

## **Separation anxiety**

When people break up

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At some point in our lives, we break up with someone dear; somehow things don't work out. Just as there are many reasons that can bring people together, there are just as many reasons for breaking up. This is a painful and powerful aspect of the 1<sup>st</sup> noble truth.

### Right voice

The Buddha teaches us a number of ways to deal with separation anxiety of this nature. This is a time when we feel as if no one really understands us. But there is a voice that is constantly chatting with us, telling us how we feel, what we should have done, blaming, anger, sadness and so on.

This is a time to learn how to speak with oneself. Use as little "I," "me," and "mine" as possible in this inner conversation. Instead of saying "I am suffering," say reflectively of reality: "There is this pain ... " Speak of the positive things that we can do, and not blame anyone. "What can I do now?" Then, examine and choose the best wholesome course of action, like "Let's go to the gardens ... "

### Light and space

Sadness and depression often arise during such occasions. Instead of locking oneself up in a closed dark space, go out into an open bright space that we like. If we like people, go to a spacious mall with soft music, or a beautiful park; if you enjoy solitude, go to some quiet place, a favourite childhood haunt perhaps.

### Happy people

We all have at least a few friends or relatives who accept us as we are or those we can easily and happily communicate with. This is a time to visit them. We don't have to pour our sorrows out to them and feel dependent on them. Just visit them, and, at the right time, calmly share what has happened in a matter-of-fact way without burdening the other party.

Often a friendly chat is not only refreshing, but also healing and empowering. Be surprised that we are not alone in our sufferings. Others have suffered, too, in different ways, but the pains are often similar. Sadness, loneliness, anger, regret, blaming. Simply note these without reacting negatively to them.

Learn to SMILE at them even. We will be surprised what such a smile can do.

### Self-counseling

It's often healing just to watch and listen to our inner voice. After some powerful thought comes to us, ask: Why do I feel like this? What is this feeling really? In other words, really

know what it is like to suffer inner pain without blaming or negativity. Even be surprised by suffering.

Perhaps, we may find ourself saying: Wow! This pain, this loneliness, is terrible. If I feel like this, imagine how others, who are suffering alone, must feel! I'm not alone here. Everyone I see around me is suffering at some point. Most of us don't talk about it.

### Learning from suffering

Often we can be strong enough to be honest with ourself. We accept where our failures or weaknesses are. Notice the triggers and conditions that cause us pain. How do we avoid these triggers, or how do we correct these conditions? How would we respond the next time this situation arises?

Our sufferings are life's experiments with learning how to live better lives. If we knew exactly what to do, life would be boring in that way. When we befriend our suffering and learn what we can, we will be wiser after that.

### Phases of suffering

After all, nothing lasts forever. Not even this suffering. This time next month, next year, we will feel different. If we are observant, we may notice that we go through 3 main phases of separation anxiety (as adults), that is, protest, despair and detachment. In a way, we can "rehearse" these stages in our mind, so that we are prepared for them.

We notice at the start of the separation, how we PROTESTED our case. When we are in love, we find every reason to get together; when things don't work out, we find every reason to separate. Yet, we can learn something from this.

Then, we feel a sense of DESPAIR at the impending loss. This a powerful feeling, which we do not always know. But here it is. This is how people suffer. This is what we want to avoid, both in ourself and in others. We need friendship, partnership, fellowship, love, for this. This is a learning process.

### Accepting ourself

In time, we get use with the separation. We even begin to feel good about the new found space and peace. We start all over again. We can be our happy self again. Make new friends, have a new relationship. Do something meaningful or purposeful with our life. Let us restart with the new day and renew ourself. We have changed for the better.

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