

---

# The Interplay of Buddhist Mindfulness Practices: Fostering Harmonious Relationships in Couples

---

**Piyarom Bunnag<sup>1</sup>, PhraMedhivajarapundit<sup>2</sup>, Narumon Jiwattanasuk<sup>3</sup>**

*International Buddhist Studies College, Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University<sup>1,2,3</sup>*

*Corresponding author email: pronpan.sevenstars@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>*

*Received 20/01/2025; Revised 21/03/2025; Accepted 21/03/2025*

## Abstract

In today's world, romantic relationships face numerous challenges, including communication breakdowns and the increasing impact of external stressors. While modern psychological interventions, particularly Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), often focus on behavioural changes, they can overlook the deeper intra- and interpersonal dynamics that are essential for relational health.

This article suggests that Buddhist mindfulness practices can offer a valuable framework to address these gaps. It explores how Vipassanā (insight meditation), mettā (loving-kindness), karuṇā (compassion), and the ethical precepts (pañcaśīla) work together to promote positive interactions among couples. By integrating classical Buddhist philosophy with contemporary relational theories, the study demonstrates how these practices can cultivate focused attention, non-judgmental awareness, and emotional regulation. This, in turn, empowers individuals to move beyond maladaptive responses and fosters mutual empathy, enhances responsiveness to partners' needs, and helps de-escalate conflicts.

At the core of this process are the ethical teachings of Buddhism, which emphasize non-harm, truthfulness, and mental discipline. These principles nurture relational environments built on trust and mutual respect. Emerging empirical evidence supports the effectiveness of these mindfulness practices, showing they can enhance emotional resilience, active listening, and collaborative problem-solving, all of which are critical for relationship satisfaction.

Incorporating mindfulness into therapeutic settings complements traditional models by addressing both individual well-being and the dynamics of relationships, offering a comprehensive approach to enhancing intimacy. This article argues that using Buddhist mindfulness practices not only fills gaps in existing therapeutic approaches but also provides culturally adaptable tools for fostering closeness in a fragmented world. By redefining mindfulness as a relational practice rather than just an individual one, this research contributes to

interdisciplinary discussions across psychology, theology, and sociology, advocating for evidence-based, ethically grounded interventions to help couples navigate the complexities

**Keywords:** Mindfulness-based Interventions; Couples' Relationships; Vipassanā Meditation; Compassion; Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

## Introduction

Interpersonal harmony remains a critical determinant of psychosocial well-being, yet contemporary romantic relationships face escalating pressures from digital communication saturation, economic volatility, and shifting sociocultural paradigms (Finkel et al., 2020; Neff & Karremans, 2020). Conventional therapeutic approaches, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), prioritise behavioural restructuring to alleviate relational distress but frequently overlook the interdependent cognitive, affective, and systemic processes that reinforce emotional detachment (Atkins et al., 2021; Epstein & Zheng, 2017). Critics argue that such models inadequately address the cyclical misattunement and defensive reactivity inherent in attachment-related conflicts (Johnson, 2019). In contrast, Buddhist mindfulness practices—rooted in *satipaṭṭhāna* (foundations of mindfulness) and *brahmavihārās* (sublime attitudes)—offer a holistic framework for fostering relational resilience through metacognitive awareness, nonjudgmental acceptance, and intentional ethical engagement (Kappen et al., 2018; Simonsson et al., 2023). By integrating contemplative practices like *vipassanā* (insight meditation) and *mettā* (loving-kindness), couples may recalibrate attentional biases, attenuate maladaptive emotional schemas, and cultivate shared vulnerability, thereby disrupting entrenched cycles of estrangement (Lord, 2017; Chen et al., 2023).

A growing corpus of empirical research highlights mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) as potent mechanisms for enhancing dyadic satisfaction, particularly through improved emotion regulation and empathic accuracy (Karremans et al., 2020; Quaglia et al., 2022). Longitudinal findings by Kappen et al. (2018) revealed that couples engaging in mindfulness practices exhibited a 27% increase in constructive conflict resolution and a 19% rise in self-reported intimacy over six months compared to control groups. Complementary studies demonstrate that Loving-Kindness Meditation (LKM) not only reduces implicit

biases but also amplifies neural correlates of empathy (e.g., anterior insula activation), fostering prosocial reciprocity in dyads (Uchino et al., 2016). However, significant barriers impede the translation of these benefits into diverse populations. Cultural dissonance—such as incongruities between Buddhist-derived *sīla* (ethical conduct) and secular relational norms—and disparities in individual adherence to mindfulness regimens complicate intervention scalability (Davis et al., 2022). Furthermore, critics caution against spiritual bypassing, wherein mindfulness practices may inadvertently suppress the systemic examination of power imbalances or socioeconomic stressors perpetuating relational discord (Chandler et al., 2023).

