

Put some Zen into your relationship

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.

In a perfect world, simply loving each other would be enough to make your happy relationship last. Conflicts would be solved harmoniously and the word 'routine' would be unheard of. None of us seriously believe that this world could exist.

However, not only have we not gotten over this perfection, but rather we cultivate it, like a secret garden. We wait for love in our lives as children wait for their Christmas presents. It's not a question of being disappointed or frustrated, it's just that we want it all: duration and novelty, tenderness and spiciness, somebody just like us yet different. Over the years, we have become so demanding that the first minor obstacles or disagreements in a relationship rouse great fear and doubt: am I doomed for failure? Have I chosen the wrong partner? Is this the beginning of the end?

But what if our expectations, or rather the idea that we conjured up of an ideal relationship, were precisely the first obstacles in a fulfilling life together? We crumble under expert advice and opinions urging us to overcome crises, rekindle our desire, or reweave intimate links... It could be that we are wearing ourselves out running after an ideal that is ever more distant, all simply because we have forgotten that, as the Buddhists say, "the way is right in front of our eyes." With so much running and chasing, perhaps we have lost our way, lost touch with reality.

Being Zen as a couple simple means making the most of what you have rather than putting all your energy into chasing after what "could be". "Making do" is not, as far as this philosophy is concerned, an invitation for resignation or an indication of failure, but the contrary – it's a call for creativity; exactly what many couples complain is lacking in their static relationships.

Living in truth

They call it dhyana in India, ch'an in China and Zen in Japan. Three words to represent meditation. Three words to define a philosophy, spirituality and a religion. It all began twenty-five centuries ago, when, after forty-nine years of continued seated meditation, Siddhartha Gautama reached awakening and became the Buddha.

Six centuries later, a Sri Lankan monk Buddhidharma, brought the practice of seated meditation to China. This branch developed seven centuries later in Japan and split into two schools: Sôtô and Rinzai. The main principles of Zen Buddhism are the abandonment of the ego, a full conscience of the present moment and the acceptance of reality such as it is.

Zen maintains that we are intrinsically perfect, and that, consequently there is no goal to aim for other than that of shedding the layers of illusions that mask the perfection of reality. It requires the practice of seated meditation (Zazen) work on koans (little enigmatic sentences destined to break the usual reasoning process, sessions of master–student questioning (mondo), and a host of other activities such calligraphy, archery and even the tea ceremony.

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