

# 7 Buddha

## 1. The Four Noble Truths (Pali Canon)

### 1.1 First Noble Truth: There is Suffering (Dukkha)

- “Suffering” (dukkha) includes:
    - Obvious pain: illness, loss, conflict, aging, death.
    - Mental distress: worry, frustration, disappointment.
    - Subtle “unsatisfactoriness”: even good things don’t fully satisfy and don’t last.
  - Key idea: Recurring suffering is inevitable as long as we live with ignorance and attachment.
  - WHY internalizing this can reduce suffering:
    - Lowers unrealistic expectations (“life should always be pleasant”).
    - Makes difficulties feel less personal (“this is part of human life, not uniquely my failure”).
    - Helps you respond wisely instead of with shock and resentment.
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### 1.2 Second Noble Truth: Suffering is Caused by Desire

- More precisely: suffering is caused by craving/attachment (clinging), not by all desire.
  - Craving = a needy, grasping “I must have / this must not be taken from me.”
  - Forms: craving for pleasure, status, permanence, control, or even annihilation of what we dislike.
- How craving produces suffering:
  - Wanting what we don’t have → frustration, envy, discontent.
  - Having what we want but fearing loss → anxiety.
  - Losing what we’re attached to → grief, rage, despair.
  - Hating what is present (pain, insult, injustice) → internal torment.
- Objection: “It’s not the wanting; it’s the not having.”
  - Buddhist reply:
    - \* If you satisfy one craving, new ones arise. The basic restless structure of craving remains.
    - \* You can test this: recall a big thing you once thought would “complete” you. Did it end dissatisfaction?
- Objection: “Desire doesn’t cause all suffering. What about physical pain?”
  - Distinction: physical/initial pain vs mental suffering about it.

### The Two Darts of Suffering

- First dart: unavoidable unpleasant experience (e.g., injury, illness, insult).
- Second dart: the extra mental layer:

- Resistance: “This must not be happening to me.”
  - Clinging to a narrative: “I’m ruined; my life is over; they can’t treat me like this.”
  - Fear, resentment, self-pity, rumination.
  - Buddhism claims:
    - We usually can’t avoid the first dart, but we can greatly reduce or drop the second dart.
    - Craving/aversion produce the second dart; weakening them reduces overall suffering, even with the same external pain.
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### 1.3 Third Noble Truth: To Eliminate Suffering, Eliminate Desire (Craving)

- Not: eliminate all goals, plans, or ordinary preferences.
  - Instead: eliminate attachment/clinging:
    - Let go of the “my happiness/identity depends on this” attitude.
    - Accept impermanence and lack of full control.
  - Objection: “If I eliminate desire, I’ll do nothing and die.”
    - Reply via distinction:
      - \* You can still have:
        - Preferences
        - Commitments
        - Projects
      - \* but without clinging to outcomes.
    - You still act wisely and energetically—but with less fear, anger, and desperation.
    - Motivation shifts from craving and anxiety → clarity, compassion, and wise intention.
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### 1.4 Fourth Noble Truth: The Eightfold Path as the Cure

- The Eightfold Path is the training that gradually:
    - Weakens craving, hatred, and delusion.
    - Cultivates wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental discipline.
  - Three broad areas:
    - Wisdom: seeing reality clearly (e.g., impermanence, not-self, cause-and-effect).
    - Ethical conduct: speech, action, and livelihood that reduce harm and agitation.
    - Mental training: effort, mindfulness, and concentration to steady the mind.
  - For this course: main takeaway
    - The path is a practice for transforming how the mind relates to experience.
    - End goal: a mind that does not cling—hence no second dart; profound peace (nirvana).
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## 2. Preference vs Attachment (Craving / Clinging)

### 2.1 Mere Preference

- A calm, flexible inclination:
  - “I’d rather X than Y.”
  - You care and act to achieve X, but your basic well-being does not feel at stake.

- Features:
    - If blocked, you feel some disappointment but can adapt.
    - You don't need to distort reality to protect the preference.
    - You can enjoy success without terror of losing it.
  - Examples:
    - Preferring one dessert over another.
    - Wanting to do well on an exam, but if you don't, you learn and move on.
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## 2.2 Attachment (Clinging, Craving)

- Rigid, needy stance:
    - “I MUST have this; I CANNOT be okay without it.”
    - Often tied to identity or self-worth: “If I fail at this, I'm worthless.”
  - Signs of attachment:
    - Strong anxiety about losing the object (person, status, achievement, comfort).
    - Intense anger when frustrated.
    - Obsessive rumination.
    - Inability to accept change; heavy fear of impermanence.
  - Examples:
    - Needing others' approval to feel okay.
    - Being unable to tolerate the idea of aging, career failure, or relationship change.
  - Pali Canon link:
    - “Mind precedes all mental states; if with an impure mind one acts, suffering follows.”
    - An “impure” mind = full of greed, hatred, and delusion—i.e., forms of attachment and aversion.
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## 2.3 Why Attachment Causes Suffering, Preference Does Not

- Preference:
    - You can lose what you prefer and still fundamentally accept reality.
    - Emotional response ≈ sadness or disappointment, but not ongoing torture.
  - Attachment:
    - Turns natural desire into a second dart.
    - Leads you to replay injuries and insults mentally (“He hurt me, he wronged me”), keeping hatred alive.
    - Creates constant vulnerability: any threat to the attachment shakes your whole sense of self.
  - Buddhist strategy:
    - Keep preferences and wholesome aims.
    - Drop the inner grip—the thought that your worth or possibility of peace depends on specific outcomes.
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### 3. Practicing Letting Go (Non-Clinging) & the Lake Metaphor