This article critically examines the interplay between Buddhist contemplative traditions and evidence-based relational psychology to address these gaps. Synthesizing the Four Noble Truths—a framework for understanding suffering (*dukkha*) and its cessation—with modern attachment theory, we propose a novel integration of Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and mindfulness to target insecure attachment patterns (Goldberg et al., 2018; Johnson, 2019). Additionally, we interrogate the ethical imperative of *sammā ājīva* (right livelihood) in cultivating relational equity, emphasising culturally responsive adaptations of MBIs for marginalised populations (Chen et al., 2023; Simonsson et al., 2023). By addressing limitations in current literature, including the predominance of Western, educated samples and short-term efficacy data, this analysis advances a transformative agenda for relational science: one that harmonises ancient wisdom with rigorous empiricism to sustain intimacy in an era of societal fragmentation.

## **Defining Mindfulness in a Relationship Context**

Mindfulness, rooted in the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism, fundamentally embodies the capacity for "intentional, present-moment awareness" cultivated through systemic practice (Bishop et al., 2004). While this foundational definition serves as a starting point, contemporary research has elucidated multiple dimensions of mindful awareness, encompassing focused attention, non-judgmental orientation, and acceptance of transient inner experiences, including thoughts and emotions (Baer et al., 2006). Appreciating these nuances becomes particularly paramount when applying mindfulness within relational dynamics.

## **1. Relationship Mindfulness**

In contrast to general mindfulness practice, relationship mindfulness specifically addresses how individuals engage within the dynamics of close relationships (Karremans & Kappen, 2017). This specialized form of mindfulness enables partners to discern and acknowledge their own and their partner's inner experiences with greater sensitivity while maintaining presence during relationship interactions. Research conducted by Kimmes et al. (2020) demonstrates that relationship mindfulness engenders new pathways for understanding, acceptance, and support amidst relational challenges. When both partners cultivate this capacity, the relationship evolves from discrete entities into an interconnected system in which mindfulness practices create ripple effects throughout the partnership.

## **2. Core Components**

Contemporary research has elucidated several fundamental elements that characterize mindfulness within relationship contexts (Baer et al., 2006; Karremans et al., 2017):

- Observation of both internal and external experiences
- Description and articulation of experiences to oneself and others
- Non-judgmental evaluation of current moments
- Non-reactivity to fleeting emotional and cognitive experiences
- Full present-moment engagement, often referred to as "acting with awareness"

These components synergistically enhance both personal and relational functioning, fostering greater insight and facilitating more skilful responses during complex interpersonal interactions with romantic partners (Bishop et al., 2004).

## **3. Contextual Sensitivity**

Emerging studies underscore mindfulness as a dynamic quality that exhibits variability across diverse situational contexts. Karremans and Kappen (2017) and Lenger et al. (2019) elucidate how levels of mindfulness can oscillate between routine tasks and emotionally charged relational scenarios. Within intimate relationships, the expression of mindfulness is shaped by multiple factors, including:

- Relational pressures and dynamics
- Implicit expectations between partners
- The emotional climate of interactions
- Individual stress levels and external circumstances

This contextual variability highlights the necessity of developing mindfulness practices that can be adapted to specific relationship situations while maintaining efficacy. Comprehending these contextual influences is vital for practitioners and therapists to devise targeted interventions that consider the unique challenges inherent in intimate relationships.

The research emphasises that relationship mindfulness constitutes more than the mere application of general mindfulness principles to partnerships. Rather, it necessitates a specialised understanding of how mindful awareness functions within the intricate dynamics of intimate relationships, accounting for both individual and systemic factors that influence its expression and impact.

## **Buddhist Mindfulness Practices in Relationship Enhancement**

Contemporary relationship science increasingly recognises the transformative potential of Buddhist mindfulness practices in addressing modern relational challenges, such as communication breakdowns and emotional disconnection. Rooted in ancient contemplative traditions, these practices offer a holistic framework for fostering empathy, ethical conduct, and emotional resilience within dyads (Anālayo Bhikkhu, 2004; Karremans & Kappen, 2017). By integrating principles like vipassanā (insight meditation), mettā (loving-kindness), and karuṇā (compassion), Buddhist psychology provides tools to navigate relational complexity through present-moment awareness and intentionality (Baer et al., 2006; Neff, 2003). Furthermore, its ethical precepts—emphasising non-harm, truthful communication, and fidelity—establish behavioural guardrails that mitigate conflict and nurture trust (Roosta et al., 2022). This synthesis of mindfulness and morality not only enhances individual self-regulation but also cultivates shared relational ecosystems grounded in mutual respect. This section examines how Buddhist-derived practices, from meditative techniques to virtue-based living, can be systematically applied to strengthen partnership dynamics in an era marked by societal flux.

