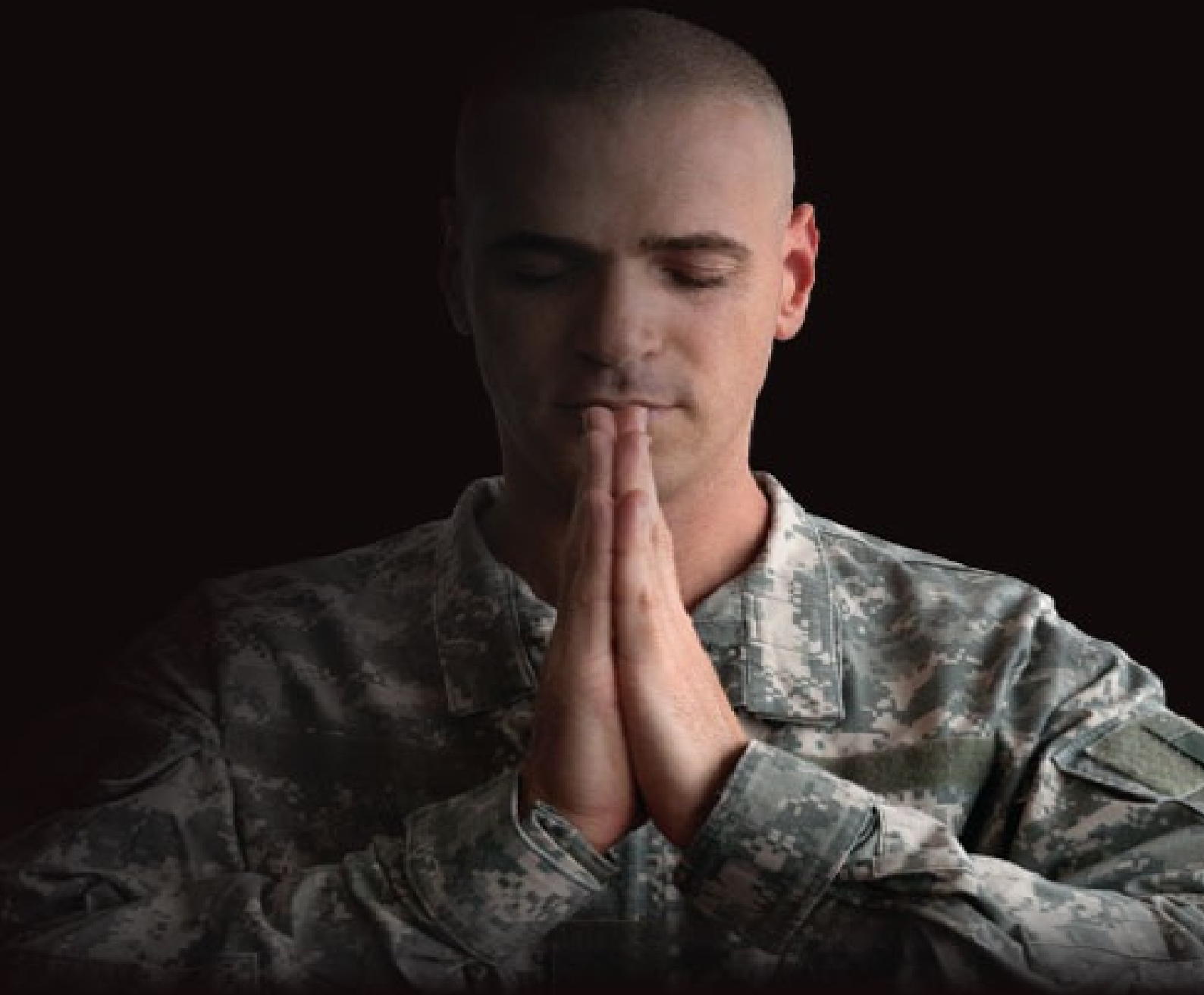


# BUDDHIST BOOT CAMP

BY TIMBER HAWKEYE



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# BUDDHIST BOOT CAMP

by Timber Hawkeye

The intention is to awaken, enlighten, enrich and inspire



HarperOne

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This book is dedicated to you.

