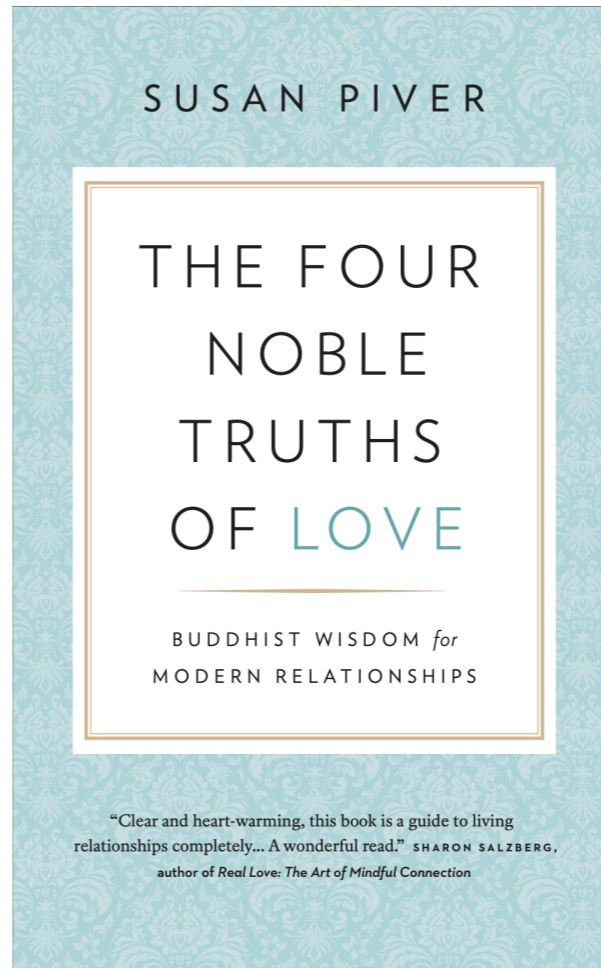
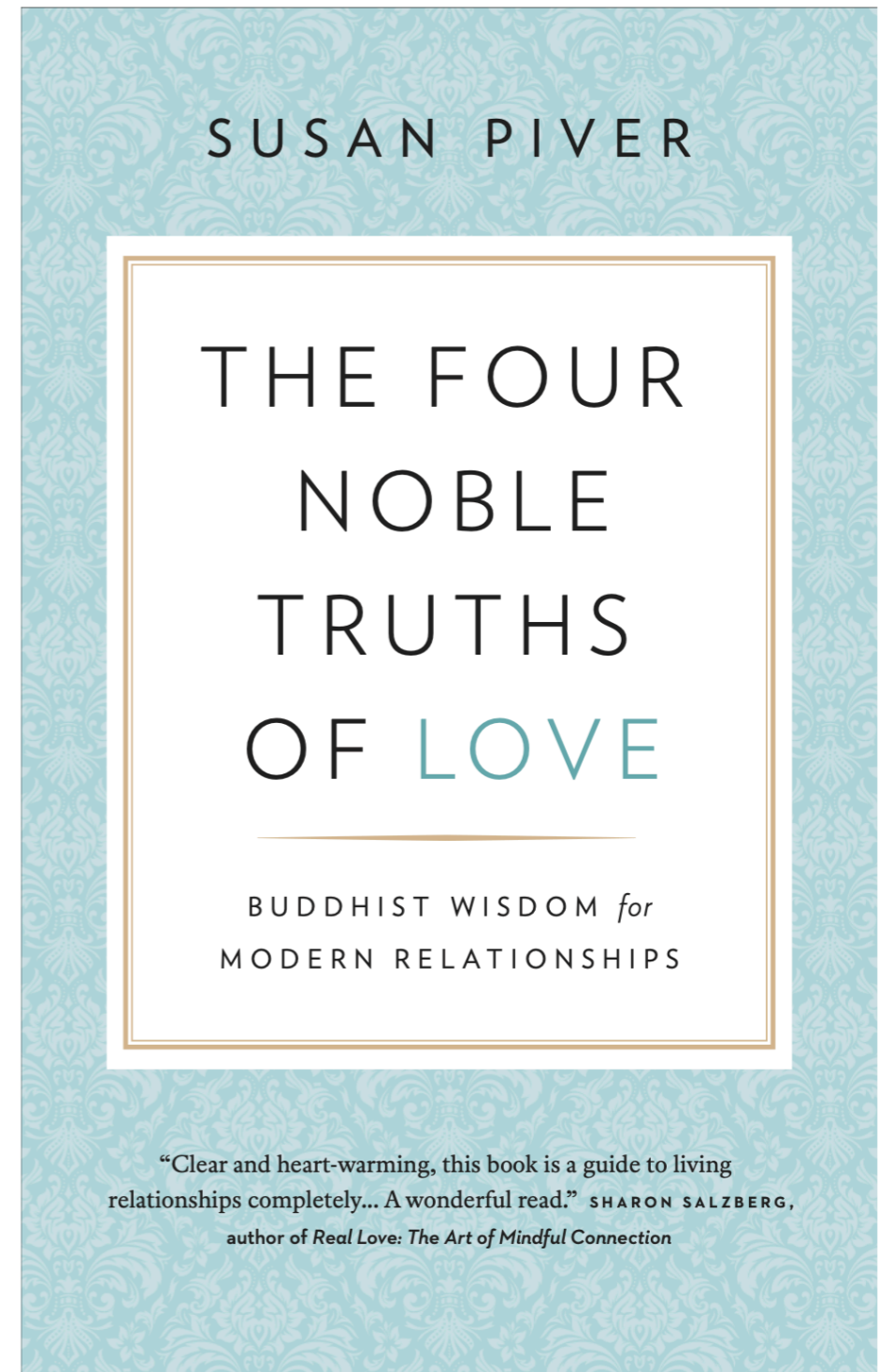