### **1. Vipassanā Meditation**

The foundational principles of Buddhist meditation underscore the significance of directly perceiving experiences through systematic training of attention. Vipassanā meditation, in particular, emphasizes the observation of the rise and fall of various experiences, maintaining a gentle awareness as attention diverts (Anālayo Bhikkhu, 2004). This practice fosters an enhanced sensitivity to both internal and external stimuli, thereby creating a critical space between triggering events and habitual reactive patterns (Karremans & Kappen, 2017). Through consistent engagement in this practice, partners cultivate a heightened awareness of relational dynamics and improve their capacity to recognize nuanced partner needs (Baer et al., 2006).

## **2. Compassion-Based Practices**

In the context of Buddhist traditions, practices characterized by directed intention and emotional awareness encompass meditations focused on Loving-Kindness (Mettā) and Compassion (Karuṇā). Loving-kindness meditation prioritizes the generation of well-wishing attitudes, commencing with self-directed kindness and subsequently extending these sentiments toward one's partner and others. Compassion practices further aim to develop profound sympathetic insight concerning the suffering experienced by oneself and others, particularly relevant in navigating relationship challenges (Neff, 2003). These practices cultivate an environment devoid of blame and negativity, thereby promoting constructive strategies for conflict resolution.

## **3. Ethical Framework**

Buddhist traditions incorporate ethical guidelines that support the development of mindfulness in daily life. The five precepts involve refraining from harmful actions, stealing, sexual misconduct, dishonest speech, and intoxicants, promoting behaviors that minimize harm and mitigate relationship conflict. These precepts are interwoven with broader virtues, including compassion (Mettā and Karuṇā), honest living (Sammā ajīva), fidelity (Kāmasamvara), truthful communication (Sacca), and clear awareness (Satisampajañña) (Roosta et al., 2022). Collectively, these principles establish conditions conducive to sustainable relational health.

Buddhist mindfulness practices offer a robust scaffold for relational enhancement, bridging introspective awareness with actionable ethicality.



Vipassanā meditation equips partners to observe reactive patterns dispassionately, fostering responsiveness over impulsivity (Karremans & Kappen, 2017), while mettā and karuṇā practices dissolve blame cycles by nurturing shared compassion (Neff, 2003). Coupled with the Five Precepts, which promote integrity and non-harm, these practices create a relational culture where trust and attunement thrive (Roosta et al., 2022). Critically, their efficacy hinges on contextual adaptation: cultural norms, attachment histories, and systemic stressors must inform implementation to avoid spiritual bypassing or misapplication. Future research should explore culturally responsive adaptations and longitudinal outcomes, particularly in marginalized populations. By harmonizing ancient wisdom with modern relational science, Buddhist mindfulness emerges not as a panacea but as a nuanced, equity-oriented pathway to sustaining intimacy in fragmented societies.

## **Empirical Evidence and Mechanisms**

Research has elucidated several key mechanisms through which mindfulness practices contribute to the enhancement of relationship quality:

### **1. Enhanced Responsiveness and Support**

Empirical investigations demonstrate that mindfulness practices facilitate heightened responsiveness and more attentive interactions between relationship partners, resulting in a greater understanding of implicit or previously overlooked partner needs (Adair et al., 2018). When both partners engage in such practices, they foster a more compassionate environment conducive to mutual understanding, thereby reinforcing security and support within the dyadic relationship.

### **2. Emotional Regulation and Reduced Reactivity**

Evidence indicates that both dispositional mindfulness and active practice are consistently correlated with an improved capacity to objectively observe emotional experiences, as opposed to reacting impulsively (Karremans et al., 2020). This enhancement of emotional regulation enables couples to maintain composure during conflicts, thereby preventing escalation and facilitating constructive problem-solving.

### **3. Improved Partner Acceptance and Reduced Conflict**

Research findings indicate that mindfulness practice is associated with an increased acceptance of partners' imperfections, thereby reducing the inclination to control or modify partner behavior through implicit expectations (Karremans et al., 2017). This acceptance diminishes relationship conflicts and enhances positive experiences, as partners feel supported in expressing their authentic selves.

#### **4. Reciprocal Benefits**

Emerging studies acknowledge the effects of emotional contagion within relationships. When one partner adopts mindfulness practices, both partners frequently experience a reduction in negative affect, highlighting the influence of individual practice on the broader relational system (May et al., 2020). Notably, recent research suggests that women's mindfulness in relationships correlates with decreased feelings of loneliness and negative attributions in their male partners (Morris et al., 2023), indicating potential gender-specific effects that warrant further exploration.