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## What Is Buddhist Boot Camp All About

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Buddhism is all about training the mind, and boot camp is an ideal training method for the generation's short attention span. The chapters in this small book can be read in any order, and are simple and easy to understand. Each story, inspirational quote, and teaching offers mindfulness enhancing techniques that anyone can relate to. You don't need to be a Buddhist to find the Buddha teachings motivational. As the Dalai Lama says, "Don't try to use what you learn from Buddhism to be a Buddhist; use it to be a better whatever-you-already-are."

So whether it's Mother Teresa's acts of charity, Gandhi's perseverance, or your aunt Betty's calm demeanor, as long as you're motivated to be better today than you were yesterday, it doesn't matter who inspires you. Regardless of religion, geographical region, race, ethnicity, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, flexibility, or vulnerability, if you do good you feel good, and if you do bad you feel bad.

Buddhism isn't just about meditating. It's about rolling up your sleeves to relieve some of the suffering in the world. If you are ready to be a soldier of peace in the army of love, welcome to Buddhist Boot Camp!

*I find television very educational. Every time someone switches it on, I go into another room and read a good book. —Groucho Marx*

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# Basic Training

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Title Page

Dedication

What Is Buddhist Boot Camp All About

Introduction

MINDFULNESS

Grasping

Training the Mind

The Big Picture

Life Is a Piece of Cake

Less Is More

Unlearn

Sit Happens

We Are the Victims of Our Own Choices

Utopia

Leave No Trace

LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Love Is the Recognition of Beauty

What a Healthy Relationship Looks Like

My Wedding Day

Feelings vs. Emotions

Sexual Responsibility

How a Short Talk Can Make a Big Difference

The Healing Power of Love

RELIGION/SPIRITUALITY

A Simple Definition of God

The Divinity Within

The Danger of Scripture

Pray, Meditate, or Both?

Leading by Example

Karma

The Message, Not the Messenger

Buddhism as a Windshield Wiper

Teaching Kids How to Think, Not What to Think

Everyone Is Your Teacher

A Pseudo-Problem with the Golden Rule

UNDERSTANDING

The Opposite of What You Know Is Also True

Rewriting the Stories We Tell Ourselves

One Man's Truth Is Another Man's Blasphemy

Repentance

Still Learning

Middle Ground

---

The Beauty of Gray

Live and Let Live

Voting

SUCCESS

True Luxury

Careers Are Overrated

When to Walk Away

Success Means Being Happy

Redefining “Enough”

A Simple Life

Knowing Is Not Even Half the Battle

ANGER, INSECURITIES, AND FEARS

At the Root of Our Suffering

The Origin of Anger

The Two Wolves

Note the Antidote

It’s Never Too Late

Controlling Your Temper

Insecurities

The Pain Behind Our Fears

LIVING IN GRATITUDE

Grateful for Each Breath

Prevention Is the Best Cure

Versions of Violence

You’re in Charge!

Why Gratitude Is So Important

A Simple Way to Be the Change

Thoughts, Words, and Actions

Doing the “Right Thing”

Activism

Permanence

The Charter for Compassion

Easier Said Than Done

About the Author

Copyright

About the Publisher

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# Introduction

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To make a long story short . . .

I sat there in front of the Tibetan Lama, wearing my maroon robes after years of studying Buddhism. “With all due respect,” I said, “I don’t believe the Buddha ever intended for his teachings to get THIS complicated!”

My teacher looked around at all the statues of deities with multiple arms and chuckled, “The Buddha didn’t do this! The Tibetan culture did; this is their way. Why don’t you try Zen? I think you’d like it!”

So I bowed out of the temple, took off my robes, and moved into a Zen monastery far from home. Zen was simpler; that much was true (the walls were blank and I loved it), but the teachings were still filled with all the dogma that sent me running from religion in the first place.