The Four
Noble
Truths of
Love:
The
Valentine's
Day
Additions



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Welcome!



My book, *The Four Noble Truths of Love: Buddhist Wisdom for Modern Relationships* offers an alternative view of love and relationships, one that include outrageous joy, lots of mistakes, a willingness to extend yourself fearlessly, and lots and lots of ordinary sorrow. This view of relationships says, among other things:

1. Relationships never stabilize. (Why didn't anyone ever tell us that?!)
2. Thinking they should be stable creates much of the instability.
3. Meeting the instability together *is* love.
4. Buddhism has a lot to say about what deepens love and intimacy (and no one has to become a Buddhist).

You don't have to agree with me on these points. They are simply what I have learned from 20+ years as both a Buddhist and a wife. In fact, I think *The Four Noble Truths of Love* is the first book ever written about relationships by a Buddhist teacher who is also a wife.

I've heard from many of you about the impact of this point of view, but I think I can sum up the general response in one word:

Phew.

Seriously, y'all. Something in this way of looking at love enables us to take a breath and let ourselves (and our loved ones) off the hook for creating perfection. What a different world it would be if we treated each other as precious and perfectly flawed humans rather than devices to be used in our own happiness schemes.

How would we celebrate Valentine's Day in this world? First, candy hearts would be outlawed. Second, I might want to consider the following:

What would a real celebration of love look like if it included, not just romance (yay, romance!) but also joy, chaos, sadness, and the mystery of deep connection?

What if my heart is broken? What is there for me to celebrate? How can I be included in this day of love when all it brings up is a kaleidoscope of horrible feelings?

What if I'm in a long-term relationship but we're in a fight? Why is it so hard to be compassionate to the ones we love?

I have questions! What questions do others have?

To follow, I invite you to peruse the answers I have come up with.

Relationships are hard!

And glorious!

Your heart can never actually be broken!

Here's to love!

Let's celebrate it all together.

Love, Susan





A Different Kind of Valentine's Day: It's Time

My first Valentine's Day memory is of sitting in Miss Tompkin's first grade class, hoping and praying that someone, anyone would leave a candy heart on my desk. "Be Mine." "Sweet Thing." "Kiss Me." I didn't even know what those things meant. I just knew that if I was not on the receiving end of at least one candy heart, life was worthless. I'm not exaggerating. Every time someone passed my desk, I prayed that this would be the moment my worth was established by the demonstrated desire of another. Every time they passed by to offer their love elsewhere, I was crushed. I saw boys I liked (I was rampantly hetero even back then) choose others and couldn't understand why. I saw boys I didn't like and made ready to compromise if only they would notice me. (They didn't.) I looked at girls who were literally rolling in candy hearts and wondered *why?* I looked at myself and thought: *Ugly. Invisible. Worthless.* I was six years old.

Hope. Fear. Disappointment. Envy. What kind of holiday was this?!

As an adult, I vowed to stop caring about Valentine's Day. Each year at the beginning of February, I would pretend not to notice that every advertisement turned pink and red, hotels and restaurants offered romantic deals for lovers, and even drugstore shampoo and GAP t-shirts had a Valentine's Day version, all aimed at celebrating that loving, sexy relationship you were sure to have.