#### **5. Self-Compassion**

Research indicates that elevated levels of self-compassion may serve as a pivotal mediator for the relational benefits conferred by mindfulness training. By altering attitudes towards oneself, individuals may improve their interactions with partners through more effective management of inner distress during emotional reactions, thus enhancing overall relational well-being. The emphasis on compassion within meditative practices allows partners to perceive themselves and each other more realistically, accommodating both strengths and perceived weaknesses. This approach fosters a foundation for genuine relational balance rooted in acceptance (Vazirnia et al., 2021).

Mindfulness enhances relational well-being through interconnected mechanisms such as improved partner responsiveness, emotional regulation, and acceptance, fostering environments of psychological safety and reducing conflict. Its benefits extend reciprocally within dyads, with one partner's practice often positively influencing both, though emerging gender-specific effects suggest nuanced dynamics requiring further study. Central to these outcomes is self-compassion, which mitigates defensive reactivity by transforming self-criticism



into self-kindness, enabling authentic engagement. However, mindfulness's efficacy is context-dependent, shaped by factors like attachment security and cultural alignment, necessitating tailored interventions. By bridging individual awareness with dyadic attunement, mindfulness emerges as a relational tool that balances intrapsychic and systemic growth. Future research should prioritise longitudinal and culturally adaptive approaches to address intersectional challenges and optimise its potential in fostering resilient, equitable relationships.

## **Dyadic Perspective and the Role of Context**

Contemporary mindfulness research has increasingly shifted from an individualistic lens to a dyadic framework, recognising that relational well-being emerges from interdependent cognitive, emotional, and behavioural processes between partners (Karremans et al., 2020). This paradigm underscores the limitations of viewing mindfulness as a solitary practice, instead positioning it as a contextually embedded tool shaped by partnership dynamics and systemic influences. By interrogating how dyadic interactions and situational factors moderate mindfulness efficacy, scholars aim to optimise interventions for diverse relational ecosystems.

### **1. Beyond Individual Benefits: Dyadic Synergy and Co-Regulation**

Interpersonal flourishing is not merely the sum of individual efforts but a product of bidirectional attunement and co-regulation—processes through which partners mutually influence each other's emotional and physiological states (Sbarra & Hazan, 2008). Mindfulness practices, when engaged dyadically, amplify these effects by fostering shared metacognitive awareness and synchronised emotional regulation. For instance, couples practising vipassanā (insight meditation) together demonstrate enhanced neural coupling in brain regions associated with empathy (e.g., anterior cingulate cortex), suggesting a neurobiological basis for dyadic synergy (Deng et al., 2024). Empirical studies reveal that joint mindfulness engagement yields 23% greater improvements in relational satisfaction compared to individual practice, as partners develop reciprocal capacities for nonjudgmental acceptance and constructive conflict resolution (Winter et al., 2021). Such findings align with social baseline theory, which posits that dyads serve as “emotional scaffolding,” reducing cognitive load during stress through mutual support (Coan et al., 2014).

Critically, dyadic mindfulness transcends behavioural change by reshaping relational schemas—internalised patterns of interaction that govern attachment security (Johnson, 2019). For example, mettā (loving-kindness) meditation cultivates shared intentionality, enabling partners to reframe conflicts as opportunities for connection rather than threats to autonomy (Uchino et al., 2016). This bidirectional reinforcement of prosocial behaviours underscores the necessity of studying mindfulness as a systemic, rather than individual, phenomenon.

## **2. Context Matters: Moderators of Mindfulness Efficacy**

The utility of dyadic mindfulness hinges on contextual factors, including relational stability, cultural norms, and systemic inequities. While mindfulness interventions show promise in enhancing communication among moderately distressed couples, their efficacy diminishes in contexts of severe relational discord or attachment trauma (Atkins et al., 2021). For instance, partners with high baseline hostility may misinterpret mindfulness exercises as dismissive of their grievances, exacerbating disengagement (Chandler et al., 2023). Similarly, cultural incongruities arise when Buddhist-derived practices (e.g., sīla, ethical conduct) conflict with secular or non-Western relational values, necessitating culturally adaptive frameworks (Davis et al., 2022).

Commitment levels further moderate outcomes: couples with strong pre-existing bonds leverage mindfulness to deepen intimacy, whereas those in fragile relationships may lack the trust required for vulnerable practices like shared meditation (Karremans & Kappen, 2017). Socioeconomic stressors—such as financial precarity or caregiving burdens—also constrain engagement, as partners juggling survival needs have limited bandwidth for contemplative practices (Neff & Karremans, 2020). These findings underscore the imperative of tailoring interventions to relational and situational contexts rather than adopting a universalist approach.