There are many incredible books out there that cover all aspects of religion, philosophy, psychology, and physics, but I was looking for something less “academic,” so to speak. I was looking for something inspirational that people today would not only have the attention span to read all the way through, but actually understand and also implement in their daily lives. I pictured a simple guide to being happy, and in it just two words: “Be Grateful.”

Gratitude has a way of turning what we have into enough, and that is the basic idea behind *Buddhist Boot Camp*.

The short chapters convey everything I have learned over the years in a way that is easy to understand without you needing to know anything about Buddhism ahead of time. In fact, this book is not about being a Buddhist; it’s about being a Buddha.

It is very possible (and perfectly okay) for someone who is Catholic, Muslim, Atheist or Jewish, for example, to still find the Buddha’s teachings inspirational. You can love Jesus, repeat a Hindu mantra, and still go to temple after morning meditation. Buddhism is not a threat to any religion, it actually strengthens your existing faith by expanding your love to include all beings.

“Boot Camp” is a training method, and Buddhism is all about training the mind. Many people claim they don’t have time to meditate every morning, but still want spiritual guidance without any dogma or rituals attached. That is exactly what *Buddhist Boot Camp* provides in this quick and easy-to-digest format.

You are now a soldier of peace in the army of love; welcome to *Buddhist Boot Camp*!

Your brother,  
Timber Hawkeye

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# MINDFULNESS



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# Grasping

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Just as we habitually hoard old birthday cards and souvenirs, bank statements and receipts, clothes, broken appliances and old magazines, we also hang on to pride, anger, outdated opinions and fears.

If we're so attached to tangible things, imagine how difficult letting go of opinions must be (let alone opening our minds to new ideas, perspectives, possibilities and futures). Our beliefs inevitably solidify to be the only truth and reality that we know, which puts a greater distance between us and anyone whose beliefs are different. This distance not only segregates us, it feeds our pride.

All of this grasping, by the way, stems from fear.

Why are we so terrified of change, strangers, the new or the unknown? Has the world not continually shown us beauty, sincerity and love through every generation? Are we so focused on the darkness that we no longer see or even remember the light? This is like *The NeverEnding Story*, if you remember it, wherein the minute people stop believing in a reality, it ceases to exist.

Love is real, people! And it's all around us. It vibrates beneath every act of kindness, service, art and family.

Fear is also very real; it permeates every doubt, despair, hesitation, hatred, jealousy, anger, pride and deceit.

Habitually contemplate whether your thoughts stem from love or from fear. If your thoughts originate in love, then follow them. But if they originate from a place of fear, then dig deep to find the root of your fear. Only then will you be able to finally let go of it so that fear no longer limits your possibilities.

There's nothing to complain about, no reason to be afraid, and everything is possible if we live FOR each other.

As far as I'm concerned, anything not meant to benefit others is simply not worth undertaking.

*All the happiness in the world stems from wanting others to be happy, and all the suffering in the world stems from wanting the self to be happy. —Shantideva*

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## Training the Mind

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Your mind is like a spoiled rich kid! You have raised it to think whatever it wants, whenever it wants to and for however long, with no regard for consequence or gratitude. And now that your mind is grown, it never listens to you! In fact, sometimes you want to focus on something, but your mind keeps drifting away to whatever IT wants to think about. Other times, when you really want to stop thinking about something, your mind “can’t help it.”

Training the mind means being in charge of your decisions instead of succumbing to cravings and so-called “uncontrollable urges.” Can you think of a better method for training a spoiled rich kid than some serious boot camp?

First things first: stop granting yourself everything you crave. Doing so simply conditions the spoiled kid to know that it can continue having whatever it wants.

Please do not mistake this for deprivation, because that’s not what I’m suggesting. You can still have ice cream, for example, but only when you decide to, not when a craving “takes over.” There is a difference.

So when a thought arises, just watch it; don’t react to it. “Oh, I really want ice cream” . . . that’s nice to see what it’s like to want something but not always get it.

The first few times that you try to train your mind you will see the little kid in you throw a tantrum which is actually hilarious. But it’s understandable; you’ve never said “no” to it before. It’s time you start!