I knew it was a stupid holiday, created by advertisers. If I wasn't in a relationship at the time, I made fun of it. If I was, we either made fun of it together or went all in with a fancy dinner reservation followed by lingerie, a set-up which basically guarantees disaster of some sort: an argument, a break-up, and/or suddenly finding we had nothing to say to each other.

Normal Valentine's Day SUCKS.

This year, we readers of [The Four Noble Truths of Love](#) are going to take a different approach. We're going to forget about all that candy heart stuff and celebrate real love: Romantic love. Familial love. Friendship-love. Pet-love. Hero- and Heroine-love. God-love. Goddess-love. Love-love. No love-love. All the loves. No one will be left out of this version of the holiday.

What I suggest below is an alternative Valentine's Day celebration, one not based on the "am I loved/chosen/deserving" angst that began for me in Miss Tompkin's first grade classroom. It is meant to offer toward something more satisfying and real.

No matter where you are right now—partnered, single, heartbroken, in love—there is something to celebrate when it comes to true love.

The Four Noble Truths of Love Valentine's Day Celebration Recipe

Sometime in early February, sit down and make a list of everyone you love. Take your time. List as many or as few beings as you like. Mine will include my husband, family, colleagues, cats, friends, and YOU, wonderful reader.

Get out a piece of paper or open a blank document. Create three columns. In the first column, list the people and animals you love: partners, friends, children, colleagues, and, obviously, pets. But you don't have to stop with those you know personally. You could include artists, activists, sages, cultural icons, and deities. For example, when it comes to my friend Crystal, here is what I imagine her list would include:

Christopher
Plum (the cat)
Nuala
Kevin
Me
Iris Murdoch
David Bowie
Carl Jung
Padmasambhava

If my husband Duncan made a list, it might show:

Duncan Jr.
Me (lucky me, I'm on two lists already!)
Jon
Gary
His dad
My dad
Sly and Robbie (the cats)
George Jones
Gregory 'The Ruler' Isaacs

I'm making these lists up, but I want you to see that they include people who are close, people admired but never met, living people, dead people, humans, and animals.

Who is on your list?

Gather photographs of these beings (or images or tokens that evoke their presence) and lay them out somewhere: on your kitchen table, bedroom floor, or shrine table (if you have one). If you're inspired, instead of one piece of paper for them all, create a page for each and decorate it as you like. You could craft the hell out of this--if you want. Or keep it simple.

On February 14, look at each name and/or face. Linger. Let yourself feel what you feel. Notice how (or if) the love you feel for each differs. What does it feel like to love your child? How does that differ from what you feel for Padmasambhava or George Jones? Let all the varieties of love wash over you. You are capable of so many kinds of affection.

Then, start again at the top and imagine the love that this person or being might feel for you. Use your imagination. If Carl Jung never met you (his loss!), imagine what qualities you share that would allow him to appreciate you. Receive that appreciation. Let yourself be loved by your family, friends, pets, and idols. Enjoy each meeting of the hearts.

Now onto the second column. Next to each person's name, list one thing you love about them. It could be anything from "always smells nice" to "altered the course of human history for the better." Take your time. Let yourself notice all the wonderful qualities they possess. Choose one, and, as you write it down, linger over the particular kind of appreciation you feel because of it. Acknowledge them, thank them, appreciate them.

In the third column, write down what you wish for each in the coming year. You might wish that your sister finally finds the love she wants. You might pray that your cat gets lots of treats. If it is someone you never met—or is now departed—you might write down what they would wish for you. Feel the connection you have with this known or unknown being.

Throughout The Four Noble Truths of Love Valentine's Day look over what you have created. Let yourself fill over and over with love, affection, admiration, respect, gratitude, and joy. Dedicate the day to enjoyment of love in all its forms. Feel the accompaniment of those you love. You may

not know this, but Saint Valentine is not just the patron saint of lovers, he is also the go-to protector for epileptics and beekeepers so clearly we have got some room to manoeuver.

This is so much better than a 'Tweet Me' candy heart, yes?

Who will you love and allow to love you? What will you create in honor of it all on this Valentine's Day? Let us bask in real love.