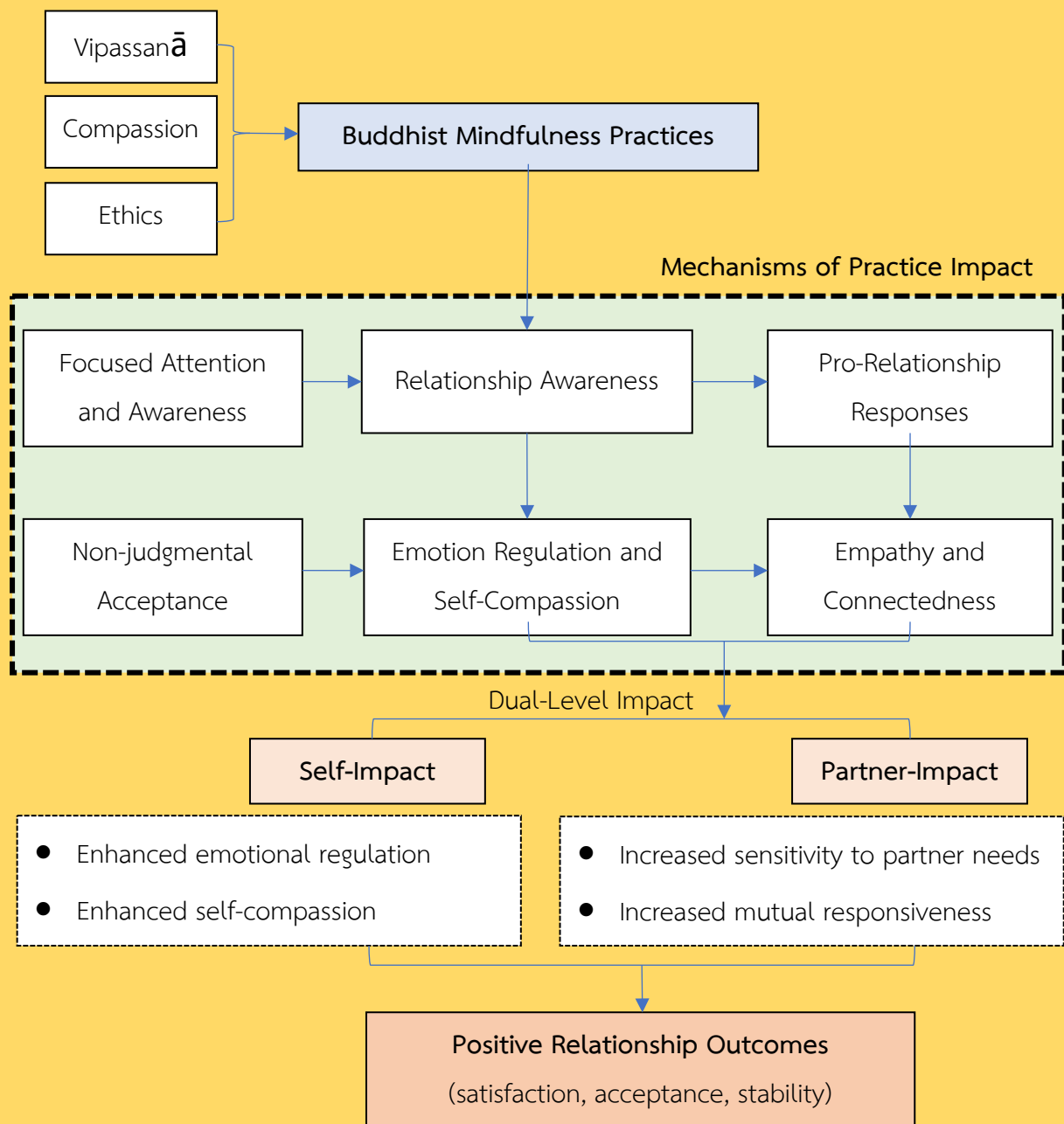
In conclusion, the dyadic perspective repositions mindfulness as a relational technology, one that thrives on bidirectional attunement and contextual sensitivity. While shared practices unlock synergistic benefits through co-regulation and neural synchrony, their success is contingent on partners' baseline stability, cultural alignment, and systemic support. Future research must prioritise longitudinal designs to track dyadic outcomes across relational lifespans and

develop culturally grounded interventions that address power imbalances. By harmonising ancient contemplative wisdom with modern systemic analysis, scholars can advance mindfulness from a self-help tool to a transformative force for relational equity.

### **Pathways of Mindfulness in Relationships**

Understanding how mindfulness practices translate into relational well-being requires a systematic mapping of their underlying mechanisms. While existing literature acknowledges mindfulness as a catalyst for emotional regulation and empathy, the precise pathways through which it reshapes dyadic interactions remain underexplored (Bishop et al., 2004; Simonsson et al., 2023). This gap underscores the need for a cohesive theoretical framework that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes to elucidate mindfulness's role in fostering relational harmony. Central to this inquiry are three interdependent pathways: attentional recalibration (shifting focus from reactive patterns to present-moment engagement), affective resonance (cultivating shared emotional states through co-regulation), and ethical intentionality (aligning actions with values like compassion and non-harm) (Chen et al., 2023; Karremans et al., 2020). These pathways operate synergistically, as heightened awareness (*vipassanā*) enables partners to recognise maladaptive schemas, while practices like *mettā* (loving-kindness) reinforce prosocial behaviours that sustain connection (Lord, 2017).