You will eventually notice that you actually have more freedom to choose once you’re in control of your choices. It’s tricky; I just hope this chapter makes sense.

*Things turn out best for those who make the best of the way things turn out. —Art Linkletter*

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## The Big Picture

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We are urgently rushing toward some goal or dream, or an ever-elusive “finish line” of some sort. Under the pretense of pursuing happiness (and the heavy weight of questions like “Where do you see yourself five years from now?”), we imagine a different version of ourselves existing in the distant future somewhere—often richer, calmer, stable and wise.

As a result, we spend very little time appreciating where we are today. By being so focused on how things “could be,” we are under-appreciating how great things already are.

Unfortunately, this mindset affects how we approach almost everything else in life: instead of being grateful for what we already have, we exhaust ourselves with cravings and longings for what we haven't yet achieved; and rather than seeing the beauty and blessing of the friendships and relationships in our lives (and how fortunate we are to have them in the first place), we regard them as inferior to the imaginary versions we've created of them in our minds.

If we give ourselves very little credit for how far we've already come, we tend to give others little or no credit for their own efforts in life. When we're impatient with ourselves, how can we possibly be forgiving of others? And as long as we continue judging ourselves when we look in the mirror, we'll be doing the same to everyone around us.

Wouldn't it be great to stop, if only for a minute on a regular basis, and reflect on how wonderful everything is?

Pause for a moment and honor the progress you've already made in your life, acknowledge the gifts you do have, and appreciate life itself for a few breaths.

We are continually evolving, growing, learning and expanding. And let's face it, we will never be “done.”

Take a step back and notice how the small details we fret about seem to disappear when we look at the big picture.

*I may not have gone where I intended to go, but I think I have ended up where I needed to be. —  
Douglas Adams*

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## Life Is a Piece of Cake

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When a friend recently asked me if there is anything I would change about my life, I instinctively said, “Absolutely not! I am more content than I’ve ever been, and happier than I ever thought would be possible.”

His response was, “Surely you would like to have more money, a bigger house or SOMETHING, no?” And my answer to that was . . . “No.” I mean, I am already happy; who knows what more money would do to my life?!

It’s like this: if life is a cake recipe that we are trying to perfect, then I’ve got my recipe down JUST RIGHT for the time being (with the ideal amount of flour, sugar, baking soda, etc.). More sugar, for example, would not necessarily make a better cake. In fact, it might ruin it!

So if you’re not happy with your life, figure out which ingredients make it bitter and take them out. Don’t believe commercials that tell you to spread more frosting on the top, because then you would simply wind up with a bitter cake that has frosting on it.

People say things like, “If I just go on vacation to Hawaii, then my life will be better!” The problem is that when you return home from the Islands (or, in other words, when you’re done licking the frosting), your bitter cake will still be there waiting for you.

But, and this is the really good part, if you get the ingredients JUST RIGHT, then your life is awesome (with or without frosting). Anything fun you do on top of that is, well, icing on the cake!

We get to try a new recipe every morning (especially if we live our lives to the fullest). So even if your cake ends up bitter one day, that’s okay—make it differently tomorrow. Just never blame other people if your cake doesn’t turn out; we each bake our own.

Here’s a secret: while everyone’s recipe is a little different, the main ingredients for a successful batter are love, gratitude, kindness and patience. And the single most common ingredient that makes people’s cake bitter is fear, so don’t use it!

Happy baking, everybody!

*If we always do what we’ve always done, we will always be who we’ve always been. —Anonymous*

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## Less Is More

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My dad wanted to see what my life was like after years of hearing me talk about simplifying and being a minimalist. I told him that to TRULY understand it, he'd have to come live with me for a month, so he did.

He is very much the materialistic consumer, so when he first walked into my little apartment he said, "OMG! You don't have anything!"

After living with me for a month, however, preparing my meals with me, going for long walks every day, reading, writing, meeting with people one-on-one, and truly tasting the simplicity of my life, he hugged me before boarding his flight back home and said, "there is nothing missing from your life!"

