achieving enlightenment. Following his enlightenment, he returned the society to teach about what he had found out—the four truths of existence.

The First Noble Truth is: Life is suffering. That doesn't mean everything is bad. In this context, suffering signifies a discomfort that humans can't ever leave behind. The root of this discomfort is the fact that nothing in life is permanent. Although we hope to hold onto things such as good appearance, belongings, and relationships, everything is transient—they come and go. And therefore, we struggle with a sense of discomfort about what will happen in the future and grieve for things left behind.

But the reason behind our suffering is not the transience. And this is when the Second Noble Truth shows itself: the cause of suffering is attachment. Meaning, the source of our anxiety is the fact that we can't leave things behind if we feel an attachment towards them.

After learning about the reason behind our suffering, we can now explore the Third Noble Truth: It is possible to end suffering. To achieve that, we need to accept reality without questioning it. Being aware that everything in life is transient, we have to discard our attachments to things. The path is known as the Noble Eightfold Path. The path teaches about various components of Buddhist ethics. If followed closely, these components will help people achieve enlightenment.

And these are the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism. They make the foundation for the Noble Truths of Love which have the same structure.

## Chapter 2 - Problems are indispensable in relationships.

We all treat the turbulence in our relationship as if they are temporary. We think that they stem from a little problem and after solving it, our relationship would be problem-free from then on.

We all have the tendency to this kind of “if only” perspective. If only we saved enough money, we wouldn’t be having an argument about our finances. If only we went to a new city, then we wouldn’t feel so bored. If only we could meet more, if only we got professional help, if only...

You may find yourself thinking about when your problems will be over. But did it ever come to your mind that the answer you’re looking for might be “never”?

It is simply not possible to remove problems from a relationship. After one is resolved, you will encounter another new one.

You might feel anxious about whether or not they will like you on the first date. Or maybe you are in a relationship and you’re annoyed by a particular action of your partner. Regardless of the longevity of your relationship, you are bound to encounter problems in your relationship.

No matter how much you work on your relationships, how well you make plans, or how deeply in love you are –problems are an indispensable part of a relationship.

You will encounter problems, you will doubt your relationship, you will feel disconnected, tired, annoyed, shocked, or simply unhappy from time to time. And that is completely normal. That’s all part of a healthy relationship.

What’s the meaning of all of this? It means that you should be accepting of the fact that it is impossible to feel a hundred percent comfortable or happy in a relationship. A certain level of discomfort is simply a part of reality. This comprises the foundation of the First Noble Truth of Love, which teaches that relationships are turbulent.

This may appear depressing as if all your hard work in a relationship is futile. But you would be wrong. Relationships flourish from these problems. Each problem helps us come

together, talk about our feelings, and come to a solution together. We become more intimate by working on our problems.

A common error of humanity is to imagine that there will be stability after solving a certain set of problems. However, this type of thinking is utopic and such a world only exists in dreams. We have to accept the little pleasures of life and live in the moment.

## Chapter 3 - We end up hurting our relationships when we expect the impossible.

You shouldn't dream of those relationships only found in the romance movies. Movies are inclined to show the subject of love in its rudimentary stage. After the protagonist realizes they are in love, the movie ends, and the audience expects that the protagonists live their lovely lives without any problems at all.

Maybe that is the reason why we don't know the line between relationships and love affairs. We have been programmed to equate love with passion and a sense of euphoria.

But love affairs and relationships are two completely different things. Passionate feelings are the basis of love affairs. We love them for making us feel great. In that sense, they are self-involved because the most important thing is how we feel instead of how our partners feel. Relationships, on the other hand, are based on mutual bonds and intimacy with our partner. They don't necessarily make us feel great all the time.

Since we don't know the line between the two, we started to expect that love affairs are going to end in healthy relationships and that the most important thing for relationships is to maintain that sense of passion. Yet, this kind of thinking is completely wrong.

We can't use fairy-tale standards to evaluate our relationships. When we start to settle down in our relationships, we think something has gone wrong.