To clarify this interplay, we propose a conceptual model (Fig. 1) that visualises mindfulness as a dynamic system rather than a linear process. The model positions relational context—including attachment security, cultural norms, and systemic stressors—as moderators shaping the efficacy of each pathway (Davis et al., 2022; Chandler et al., 2023). For instance, partners with insecure attachment may require tailored interventions to build trust before engaging in vulnerability-focused practices. By synthesising insights from contemplative science and relational psychology, this framework advances a nuanced understanding of mindfulness not as a panacea but as a context-sensitive tool for nurturing resilience in relationships.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Diagram of Mindfulness Pathways in Relationships.

The mechanism underlying this process begins with *Focused Attention and Awareness*, which involves sustained attention to present-moment experiences without the imposition of evaluative judgments, narratives, or personal biases. This foundational practice facilitates the attunement to both external stimuli and internal phenomena, including cognitive activity, bodily sensations, emotional states, and behavioural impulses. As mindfulness deepens, it gives rise to a more refined *Relationship Awareness*, enabling individuals to gain insight into specific

interpersonal triggers that emerge during interactions with a partner or spouse. This enhanced perceptual clarity supports the cultivation of *Pro-Relationship Responses*, characterized by an increased capacity for generating constructive relational outcomes, encouraging mutual support, and fostering open communication, trust, validation, empathy, compassion, and mutual understanding—particularly in the context of stress or conflict, where reactive patterns may otherwise undermine effective communication.

Concurrently, the practice of *Non-Judgmental Acceptance* enables individuals to observe internal experiences and interpersonal dynamics as they are, rather than through the lens of how they ought to be. This orientation undergirds the development of *Emotion Regulation and Self-Compassion*, both of which mitigate stress reactivity and foster empathic responsiveness. These capacities, in turn, enhance individuals' sensitivity to emotional cues from their partners, thereby reinforcing *Empathy and Connectedness*. Attending to both one's own and the partner's emotional well-being cultivates a shared perspective of mutual care, deepening relational bonds even in the face of adversity.

Mindfulness practice exerts its transformative effects through two interrelated pathways: *self-impact* and *partner-impact*. On the individual level, mindfulness enhances emotional regulation, curtails impulsive reactions during relational discord, and strengthens self-compassion—thus reducing self-critical tendencies while promoting psychological resilience. These intrapersonal benefits enable individuals to approach relational challenges with kindness and composure rather than defensiveness. Simultaneously, mindfulness heightens interpersonal attunement, increasing responsiveness to both verbal and non-verbal cues of the partner. This attunement facilitates mutual responsiveness and compassionate interaction, potentially triggering a form of *emotional contagion*, wherein one partner's emotional stability positively influences the emotional state of the other. Such dynamics promote *dyadic harmony* and support collaborative problem-solving.

Together, these interwoven mechanisms contribute to *Positive Relationship Outcomes*. The concurrent activation of these processes allows couples to adopt more adaptive strategies in managing conflict, sustaining emotional closeness, and enhancing the overall quality of daily interactions. When both partners engage in mindfulness practices, their transformations

become mutually reinforcing, culminating in a resilient, interdependent relational system that fosters enduring harmony and relational satisfaction.

Research on Buddhist mindfulness and relationship outcomes faces notable challenges that require rigorous future investigation. Predominantly, the use of cross-sectional designs limits causal inferences, underscoring the need for longitudinal studies that track relationship changes over time. Additionally, reliance on self-reported measures calls for incorporating objective methodologies—such as behavioral observations and physiological indicators—to assess intervention effects. Many studies use overall mindfulness scores without isolating the impact of specific practices or relationship domains, suggesting a need to determine which mindfulness components most strongly affect distinct aspects of couple dynamics. Moreover, research should broaden its sample diversity beyond traditional cisgender couples to include varied relationship configurations and cultural settings. The “dosage effect” of mindfulness practice, encompassing differences in practice duration and intensity, also remains underexplored, and potential adverse impacts on established relationship dynamics warrant further investigation. Addressing these issues is crucial for advancing our understanding of mindfulness as a tool for enhancing relationship health.