It brought tears to my eyes because he actually got it. Both his statements were true: I don't have anything (in the materialistic sense), yet there is nothing missing from my life.

When I shared this particular story on *Buddhist Boot Camp's* Facebook page, I received hundreds of wonderful comments from readers who truly understood the significance of that moment with my dad.

Working part-time so that I can live full-time is the best decision I've ever made. I don't feel like I have "sacrificed" a life of "luxury"; I've simply exchanged material goods and the illusion of abundance for actual, true bliss.

I moved apartments every six months when I was younger, so I learned not to keep ANYTHING that would later have to pack. No knickknacks, no souvenirs, no "stuff."

It feels great to be so light and free from any attachment to things. But if you're torn about throwing away or giving away something that has a memory attached to it, keep in mind that you're only giving away the object, not the memory.

If you're worried about not remembering something, take a picture of it (the photo doesn't take up any room). The past will let go of you if you let go of the past.

Now spread your wings and fly!

*You don't have anything, yet there is nothing missing from your life. —My dad*

I'm not sure if wisdom is so much about acquiring additional knowledge, or more about letting go of the illusion that we know any ultimate truths.

My dad made an interesting observation when I explained my life journey to him. "You're not trying to learn anything new," he said. "You're trying to go back to being two years old, aren't you?"

To some degree, I think that's true. I mean, I didn't know how to be prejudiced or judgmental at that age. I was fascinated by everybody regardless of race, weight, height, gender or even species.

In fact, I think everybody is born caring and compassionate, with the capacity to unconditionally love all sentient beings without exception. As soon as we are old enough, however, our parents, teachers, preachers, and society teach us to only love and trust family members or, at most, people with the same colored skin.

As a result, by the time we reach high school, we're so disconnected from one another that we can watch an entire nation starving on TV and not feel an ounce of compassion simply because they don't look like us. It's sometimes not until after college (if at all) that we wake up to realize, "Hey, wait a minute. They're people too!"

I admit having felt very distant from people who were "different" from me in my preteen years. But we certainly don't have to stay who we were when we were younger! I can't even watch a caught fish flopping on the sand without feeling its agony nowadays, let alone see another human in pain.

Sometimes life isn't about anything new that we have to learn, but about what we have to UNlearn instead.

I am another you, and you are another me. And the journey continues. Namaste.

*It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men. —Frederick Douglass*

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## Sit Happens

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Life can be like a loud football stadium, with all the visual and auditory stimuli of a game (the screaming, laughter, cheering, food, noisemakers, players, refs, and the vibration of your seat . . .).

Now imagine the same stadium absolutely silent, still and calm, to a point where you can hear a person whispering at the other end of the field. That's how I can best explain the transformation of my world through sitting meditation. By lowering the volume, I went from hearing the music of life, to listening to the sounds that make up the song; from living, to being alive.

The true beauty is that it's ongoing . . . it keeps getting better. My senses are heightened and I notice even the subtlest internal changes. There are no words to describe how profound and incredible this feels; one must experience it to truly understand, if only for a moment.

Sitting very still may not sound interesting, but the results of doing it on a daily basis are extraordinary. Is peace merely the absence of war, or is it tranquility despite the conflict? Is happiness the absence of suffering, or is it contentment despite the imperfections?

I believe we can be happy in a world that is already broken, and have inner peace in the midst of chaos. We can be in a frustrating situation but choose not to get frustrated, and we can also find bliss in less-than-ideal situations. Happiness is a choice.

When the mind's delight in being stimulated is exhausted, serenity sets in . . . a deep calm with a half-smile of appreciation and acceptance of whatever arises, without judgment or aversion. It's a sense of relief beyond peacefulness; it is divine tranquility.

*Through meditation and by giving full attention to one thing at a time, we can learn to direct attention where we choose. —Eknath Easwaran*

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## We Are the Victims of Our Own Choices

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Where we are today is a direct result of decisions we've made as far back as ten years or lifetimes ago and as recently as last night.

We have a tremendous personal responsibility for the way our life has turned out, and an equally important role of steering it into the future. Although we constantly make decisions, we're not always mindful of their far-reaching consequences.