II Invitations to the Broken-hearted



I couldn't trust myself not to weep in public. I also couldn't trust myself to sleep at night, either. At a time like that we have to surrender. We are facing something vast and, really, we have always known that we would have to face it. It is an enormous, shaggy beast blocking the way. And there is something exhilarating about the inevitable when at last it arrives; awakening is not a choice or a matter of technique anymore, it's the only place left. The huge animal rolls over us, and suddenly we find that we are riding on its back. It has become a vehicle.

The obstacles really have become gates. John Tarrant Roshi

If your heart is broken from losing love, Valentine's Day can be particularly hard, or worse, shaming. You want to tune the whole thing out. You think of all the happy lovers out there gazing dreamily into each other's eyes while you sit alone gazing dreamily at Netflix.

Rather than (or, let's face it, in addition to) feeling sorry for yourself, you could also recognize that heartbreak presents the precise circumstances for transformation required by alchemy, the ancient art of transmuting metals into gold, base substances into richness, poison into medicine. As the great writer Catherine MacCoun says in her pivotal book, *On Becoming an Alchemist* (READ IT), in order to transmute energy, something solid must first be introduced into a state of volatility. My friend, you are in that state right now and thus are ideally positioned to turn pain into wisdom. Your primary material? Your own heart, exactly as it is, raw, tormented and, seemingly, broken.

So fucking what?, you might ask. I don't care about wisdom. I don't care about becoming some kind of lady Dalai Lama. I just want this pain to stop. I want it to go away. WHERE IS THE OFF SWITCH?

Perhaps there is an off switch. I invite you wholeheartedly to search for it. If and when you find it, you'll need to let everyone else know. In the meantime, perhaps you've tried the following: Drinking. Drugs. Drunk Dialing. Demonizing (insert relevant gender). Demonizing yourself. Sex with someone. Anyone. No one. Sleeping a lot. Therapies of all sorts. At certain times any of these could be momentarily useful, but eventually the pain comes rushing back and then what do you do?

It is enormously helpful to find a way to tolerate your own pain. To hold it and inspect it to see what you can learn from it. Otherwise, just when you think, "okay, I'm better, I really think I'm getting over this thing," WHACK, some song lyric or message T slams you back down again by evoking a certain memory or association. But what if I told you that this back and forth had logic? That it contained invaluable information about how to heal and, beyond surviving, how to strengthen and empower your capacity to love?

You can't circumvent heartache—you can only go through it, gingerly and with great presence of mind. Heartache is like a swamp that comes out of nowhere to drown the superhighway of love you thought you were on. When the road suddenly disappears, you have a number of choices. You could turn around and try to drive back to where you came

from, but that place doesn't exist anymore. You could get out of the car and wait, but for how long? You could gun the engine and plow your way through the swamp, but you might drown. Or you could slow down, switch gears, and proceed with great caution to make your way across the stream, gingerly. You won't know how deep or wide it is until you enter it. You won't know if you have enough gas or at what point the electrical system will short out. The only thing you know is that once you start to make your way through, you can't stop. You have to keep going.

It may sound grim, but, if anything, it's more like Grimm's Brothers because out of nowhere guides will appear to help you. I don't know how to explain this, but they will.

The invitations below can help bring them closer.

Eleven Invitations to the Broken-Hearted

1. I invite you to view the sorrow and madness of heartbreak as a condensed, knotted form of wisdom. 'Awakening is not a choice or a matter of technique anymore, it's the only place left.' I invite you to view your emotional pain, not as something to be chased or explained away, but as a powerful communication from just beyond conventional understanding, offering you a chance to invite magic into everyday life.

2. I invite you to experience your own heartbreak. I understand that an invitation to relief and peace is preferable, but that is simply not

what is happening right now. If, as the Buddhists say (and I invite you to view it as such), every moment invites enlightenment, please consider that that moment may be now. And now. And now. For better or worse, it is not an invitation to a fabulous party or the beloved's welcoming embrace—at least not that beloved's. In this moment, a different beloved is beckoning. This beloved knows your heart of hearts. It knows how deeply you are able to love. It knows that, at its very core, your heart possesses an endless supply of passionate warmth.

3. I invite you to experiment with the idea that heartbreak could be a source of the most profound wisdom imaginable and that you already possess this wisdom. It is the source of unconditional joy, of a life of meaning and depth. There is nothing, absolutely nothing you have to do to acquire this wisdom, except to relax and allow it to blossom.

4. I invite you to become interested in your inner life, understand your own mind, and taste liberation.

5. I invite you to view your heartbreak for what it truly is: a genuine experience of power and wakefulness. Ask: If this situation were my teacher, what would it be here to teach me?

