

Suffering (three types)

These teachings come from BBC and Lion's Roar with additional notes from me

The First Noble Truth – dukkha

Dukkha refers to the 'suffering' or 'unsatisfactoriness' of life. A person might temporarily fulfill their desires but suffering – whether physical, emotional or mental – cannot be avoided, unless Awakened to one's True Nature.

Types of suffering

- **Dukkha-dukkha** – the **suffering of suffering**. This refers to the physical and emotional discomfort and pain all humans experience in their lives.
- **Viparinama-dukkha** – the **suffering of change**. This refers to the suffering that arises from an inability to accept change. People cling to pleasurable experiences and feel sad when they pass. They cannot accept the truth of impermanence.
- **Sankhara-dukkha** – the **suffering of existence (or all-pervasive suffering)**. This could almost be described as background suffering. It is the profound unsatisfactoriness of existence - the sense that one must continually manipulate the experience to improve it in some way.

There's a good reason that Buddhists seem obsessed with suffering. Suffering is the central problem that Buddhism addresses, and recognizing our suffering is the first step to its solution. Suffering is a universal truth—along with impermanence and non-self, it's one of the three basic qualities (marks) of existence—but it comes in many forms.

To help us recognize our suffering—and so begin to seek its cause and cessation—Buddhists have broken it down into different categories.

While there are many subcategories, we are asked to contemplate three basic patterns of suffering in our lives:

1. The **suffering of suffering**. This is the one we're all familiar with: the pain of birth, old age, sickness, and death, as the Buddha described it.
2. The **suffering of change**. When you do get what you want, you can't hold onto it. Even if things are going great now, it's just a matter of time. The richest, most successful person in the world will eventually lose it all.
3. **All-pervasive suffering**. This is the type of suffering we are most likely not to recognize, yet the most instructive when we do. It's the general background of anxiety and insecurity that colors even our happiest moments. Deep down, we fear that life doesn't offer us solid ground and that our very existence is questionable. From a Buddhist point of view, these doubts are well-founded, and exploring them offers us glimpses of wisdom.