The first step is to have a very clear idea of the kind of life you want to live (perhaps a simple life, uncomplicated, comfortable, calm and happy). Then, before making any decision, ask yourself, "Will this action that I am considering get me closer to the kind of life I want to live, or farther from it?" The key, again, is to think of the far-reaching consequences of your decisions, not just instant gratification.

Here's the catch: **the path of LEAST resistance will often take you farther from your destination than the seemingly more difficult one, but an easy trek in the wrong direction is ultimately far more exhausting and devastating than an uphill climb toward euphoria.**

Every decision you make is important. If you smoke now, for example, you might not be able to donate a lung to your own child in the future. And if you have more money than you need while someone else doesn't have enough to buy food, you're not changing the state of the world; you're contributing to it. There are no shortcuts to anyplace worth going to.

Instead of looking to blame others for your dilemmas, look within. Any circumstance (no matter how devastating it may seem), is not only caused by a past event, but is actually a blessing if we gain wisdom from it. History doesn't have to repeat itself if we can learn from our mistakes the first time around.

Treat every living being, including yourself, with kindness, and the world will immediately be a better place.

*If you really want to do something, you will find a way. If you don't, you will find an excuse. —E. James Rohn*



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# Utopia

Imagine the world as a restaurant, and we are all its employees; a group of people who share the vision of a perfect dining experience (great food, wonderful service, and a pleasant ambiance).

Each person has a different responsibility, and no task is more important than the other; it takes the combined effort of everyone involved for the dream of utopia to become a reality. While one person is the cook, another is a server, the other washes dishes, and yet another cleans the bathrooms, but they each do what they can in order to help the restaurant be a success.

The most important (and difficult) aspect of ANY job is to focus on the task at hand, and to not worry about whether someone else is doing her or his part.

It is not our place to judge or comment on somebody else's job performance. The minute we become more concerned with what someone else is (or is not) doing, is the minute we fail to do our own part.

We cannot control what anyone else is up to; we can only be mindful of what we can each do individually, and do it well.

This approach is very applicable in our daily lives. I have seen people who drive electric cars get angry with SUV owners, and vegetarians being downright hostile toward

their meat-eating brothers. Everything is subject to time, place and circumstance. We do not all ripen or awaken or mature at the same rate, and the opposite of what you know is also true.

Be gentle with yourself, kind to others, and love your neighbors unconditionally (not only if they live according to your beliefs).

*Everyone is a genius, but if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its entire life believing it is stupid. —Albert Einstein*

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## Leave No Trace

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One of the practices in the kitchen at the Zen Center is to wash, towel-dry, and put used dishes back where they belong (it's part of the "leave no trace" training).

Other residents occasionally left their dishes in the sink, so I did what I thought was the "right thing" to do and put them back. The Temple Keeper saw me doing it one day and gave me "the look" followed by "the speech."

"How are you helping them with their practice if you do that?" she asked. "Leave the dishes for them to see when they return."

It was interesting to understand that even an act of kindness could have a negative impact, and that sometimes we cause more damage by trying to help because we're not looking at the big picture or what "helping" truly means.

This is why *Buddhist Boot Camp* was written without any "should" statements in it. I am not here to tell you what to do, but rather to convey what I've learned in the simplest terms possible, so that you can apply the lessons in your own life if you want to.

The book's intention is to inspire readers to be the best version of themselves there is, which sometimes means NOT putting other people's dishes away, or else you'll get "the look."

*Beyond right and wrong there is a field. I will meet you there! —Rumi*

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# LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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## Love Is the Recognition of Beauty

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A flower doesn't stop being beautiful just because somebody walks by without noticing it, nor does it cease to be fragrant if its scent is taken for granted. The flower just continues to be its glorious self: elegant, graceful, and magnificent.

Our Mother Nature has provided us with these immeasurably valuable teachers that blossom despite their short lifespan, stars that continue to shine even if we fail to stare at them, and trees that don't take it personally if we never bow down in gratitude for the oxygen they provide.