6. I invite you to let go of any and all stories you attach to heartbreak and, instead, simply feel what it feels like.

7. I invite you to open to your deepest wisdom, which, in heartbreak, is liberated from conventional restrictions. Ask: Right now, who do I know I am, beyond doubt?

8. I invite you to discard completely and fully all negative self-talk and instead listen. Listen to this world which is seeking to teach you precisely what you most need to learn. Ask: Seen and unseen friends, please be here with me now.

9. I invite you to convert poison into medicine; to offer yourself to the world as a being of compassion and love, as one whose heart is always broken but is also stabilized within that brokenness.

10. I invite you to work with every moment as a possible moment of awakening. Ask: In this moment, where is the source of my heartache?

11. I invite you to rouse the aspiration that all beings who feel as you do, who suffer from a broken heart could be healed exactly as you wish to be healed, in this moment, right now.

On Compassion



One of the big challenges in all relationships is finding a way to be compassionate toward our loved ones. Oddly, it can be easier to feel compassion for a stranger.

Often when we think about compassion the very next word that arises is “should” as in: I should be compassionate. We bring a moralistic view to this profound state that transcends the boundaries of morals and moralism. “Should” is irrelevant. For example, you may think about certain people, I can't be compassionate because you're an asshole. Irrelevant. Good people are [compassionate](#) so I will let go of my true feelings and be nice even though you don't deserve it. Irrelevant. These thoughts will not lead to true compassion.

Last night, I had a dream about cats. I'm a cat lover. I suffer with the cats of the world and when I think about all the stray cats out there, it keeps me up at night.

In my dream, I saw a kitten and a rabbit in the backyard. The rabbit was quite large. It stood behind the kitten, bit its neck and started shaking it. I ran out, picked up the rabbit, and shook the kitten loose. It flew a few feet and landed on the grass. The rabbit hopped away.

I didn't know if the kitten was dead or alive but I picked it up. The kitten was alive. I went inside, got back in bed, held the kitten to my skin under the covers, and felt my heart mix with the life and death of this tiny creature. I had no idea what would happen, all I knew was that I was going to remain right there, no matter what.

I was so heartbroken, I woke myself up and felt the echo of my heart essence mixing with the life and death of this little one.

Somehow that is the pith instruction in compassion.

Immediately, we see that compassion is beyond judgment. Rather, it is choiceless. It was choiceless to shake the kitten loose, it was choiceless to pick the kitten up, it was choiceless to mix my heart essence, it was choiceless to cry. Would I do that in waking life? I have no idea. Luckily, it was a cute kitten as opposed to, you know, a psycho killer. It's natural to think, "sure, anyone would want to take care of a kitten. What about the most awful people in the world? Am I supposed to cradle them to my breast too?" You know, let's not start there. That is too complicated. Let's start with something simple, like a little kitten. We can build from there.

I want to share with you something I read this morning that is a counterpoint to the moralistic view of compassion. It is from Kamalaśīla, an Indian teacher who lived more than 1,000 years ago.

Moved by compassion, bodhisattvas take the vow to liberate all sentient beings. Then by overcoming their self-centered outlook, they engage eagerly and continuously in the very difficult practices of accumulating merits and insights. Having entered into this practice they will certainly complete the collection of merits and insights. Accomplishing the accumulation of merit and insight is like having omniscience, itself in the palm of your hand. Therefore, since compassion is the only root of om-

niscience, you should become familiar with this practice from the very beginning.

Kamalaśīla points out that omniscience (or wisdom) comes from compassion. Not from study. Not from testing theories. Not from being really, really smart. Rather, it is letting go of self that opens the floodgate. This does not mean diminishing self or putting yourself second. In my understanding, that is a Western interpretation. In the Buddhadharmā, it means something more like allowing yourself to merge with what is, not holding yourself separate.

Meditation practice is the practice of not holding yourself separate.

Rather than disappearing into your stories about what is happening, you disappear into what is happening. It takes tremendous courage. Compassion, as it turns out, is not about feeling sorry for everyone or moping about in pretend empathy. It is a gesture of fierceness. People talk about finding the courage to accomplish audacious goals, go sky-diving and so on, but those things are a walk in the park compared to the bravery of true compassion. What is really heroic is to be open and willing to communicate with this world and its powerful sorrows.

Anyone who says otherwise doesn't know what they're talking about.

Q&A on Love with Susan



From a talk given to the Interdependence Project in New York City.