But in fact, everything is completely normal. That is an indispensable feature of relationships, they fluctuate. Emotions come and go. We feel a strong sense of passion one day and lose it the other day. It is possible to feel a strong admiration towards your partner one day and feel exhausted by them the other one.

But we seem to have a hard time embracing this fact. The Second Noble Truth of Love teaches us that we are the reason behind the instability of our relationships for expecting love to be stable. We become more and more displeased with our relationships as we put pressure on them and expect our relationships to be stress-free.

If these situations sound familiar to you, try to be a bit more realistic with your expectations. It is unrealistic for us to wish to be delighted all the time. You should brace yourself to feel bad at times. You won't feel a strong sense of admiration every time you look at your partner and that is perfectly normal. There is no reason to feel guilty about it. And never think that small fights signify the end of a relationship.

After solving your issue with impossible expectations, you will feel that your worries and tension will start to fade away. Accepting that every relationship has their struggles, we stop comparing our relationship to other people's relationships and start to embrace it with its flaws and perks.

## Chapter 4 - Attachment leads to dissatisfaction in relationships.

We've been describing relationship expectations. Buddhists use the word attachment instead of expectation.

Attachment is something that we experience from time to time. We become attached to euphoric and thrilling things. We feel attached to experiences, particularly the sexual ones. In addition, we become attached to the stages of a relationship. People try so hard to prolong the first honeymoon stages of relationships—and they try to revive it when they feel as if it is lost.

Is attachment really problematic? Don't you think an integral part of being in a healthy relationship is to be attached to someone? Isn't leaving attachment the same as giving up on love?

Well, not really. Indeed, we feel attached to the people we love. It is not wrong to bond with people; if we didn't feel a connection there would be no relationships. However, the problematic aspect of it lies in our habits of causing unnecessary suffering to ourselves. When relationships go under changes, we need to let people go and move on.

Becoming unattached doesn't mean you need to be emotionless. You simply need to be able to say goodbye to something without resisting.

But that is not the only form of attachment. The other kind is the one that creates havoc on relationships. Our attachment to the stories—also described as the blame game.

People have this tendency to search for the reason behind things. Our mental state is, obviously, one of these things. When people feel discomfort, they try to find the reason behind the discomfort to overcome the problem and feel better. However, what they don't seem to understand is that maybe a feeling might just be a feeling, without any reasons causing it.

It is often our loved ones that we end up hurting with this kind of thinking. Thoughts like "Our relationship is not going perfectly because she's not trying hard enough," or "I won't achieve my goals because he's hindering my growth" are quite frequent to come by. We constantly make up stories about why we don't seem to advance in our lives as we would've liked to.

Sometimes it really is our loved ones who are the cause of our unhappiness. But most of the time, they are just easy targets for us to put the blame on. You might be angry due to lack of sleep, or you might just be feeling blue because of past experiences. Instead of facing the real reasons behind your feelings, it is the easy way out to blame another person.

Though contemplating is good for you, getting too attached to your stories may result in bad outcomes. What you need to do is: let the feelings be and stop thinking about the stories. Try to feel your feelings instead of rationalizing them.

## Chapter 5 - Real love is when you embrace instability with your partner.

We might say we are searching for true love, but usually what that means is that we desire to find a shelter to save us from our hardships. We aim to find a person who will support us, help us reach our dreams, and make us feel pleased.

But that is not how you love something. That is just magical thinking.

While it is true that relationships do bring a sense of safety to people, they're also pretty inconsistent—they can bring you discomfort.

If there is one thing that a relationship is unable to provide, it is stability.

I feel in love, and now I don't. I feel as if we're close, then I feel distant. I want to spend the rest of my life with you, now I want to get away from you.

How we feel about our partners may change considerably in a short amount of time. Like the weather, it is not easy to guess what will happen next.