We also have an incredible and unlimited capacity to love, but the question is: Can we do it like a flower? Without needing to be admired, adored, or even noticed? Can we open our hearts completely to give, forgive, celebrate, and joyfully live our lives without hesitation or need for reciprocity?

It seems like sometimes we go beyond taking things personally and are noticeably deflated when we are unappreciated. In fact, devastated, we wilt in sorrow and then attempt to guard ourselves by withholding, using all sorts of protections and defenses. We get hurt (even angry) if our boss fails to recognize an astonishing feat, if a lover pulls their hand away, or when a friend forgets our birthday. Can you imagine a flower copping an attitude for not being praised, or the moon dimming its glow because we're too self-absorbed to notice it more often?

Make an effort to shine **no matter what**, to love unconditionally, and to be a kind and gentle soul (even when nobody is watching).

And, if you're so inclined, hug the next tree you see and say, "Thank you!"

*Everything has its beauty, but not everyone can see it. —Confucius*

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## What a Healthy Relationship Looks Like

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Relationships are often misunderstood to be a simple commitment between two people; a dedication to each other with a sense of belonging to one another. That kind of limited perspective breeds expectations, possessiveness and disappointment, and it reeks of ownership, greed, ignorance, and selfish desire.

A healthy relationship is an agreement between two people to support one another in their spiritual practice. It is a vow to encourage each other's dedication, devotion and path, free from attachment and expectations (yet full of caring and compassion). A healthy relationship is based on unconditional love, not on the need to possess. Although you put plenty of "heart" into it, you lose nothing by giving love away.

If each person is equally dedicated to inspire, create, awaken, and enrich the lives of others, then there is no hidden agenda. It is far less important what one receives from the other than what one can give.

Intimacy would suddenly surpass warmth and tenderness to also include patience, vulnerability, honesty, active listening, understanding, connection, and unwavering trust.

There is a healing power inherent in this kind of union, and it is capable of enabling deep transformation for both people. It is an incredible opportunity to actually practice what we learn (from non-violent communication to meditation, listening, mirroring, authenticity, resolve, radical honesty, appreciation, purpose, equality, celebration and mutuality).

Healthy relationships are a collaboration of sorts: two peaceful warriors spiritually supporting one another on their individual journeys to spread positivity and light.

May we all close the gap between what we believe and how we act in the world.

*Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.*  
—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

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## My Wedding Day

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I got married at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco on September 9th, 1999. I was young, in love, and under the impression that if you “seal the deal” when everything is great, then you don’t end up with a marriage like my parents’ (described by them as “unhappily ever after”), but rather remain youthful, related, passionate, and optimistic “for as long as you both shall live.” Did I mention I was young and in love?

At the time, neither one of us had any role models for what a healthy relationship looked like, but we had more than enough reasons to be skeptical that any marriage could actually last. (I was a paralegal at a family law firm when we met, and the divorce rate in California was about 75 percent back then.)

We decided not to include “’til death do us part” in our vows. Instead, we said we’d remain married “so long as we both want to stay in this.” Our love was unconditional, you see, but our staying together was conditioned upon happiness and willingness to continue. We were in love, but we were very logical about it.

So we got married under that beautiful dome in front of three hundred friends and relatives, and I still have wonderful memories from that incredible night of 9/9/99. The number nine, as it turns out, didn’t mean “longevity” after all, at least not for us.

Even though we were together for a couple of years before getting married, we had very different expectations and assumptions about what “marriage” actually meant. This difference in opinion ultimately led to a mutual and civil agreement to separate; an agreement that was reached during a couples therapy session just a few months after the big day. We remained best friends for a handful of years after the breakup, but then the universe took us in completely different directions, and we lost touch.

I spent years trying to reproduce the positive aspects of that relationship with others, and then a few more years practicing celibacy while studying psychology and religion at the same time. I wanted to understand what people believe, and why they believe what they do.

When I heard about an old man who introduced the woman he was with as the woman who walked beside him, I finally understood what Antoine D. meant when he wrote, “Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.”