Susan Piver: Why is it hardest to apply the dharma in your closest relationships? It's sort of a rhetorical question, although, if anyone knows, I'd love to hear it. It doesn't matter how much dharma you know. It doesn't matter how deep your practice is. It doesn't matter how committed you are. When it your partner does that thing for the 107th time that you've told them never to do again, all your ability to be equanimous and compassionate disappears. It's really weird.

One way Buddhism can help is by helping you establish the “right view” of what love is and can be, and how to do it. If you start out with “wrong view” which is something like, you're supposed to make me happy and that's what the relationship is about, then, obviously, it's not going to work.

What is the right view? Does anybody have any thoughts? It's a hard question.

Audience: Maybe that we're here to share ourselves.

Susan Piver: Mm hmm. We're here to share ourselves, I think is an excellent view.

Audience: To see the person that would serve a clear perception that's craving security without clinging.

Susan Piver: To see the person with clear perception and something without clinging?

Audience: Craving security.

Susan Piver: And without clinging, yeah. That's a good one. It's very hard not to cling to the person you love. It's really hard, and I'm not saying that you shouldn't cling to them.

Audience: It's also hard to not cling to an image of that person that we make.

Susan Piver: Yes, that's right. I think that's the crux. It's hard not to cling to an image of that person that we make (up). The person that you fall in love with gradually starts to disappear in your mind and is replaced with an image of the being that you think is supposed to be there – this is what a person who loves me is supposed to look like. The inner projector goes crazy. The closer you get to love – because the higher the stakes are, and the more scared we all get, the more we become like, if you're going to love me this is how you have to do it, and this is what I need in a relationship. You should know those things, and those things are not to be (discounted), but when that becomes what the relationship

is about, then it chokes. It chokes the situation. We all walk around, you can imagine, with an inner projector. We each have a movie playing in our head, around the clock, of what life is supposed to look like. We cling to it because we're afraid to let go of it. If you just open your mind into space, without pre-knowing what things are supposed to look like, it's very groundless and disorientating. You need to practice to be able to do that. In the meantime, you have a movie playing in your head that you're constantly refining, and getting a new director, and firing the star, and just changing the situation. It's like there's a lens in the middle of your forehead and wherever you look it is projecting the movie that's in your head, and whoever happens to walk through is in the movie. I think the right view of love—his is my personal opinion, the Buddha did not say this—is to turn the projector off, completely. Do you think that's a good idea?

Audience: It's the best way to live life.

Susan Piver: How do you turn the projector off? Wouldn't that be amazing? How would you like to be loved by someone who could turn the projector off? Think about that.

Audience: That'd be kind of scary.

Susan Piver: How so?

Audience: I imagine that it would reflect your projector a lot, what you're adding to a situation if nobody else is adding something.

Susan Piver: It would shine a spotlight on your own projections. Yeah, it would, I'm sure, which is a kind of politeness. It's doing you a favor at a certain level.

Audience: When thinking about serial monogamy and applying these ideas, I think the more I get into this work, the more I realize the love for previous people other than the one you're with currently seems to kind of resound in new ways. I was just wondering if you could talk about still being in love with people from the past.

Susan Piver: What do you think? I don't mean to throw this back on you, but when you say you're in love with people from the past, what do you mean?

Audience: That I haven't had a lot of acrimony at the end of my relationships. It's been a lot of—kind of like the situations you describe: distance and things like that. I've never been one to shut people out. I find in dreams and my thoughts I'm missing in profound ways a couple different people who are not the person I'm with now. It's challenging.

Susan Piver: How so? Why?

Audience: Because I'm trying to understand what to do with it, if it's a letting go thing, or if it's a closure thing, or if it's a should I go back thing. It's all that confusion.

Susan Piver: I think I can understand what you're saying. I would just suggest playing with the idea that it doesn't mean anything but it (also) doesn't mean nothing, either. It doesn't mean anything in terms of what you're supposed to do, but it may instead mean something in terms of the flowering of your own heart.

Instead of trying to decipher the message, I would put my mind directly on the feeling that arises. If a feeling of longing, or a feeling of missing, or a feeling of remorse, or whatever it might be arises, there's no problem. Just put your attention fully on that feeling like you do your breath in meditation, and let the story go completely. This will facilitate whatever is in the works.

Audience: I'm remembering something I've heard you say: that another person is not a "pawn in your happiness" scheme. I really resonated with that sentence. I was like, that's awesome. Just the idea of what you were talking about when you first get into a relationship and maybe there's good things, and sometimes I think beginnings of relationships can be tough, too, depending on what people are bringing into it and what has happened before. Even being a relatively—I'd like

to think of myself at this point as a relatively aware person. Still that crap of making someone a pawn in your happiness scheme pretty much is right there.