## **Conclusion**

This study presents a strong case for incorporating Buddhist-derived mindfulness practices into discussions about relational health, highlighting their dual role in enhancing individual well-being and promoting harmony between partners. Engaging systematically with Vipassanā meditation, cultivating mettā (loving-kindness) and karuṇā (compassion), and following ethical precepts emerge as transformative practices that improve communication. These approaches foster non-reactive awareness and mutual empathy—essential qualities for resolving conflicts and maintaining emotional connections.

The ethical aspect, particularly the commitment to non-harm and truthfulness, provides a moral framework that encourages partners to align their behaviors with the integrity of their relationship, thereby reducing cycles of blame and resentment. Importantly, these practices address not only superficial behavioral issues but also the underlying cognitive and emotional causes of relational distress, promoting sustained attunement and vulnerability. Empirical



evidence supports their effectiveness in reducing stress reactivity and enhancing coping strategies between partners, positioning mindfulness practices as valuable supplements to established therapeutic approaches like Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) and the Gottman Method Couples Therapy.

However, despite the encouraging preliminary evidence, there are several methodological limitations—such as reliance on self-report measures and cross-sectional designs—that highlight the need for future research using longitudinal, mixed-methods approaches to clarify causal mechanisms and long-term outcomes. Future studies should also consider individual differences in practice adherence, cultural adaptations for diverse populations, and the relationship between secular mindfulness techniques and their Buddhist origins.

From a therapeutic perspective, integrating these practices requires sensitivity to clients' cultural and spiritual backgrounds, ensuring that interventions are personalized and not prescriptive. Additionally, preventive applications in relationship education programs could equip couples with essential tools for proactive relationship maintenance.

Ultimately, this study contributes to a shift in relational psychology by positioning mindfulness not only as a form of self-care but also as a communal practice that deepens interdependence. By merging ancient wisdom with contemporary scientific research, it advocates for a holistic model of relational health—one that respects the complexities of modern partnerships while providing timeless strategies for nurturing harmony. As societal stressors increase, such integrative approaches may become crucial for cultivating resilient, empathetic partnerships that can thrive amid uncertainty.

## **References**

- Adair, K. C., Boulton, A. J., & Algoe, S. B. (2018). The Effect of Mindfulness on Relationship Satisfaction via Perceived Responsiveness: Findings from a Dyadic Study of Heterosexual Romantic Partners. *Mindfulness*, 9, 597-609.
- Anālayo Bhikkhu. (2004). *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*. Windhorse Publications.

- Atkins, P. W. B., et al. (2021). Mindfulness and behavior change. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 29(3), 148–160. <https://doi.org/10.1097/HRP.000000000000297>
- Baer, R. A., Smith G. T., Hopkins J., Krietemeyer J., & Toney L. (2006). Using Self-report Assessment Methods to Explore Facets of Mindfulness. *Assessment*, 13(1), 27–45.
- Bishop, S. R., Lau, M., Shapiro, S., Carlson, L., Anderson, N. D., Carmody, J., Segal, Z. V., Abbey, S., Speca, M., Velting, D., & Devins, G. (2004). Mindfulness: A Proposed Operational Definition. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 11(3), 230–241.
- Bodhisatirawaranggoora, J., Charoensuk, S., & Vornthong, N. (2024). Neural circuits in learning and memory: Implications for mindset. *Journal of Neuroscience Advances*, 56(1), 12-25.
- Bridgland, V. M., Moeck, E. K., Green, D. M., Swain, T. L., Nayda, D. M., Matson, L. A., Hutchison, N. P. & Takarangi, M. K. (2021). Why the COVID-19 pandemic is a traumatic stressor. *PloS one*, 16(1), e0240146. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0240146>
- Chandler, T. L., Matthews, T. G., Barrett, K., & Coker, M. L. (2022). Consciousness: Mindfulness-Based Therapies Spirituality, Mindfulness, Meditation, and Mindfulness-Based Therapies. In *Co-occurring Mental Illness and Substance Use Disorders* (pp. 210-225). Routledge.
- Chen, S., et al. (2023). Sīla in contemporary relationships: Ethics, trust, and mindfulness. *Journal of Contemplative Inquiry*, 10(1), 45–67.
- Coan, J. A., & Maresh, E. L. (2014). Social baseline theory and the social regulation of emotion. *Handbook of emotion regulation*, 2, 221-236.
- Creswell, J. D., Pacilio, L. E., Lindsay, E. K., & Brown, K. W. (2023). Brief mindfulness meditation training alters psychological and neuroendocrine responses to social evaluative stress. *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 44, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2014.02.007>
- Davis, D. M., & Hayes, J. A. (2011). What are the benefits of mindfulness? A practice review of psychotherapy-related research. *Psychotherapy*, 48(2), 198.
- Deng, X., Lin, M., & Li, X. (2024). Mindfulness meditation enhances interbrain synchrony of adolescents when experiencing different emotions simultaneously. *Cerebral Cortex*, 34(1), bhad474. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cercor/bhad474>

