

1st Zen objective: Reject our given certainties

To make the most of being with your partner adopt the philosophy of a Zen couple with three objectives to put you on the right track.

How many of us have a preconceived idea of a relationship before it even starts? How many of us are certain we truly know our partner? These certainties are reassuring, they grow over time and so everyone becomes what their partner believes, shaped by their expectations. Up until the day when one of the partners gets fed up and unexpectedly reveals his or her true self...

How to: kill the Buddha

If you meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha! This retort coined by the Chinese master Lin-Tsi is certainly the most puzzling saying in Zen Buddhism. What does it mean? It's simply advising us that we should not latch onto any beliefs, even the most sacred. For Zen Buddhism, knowledge should come solely from experience and not from any preconceived ideas, as brilliant as they may appear, that we have conjured up about a person or a situation. "Killing the Buddha" is the first step towards freedom. This act, which consists of ridding yourself of your expectations, beliefs and prejudices, is, in relationship terms, a very difficult one to accomplish.

- Ban saying 'always' and 'never' when you address your partner
- Don't state certainties: 'I knew that you were going to react like that', 'You made the wrong choice, you're going to regret it', 'I know what you're going to say', etc.
- Don't lay down general laws: 'You don't have a way with children', 'You're lacking ambition', 'You only think of yourself.
- Ask 'why not?' Step away from your preconceptions about yourself and him (or her). During discussions, try to see things from their point of view, simply to break your automatic mental responses. Accept propositions that you would not normally accept for the sake of having a new experience.
- Share your emotions, your discoveries, your pleasures. Just like the first days of your relationship. Don't let problems get the better of your relationship.

(1) In *"Zen mind, Beginner's Mind"* (Shambhala Publications Inc, 2005)

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