I mean, I wonder if you'd speak a little bit more to the disappointments that you – when you're realizing oh, it's like oh. It's just this person who has the same shit that I have in their own way. It's just what it is. There's a bit of a disappointment in that or realizing this person is not exactly what I thought would be the person who should love me a certain way. There's a certain grief, I guess, that kind of comes with that, taking off the veil of that—

Susan Piver: This is a very good and rich area to explore. Bring your full awareness to those feelings. Try to drop any storyline that's connected to them. That's the hard part. That's the good part. Pema Chödrön says “feel the feelings and drop the story.” I'm very angry because she said my whole book in one sentence, but that's Pema. (Laughter)

To encounter disappointment and grief is very painful. I don't mean to minimize that. It's genuinely painful. It puts your relationship so firmly in the human realm and yanks it so quickly from the god realm. The human realm is where we want our relationships to take place because that's where we can love and be loved, take off our clothes and connect, and find out what intimacy is.

When it comes to these things, disappointments and grief—and I really believe this, I try to walk this talk: They're not a problem because whatever you encounter in your relationship, the good, the bad, and the ugly, is always a means for deeper intimacy. Not for deeper love, not for deeper happiness in the conventional sense—because feelings of love come and go—but in the ability to cultivate intimacy, like how much can I know you, how much of yourself will you show me, and how much of myself can I show you, how much of myself can I be in front of you. That has no end.

All these things, the disappointments and the delights, are devices for knowing each other better. Some things you're charmed by and some you're shocked by, upset by, confused by. As long as you're both working with this intimacy piece as opposed to the will you make me happy piece, that's a good relationship in my book.

Audience: I completely agree, I guess. It's taken me 41 years of human life to sort of come to that point of like it's not about this magical, the god realm. I really think in those terms, but that feels really accurate of how we idealize what love is supposed to do for us. It's still a struggle. I mean, I find myself challenged in the sense that I'm in a situation where I am actually finding intimacy and (feel) like, you're weird, and that's bizarre, and then I like that but I actually really like that, and that's really

sweet, but it's not the god realm at all. We're realistic in some strange way.

Susan Piver: I know, and I don't mean to pry into your personal life, this is pretty personal, or say too much information about my personal life, but I learned many things about my husband. I've been married for 18 frigging years. That is a long time. He's completely confusing to me. I love him very, very much, and he really upsets me. I can't comprehend many, many things about him. This is going to sound so superficial, but the thing that gets me through the whole situation is: I like his skin. I'm not kidding. I like his flesh. I like the way he smells. I like the way he feels. I like his being. That is big. When people say, there's this huge sexual magnetism, but that is going to go away, or that's going to change, or that's not the basis for a relationship...I whole-heartedly disagree. There have to be other things there, but that flesh-liking-flesh is the great equalizer. Seriously.

Audience: That's a really interesting—that's an interesting point to get to for the question that I was thinking of a minute ago, which was all these qualities that you're talking about, about intimacy and love in a relationship—what are your feelings on those qualities being developed and nurtured in a friendship?

Susan Piver: Can you say that in another way?

Audience: A platonic friendship having some of these qualities, or many of them, or all of them, of intimacy and staying – taking out the projector. You know what I mean? Really growing within the confines of a friendship that is not sexual, I just wondered what you think. That's the question I was thinking of before we got to this point in the conversation.

Susan Piver: You mean like is that good? Yeah!

Audience: I just wondered what the possibilities are or how you think that sex does or doesn't—you know what I mean? Sexuality does or doesn't come into play.

Susan Piver: There are friendships and there are lover affairs. It's really easy to not know which one you're in. It's really easy to think well, I have all of these things with this person who is my friend. I really want to want to have sex with them, but I don't. Maybe that will happen because we have all these other kinds of intimacy.

I would like to tell you that it's not going to. I mean, maybe. (Laughter.) Chemistry is real, as far as I can tell. It's either there or it's never going to be there. That said, I know people who are like, we were friends first and then the attraction happened, and that's great. Personally, I have no idea what that is like. I don't know if I'm answering your question, but

yes, I think all the things that I'm talking about for love relationships, like turning off the projector, and being kind, and intimate—those things apply to all relationships. There's this other piece that is sex and more than sex (meaning it's a sexual relationship only) that is the confusing part. I hope I helped.

