

RELATIONSHIPS

Some relationships arise from attachment, which comes from the illusion of a permanent, separate self. A relationship arises because of causes and conditions. One cannot make a potted plant bloom by buying it and leaving it alone. You must provide it with the right conditions e.g. by watering it.



The "suffering of change": the problem is that the level of happiness fluctuates. In Buddhism, we say that is the **nature of life and samsara.**



Romantic relationships change every moment, and this uncertainty is evidenced by **rising divorce rates.**

We can be perfectly happy in the presence of loved ones and in the next moment get depressed. This is due to the nature of what we call **"worldly feelings."**

The **"right partner"** will not solve all our problems though he/she may temporarily cheer us up.



Impermanence also applies to **long distance relationships**: people's character would have changed by the time they meet again.



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FRIENDSHIP

Status Photo Place Life event

The impermanence of friendships: friendships can both end and be revived. People grow together and grow apart.

However, there is room for spiritual friendships: the Buddha told Ananda that **"noble friends and companions"** are the whole of the holy life."

Friends Post

FAMILY

Familial relationships are not permanent: parents age, siblings grow apart, and children leave the nest.

Parents often feel lost when their children fly the coop. Also, children often forget that parents are not immutable but will age and weaken with time.

COPING WITH IMPERMANENCE

- ✓ Impermanence doesn't imply that we should forgo relationships; love makes our world a better place. Instead, we should treasure what we have now, and **accept the inevitable separation** when it comes. Life goes on even when a relationship ends.
- ✓ We also need to have a **realistic attitude** towards the happiness that we experience while the relationship lasts.
- ✓ There is nothing wrong with relationships **as long as one does not cling**. You can have meaningful and happy relationships as long as you try not to pursue (e.g. criticising) or withdraw (getting defensive etc) when conflicts arise. Both pursuing and withdrawing lead to suffering.
- ✓ When those around us suffer because of impermanence, we can **comfort them with compassion and wisdom**, just like how the Buddha comforted Patavara after she lost her son.