It was clear that I had to redefine what the word “relationship” meant to me, and that two people could actually help one another stay on track instead of lose focus.

I call it a REALationship.

*What comes, let it come. What stays, let it stay. What goes, let it go. —Papaji*

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## Feelings vs. Emotions

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A friend called me crying one day because her boyfriend had left her for another woman. I couldn't understand why she was devastated. "You want to be with a guy who loves you as much as you love him, right? Someone who would never do this to you, correct? And this guy obviously doesn't fit those criteria, so why are you sad?" It made no sense. At least not to me.

It was clear, right there and then, that my view on emotions is very different from other people's. I view emotions as the potholes on an otherwise smooth path toward euphoria, while my friends celebrate (yet complain about) the ups and downs of their emotional roller coasters. I'm not a mean, cold-hearted or unsympathetic individual; I simply trace back the origin of the pain we feel and, if it is self-inflicted—which it almost always is—I say, "If it hurts when you pinch yourself, stop pinching yourself!"

My friends know me very well, by the way, so when they come to me for guidance they actually expect this kind of a reality check. I can understand, however, how or why my comment would seem so brutal to an outsider.

I was taught that feelings naturally come and go (like clouds in the sky), whereas emotions are feelings with a story attached to them. Those emotions can last for as long as we keep feeding the story, and this can go on for years. So when people FEEL sad, I understand, but when they EMOTIONAL sad, I get very confused.

Buddhism teaches us that if we get attached to impermanent things (and feelings are a perfect example of things that are impermanent), then our lives will be full of anguish. But if we live each moment without getting attached to it, then we can eliminate the very cause of suffering right there and then and joyfully live our lives.

As soon as I started studying the Buddha's teaching I thought, "Now THIS makes sense! It's absolutely brilliant!"

Although it makes logical sense, it also takes years of retraining the mind to see things this way (especially in the heat of the moment). We all feel sad sometimes, or hurt, angry, excited, anxious, or even blissful, but it never lasts for very long, and that's okay. When one feeling passes, another feeling will replace it.

It's natural to feel disappointed when things don't work out as you had hoped, but the only natural response when that happens is to move on. Difficult as it may sometimes seem, it's still easier than trying to cling to what is no longer there!

All you can do is remind yourself to let go.

*Losing an illusion makes you wiser than finding a truth. —Ludwig Börne*

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## Sexual Responsibility

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Someone posted the following question on *Buddhist Boot Camp*'s Facebook page: "What is the Buddhist stance on homosexuality?"

The answer is simple: Buddhism has a precept regarding sexuality in general; it does not have different teaching regarding homosexuality than it does on heterosexuality.

The third Buddhist precept, beautifully translated by Thich Nhat Hanh in his book *For a Future to Be Possible*, is about "cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society." It is about respecting your own "commitments and the commitments of others," and not engaging "in sexual relations without love and a long-term commitment." The precept invites everyone to "do everything in [their] power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct."

When a sexual act is an expression of love, loyalty, honesty, warmth and respect, then it doesn't break the third precept (whether the couple is of the same gender or not). As long as there is love and mutual agreement between the two people involved, it isn't sexual misconduct.

Unfortunately, as is the case with all organized religions and philosophies, some sects would argue this point, but I don't think the Buddha would. Bigotry wrapped in a prayer is still bigotry, and we don't play that game!

The same answer applied when someone asked, "Can you tell me what the Buddhist views are on women? I saw something very alarming the other day and want to get my facts correct."

Buddhism equally honors and respects all beings (period). If you witness ANYONE making exceptions to that rule, those exceptions are illegitimate.

The Buddha fully prepared us for this when he said, "Don't believe everything you see, read, or hear from others, whether of authority, religious teachers or texts. Find out for yourself what is truth, what is real. Discover that there are virtuous things and there are non-virtuous things. Once you have discovered for yourself, give up the bad and embrace the good."

So just remember: **Compassion has no contingencies.**

*It doesn't matter who you love, where you love, why you love, when you love or how you love; it only matters that you love! —John Lennon*



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