Audience: Just kind of staying on this topic, is it—I don't know. Is it cruel to remain friends with someone knowing that you can't love them but they would like to (love you)?

Susan Piver: Yes.

Audience: Unfortunately.

Susan Piver: For a while. Once that person has moved on, has closed that door to you in their heart by whatever means, then it's fine to be friends. The idea that you can hold onto certain parts of a love relationship and cut out others when only one person wants to do that, or even if both of you want to do that, that's Machiavellian nuttiness. You can't subtract from a relationship. Time has to go by. You have to move to a different point in your life and then re-encounter each other, I think. That's my observation. It's the only way that it's worked in my life, and my friends' lives, and just what I see is you have to actually move on and then see what happens.

Audience: I struggle with this idea that there's this higher idea of love or this dream love. Ultimately if you're really lucky, it's the person you marry. In relationships that I've been in, I feel like it gets to a point where I think well, they're not that ideal. They never were right from the beginning. I never thought they were the one or anything, but I dated them. Then you get to a point where you think well, I know how to be a nice person. I can make this work. I can love them, but I'm still hoping for something (more). It's hard to figure out how to balance that. I just don't know how to do that.

Susan Piver: Yeah, I think I understand what you're saying, but can you say it again a different way?

Audience: I don't know how.

Susan Piver: Is it that you want the romantic ideal? And then there's the reality of the person you're with, and you think maybe the ideal is still out there?

Audience: Yeah, you're still holding on or waiting.

Susan Piver: That's a tough one. That's a tough one. I mean, it would be really easy to say there is no soul mate. There is no ideal, but I actually don't believe that. I think there is. I also don't think well, there's just one right person and they're out there somewhere looking for you.

There is a kind of magic that can happen but only with certain people or one person. That, too, is impermanent. You may meet a person that you feel this profound connection with that you could describe in any number of ways. That's great, and I hope that you do. Then they throw their clothes on the floor and bring all the normal irritations—all I can tell you is for me the person who I did marry I never would have guessed would be the person I would fall in love with.

You hear people say “make a list of what you want.” Don't do that, by the way. Don't make the list. It's really an act of horrible aggression. It's a way of saying I will only see people that have these qualities, and everyone else I'm just—I'm not going to look at them. I'm not going to see them. I'm not going to take them in. I'm not going to give them credit for being humans. The list is a big load of crap. That said, it's good to be clear on what makes you feel loved and blah, blah, blah. Anyway, there's no list thing that he (my husband) would ever have qualified for at all, but I love him. When I fell in love with him, it was not convenient and it was not expected. It was like getting—this is not going to sound like a good thing, but it was. It was like becoming ill. It was like being suddenly overtaken by this condition that I had absolutely no choice about. We have very little in common except that we love each other, and I can't even tell you why. There's something about the flesh-that-loves-flesh piece that's very real and important. There's something

about the—I don't know. I look at him, and it's been now over 18 years, and I'm like...I love him.

Is that a soul mate? I don't know. I mean, we have a lot of fights, and he can be an asshole. We disagree about many things. Still, there's that moment when I look at him, and I'm like I love him. I think there are some things you can't explain.

It's worth holding out for true love. It might not look like what you think it should.



SUSAN PIVER

THE FOUR
NOBLE
TRUTHS
OF LOVE

BUDDHIST WISDOM *for*
MODERN RELATIONSHIPS

“Clear and heart-warming, this book is a guide to living relationships completely... A wonderful read.” **SHARON SALZBERG**,
author of *Real Love: The Art of Mindful Connection*

“The Four Noble Truths of Love is like the book baby of the Buddha and Oprah Winfrey. It pulls no punches in the best of ways. Chock-full of relationship a-ha moments, it made me reflect not just on my marriage and how to keep deepening into it, but also on every loving relationship in my life. This wisdom may be thousands of years old, but Piver’s ability to convey it with grace, humor, humility, and profound relevance to modern life is a true gift. Get it, read it, live it!” **Jonathan Fields**, founder of Good Life Project

“Susan Piver consistently offers what so many of us seek: A generous, caring, loving teacher, someone with an open heart and a clear mind, eager to help us find our own way forward.” **Seth Godin**, author of *Linchpin*

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“Clear and heart-warming, this book is a guide to living relationships completely, with all their pleasures and other- wise. Susan Piver brought the four noble truths to life in her own marriage, and here shares the fullness of that experience. A wonderful read.” **Sharon Salzberg**, author of *Real Love: The Art of Mindful Connection*