#### 3.1 What Letting Go Is (and Is Not)

- Letting go:
    - Releasing your mental grip on thoughts, emotions, and outcomes.
    - Allowing experiences to arise and pass without insisting they stay or go.
    - Not a form of repression; you're not denying or pushing away feelings.
  - Not:
    - Apathy or indifference.
    - Forcing yourself not to feel.
    - Pretending "I don't care" while secretly clinging.
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#### 3.2 Practical Steps: How to Practice Non-Clinging

##### Step 1: Notice

- Become aware of:
    - Thoughts: "I can't stand this," "I need them to respect me."
    - Emotions: tightness, anxiety, anger, craving.
    - Body sensations: tension in jaw, chest, stomach.
  - Key stance: curious, non-judgmental observation—"What is present right now?"
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##### Step 2: Gently Release / Let Go

- With a thought or emotion:
    - Name it: "thinking," "worrying," "anger is here."
    - See it as a passing event, not as "me" or as absolute truth.
    - Mentally loosen your grip:
      - \* "I don't have to follow this thought."
      - \* "This feeling can be here without me acting it out."
  - For cravings:
    - Acknowledge: "Craving is present."
    - Notice the urge in the body; watch it peak and pass like a wave.
    - Don't feed it with stories ("I deserve this," "Just one more.").
  - For aversion:
    - Notice the "NO" reaction.
    - Allow the discomfort (first dart), but drop the extra "This must not be!" commentary.
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##### Step 3: Repeat, Patiently

- This is a skill; repetition is essential.
- Start with small, everyday attachments:
  - Annoyance in traffic.
  - Desire to check your phone.
  - Mild envy or insecurity.

- Also avoid growing new attachments:
    - Don't dwell on slights, build revenge fantasies, or constantly replay praise.
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### 3.3 The Lake Metaphor

- Ideal mind = calm, clear lake:
    - Surface is mostly still, reflecting the world accurately.
    - Not constantly churned up by storms of craving, fear, or hatred.
    - When disturbed, it settles naturally once the wind dies down.
  - Emotions/thoughts = wind and waves:
    - Hatred, injustice, fear, anxiety: strong winds that create rough waves.
    - If you cling or resist, you keep stirring the water.
    - If you let go—don't grasp, don't push away—mental "wind" decreases and the lake settles.
  - Takeaway:
    - Goal is not to suppress all waves, but to:
      - \* Not dwell on them.
      - \* Not identify with them.
      - \* Allow the mind to return to stillness more quickly.
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## 4. Awareness Without Resistance: "Don't Cling, Don't Push Away, Don't Ignore"

This is a concise formula for how to relate to any experience (thought, emotion, sensation) in awareness.

### 4.1 Don't Cling

- With pleasant experiences:
    - Enjoy them fully, but recognize they are impermanent.
    - Avoid "I must keep this feeling/person/status forever."
  - With neutral or unpleasant experiences:
    - Don't cling to self-centered stories:
      - \* "I am this depression."
      - \* "I will always be a failure."
  - In practice:
    - Notice when you want to hold on (to praise, pleasure, comfort).
    - Acknowledge the wish, then let the object/event come and go.
    - Remember: clinging is what turns change into suffering.
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### 4.2 Don't Push Away (No Resistance / No Aversion)

- With pain, fear, sadness, or insult:
  - Allow the first dart: "This hurts."

- Drop the second dart: “This is unbearable; it shouldn’t be happening; I hate these people.”
  - Non-hatred:
    - Buddhist teaching: hatred is never ended by more hatred; it ends by non-hatred.
    - If you replay “He abused me, he harmed me,” hatred continues.
    - If you stop harbouring those thoughts, hatred naturally fades.
  - In practice:
    - When something unpleasant arises, mentally say “Let it be here” for a few breaths.
    - Feel it in the body without immediately reacting or distracting yourself.
    - Watch resistance as just another experience you can allow and release.
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#### 4.3 Don’t Ignore (Don’t Numb Out / Don’t Space Out)

- Ignoring = a third unhelpful strategy:
    - Zoning out, distraction, denial, refusal to look.
    - This allows hidden attachments and fears to keep driving behaviour unconsciously.
  - Why non-ignoring matters:
    - You need awareness to see craving and aversion clearly.
    - Only what is seen can be let go.
    - The Pali canon emphasizes seeing what is truly essential vs unessential—this requires clear attention.
  - In practice:
    - Notice impulses to escape: compulsive scrolling, overeating, mindless TV, etc.
    - Instead, stay with your actual experience for a bit:
      - \* “Loneliness is here.”
      - \* “Boredom is here.”
    - Observe without judgment; this itself weakens their power.
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#### 4.4 Summary: Awareness Without Resistance

- For any experience, apply all three:
  1. Don’t Cling
    - No grasping, no “I must have/keep this.”
  2. Don’t Push Away
    - No war against what’s already here; allow it to be felt.
  3. Don’t Ignore
    - Don’t go numb; stay gently aware.
- Result:
  - You still experience life fully—including joy and pain—
  - But you greatly reduce the second dart of mental suffering.
  - Over time, the mind becomes like a well-built house or a calm lake:
    - \* Less easily shaken by passion and hatred.
    - \* More stable, clear, and capable of genuine happiness.