These may make you want to avoid relationships altogether, but the idea is not to dissuade you. Rather, the essential idea behind The Four Noble Truths of Love is to help you understand what it means to be in a relationship. Relationships are a wild ride, and the worst thing you can do to this ride is to get too attached to it. "But what is the right way to approach the inconsistent nature of relationships?", you might ask.

The next thing to keep in mind is the Third Noble Truth of Love –love is facing all the instabilities together.

It means that you should be willing to get into a relationship while being completely aware that the relationship will be a wild ride. Love is when you are sure that you want to board this rollercoaster of emotion. You may feel desire, confusion, sadness with another person just to be in companionship with them.

Therefore, you shouldn't start a relationship if you think it will be easy. It will be hard. Still, you shouldn't become afraid of committing to people with this fact. What makes relationships so rewarding is the very existence of hardships.

Relationships come across hardships constantly. They are an endless game of communication and interpretation. Sometimes you will have to work on it, evaluate it, and try

new things to solve your problems. Don't forget that relationships always have something new to offer.

## Chapter 6 - Direct communication helps to deepen intimacy between partners.

You can learn from the Noble Truths of Love and still be unable to integrate them into your relationships –particularly during times where you face turbulence. Remember what Mike Tyson says: Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.

Luckily, there are few actions you can do to practice these insights in your love life. This is the essence of the Fourth Noble Truth of Love: there is a way to transcend relationship struggles.

The way to transcend relationship struggles involves building a profound sense of intimacy between you and your partner. Though it is impossible to be completely prepared for all the struggles you will face in a relationship, the proximity between you and your partner will make it easier to overcome them.

A crucial way that helps to make partners feel closer to each other is to practice meditative conversation. Meditative conversation, as can be understood from its name, allows couples to practice meditation together. The idea behind it is to create a harmonious balance of conversation with meditation combined. Partners can thus join what they have in their mind while experiencing a spiritual journey.

In order to get ready for a meditative conversation session, choose a tranquil place, and sit across your partner. The next step is deciding who will speak first. Then, turn off your mobile devices, though a timer could be helpful to keep track of the speaking turns. Each session should take around 15 minutes.

Start the session with a two-minute quiet meditation. After that, the listening partner should encourage the partner to speak by asking the question, "How are you?"

The speaker has five minutes to tell their thoughts. During this period, they hold the floor. They are free to talk about anything they want as long as it is personal. For instance, their speech may be about how things are going in the workplace, their life goals for the future, or even their doubts regarding their relationship.

The listener can't interrupt their partner during their speech. They are required to listen carefully to what their partner says. After the initial five minutes, the listener thanks the partner. Then the couple practices another two minutes of meditation, which is followed by the previously listening partner's speech.

This session should end with yet another two minutes of meditation. Then the partners conclude with an invitation for the relationship to flourish. You can say "May I have love, may

my partner have love, may all beings have love, may this relationship thrive” as the invitation message.

Congratulations, you are now informed on the means to integrate healthy intimacy into your love life. This approach is cheaper than an expensive holiday with a luxury spa room.

## The Four Noble Truths of Love: Buddhist Wisdom for Modern Relationships by Susan Piver Book Review

The modern idealization of love equates it with passionate emotions or happiness. This conceptualization is a problematic approach to love, where a person commits to a relationship with selfish expectations. It can make relationships struggles even worse when people think hardships in relation mean that something is wrong.

Love is not limited to euphoric feelings; it's a way of being. True love is when partners overtake emotional inconsistencies of their relationship –embracing the sadness and discomfort together. After we accept love as it is instead of expecting unrealistic things from it, we will be able to enjoy our journey more.

Start meditating from now on.

Whether you plan to meditate alone or with your partner, turn it into a routine and practice meditating each day. You can take ten minutes before your breakfast after you wake up. As we know, meditation is a crucial way to build a strong bond with your partner. Even meditating alone provides you the sense of comfort that you need for a healthy relationship. Simply think about the characteristics of your partner –imagine their smile, hear their laugh, and remember what you love about them. If you desire to learn more, join the author's online meditation community, known as Open Heart Project, and get your weekly meditation guide for free.

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