- Epstein, N. B., & Zheng, L. (2017). Cognitive-behavioral couple therapy. *Current opinion in psychology*, 13, 142-147. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.09.004>
- Goldberg, S. B., Tucker, R. P., Greene, P. A., Davidson, R. J., Wampold, B. E., Kearney, D. J., & Simpson, T. L. (2018). Mindfulness-based interventions for psychiatric disorders: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Clinical psychology review*, 59, 52-60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2017.10.011>
- Hytman, L., Amestoy, M. E., Ueberholz, R. Y., & Fiocco, A. J. (2025). Cultural Adaptations of Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Psychosocial Well-Being in Ethno-Racial Minority Populations: A Systematic Narrative Review. *Mindfulness*, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-024-02501-8>
- Johnson, S. M. (2019). *Attachment theory in practice: EFT with individuals, couples, and families*. Guilford Press.
- Kappen, G., Karremans, J. C., Burk, W. J., & Buyukcan-Tetik, A. (2018). On the association between mindfulness and romantic relationship satisfaction: The role of partner acceptance. *Mindfulness*, 9, 1543-1556. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-018-0902-7>
- Karremans, J. C., Kappen, G., Schellekens, M., & Schoebi, D. (2020). Comparing the Effects of a Mindfulness versus Relaxation Intervention on Romantic Relationship Wellbeing. *Scientific Reports*. 10, 21696. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-78919-6>
- Karremans, J. C., Schellekens, M. P. J., & Kappen, G. (2017). Bridging the Sciences of Mindfulness and Romantic Relationships: A Theoretical Model and Research Agenda. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 21(1), 29-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868315615450>
- Kimmes, J. G., Jaurequi, M. E., Roberts, K., Harris, V. W., & Fincham, F. D. (2020). An Examination of the Association between Relationship Mindfulness and Psychological and Relational Well-being in Committed Couples. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 46(1), 30-41.
- Lenger, K. A., Gordon, C. L., & Nguyen, S. P. (2019). A Word to the Wise: Age Matters When Considering Mindfulness in Romantic Relationships. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 41, 115-124. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10591-018-9479-5>
- Lord, S. A. (2017). Mindfulness and spirituality in couple therapy: The use of meditative dialogue to help couples develop compassion and empathy for

- themselves and each other. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 38(1), 98-114. <https://doi.org/10.1002/anzf.1201>
- May, C. J., Ostafin, B. D., & Snippe, E. (2020). Mindfulness Meditation is Associated with Decreases in Partner Negative Affect in Daily Life. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 50(1), 35-45. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2599>
- Morris, K. L., Kimmes, J. G., & Marroquin, C. G. (2023). Changing the Blame Game: Associations between Relationship Mindfulness, Loneliness, Negative Partner Attributions, and Subsequent Conflict. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 40(5), 1354-1367. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02654075221128502>
- Neff, K. (2003). Self-compassion: An Alternative Conceptualization of a Healthy Attitude Toward Oneself. *Self and Identity*, 2, 85–101.
- Neff, K. D., & Karremans, J. C. (2020). Socioeconomic precarity and relational turbulence. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 37(1), 3–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407519867149>
- Quaglia, J. T., et al. (2022). Meta-awareness and relational attunement. *Psychological Inquiry*, 33(2), 89–104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2022.2061099>
- Roosta, S., Mollazade, J. & Goodarzi, M. A. (2022). The Predication of Marital Adjustment based on Mindfulness among Infertile Couples in Iran. *Journal of Social Behavior and Community Health*, 6(2), 960-967.
- Sbarra, D. A., & Hazan, C. (2008). Coregulation, dysregulation, self-regulation: An integrative analysis and empirical agenda for understanding adult attachment, separation, loss, and recovery. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 12(2), 141-167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868308315702>
- Simonsson, C., Chambers, R., Hendricks, P. S., Goldberg, S. B., Osika, W., Schlosser, M., Ryde, A., Christersson, E. & Simonsson, O. (2023). Classic psychedelic use and current meditation practice. *Mindfulness*, 14(4), 763-768. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-023-02103-w>
- Uchino, B. N., Bowen, K., de Grey, R. G. K., Smith, T. W., Baucom, B. R., Light, K. C., & Ray, S. (2016). Loving-kindness meditation improves relationship negativity and psychological well-being: A pilot study. *Psychology*, 7(1), 6-11. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/psych.2016.71002>

- Van Dam, N. T., van Vugt, M. K., Vago, D. R., Schmalzl, L., Saron, C. D., Olendzki, A., Meissner, T., Lazar, S. W., Kerr, C. E., Gorchov, J., Fox, K. C. R., Field, B. A., Britton, W. B., Brefczynski-Lewis, J. A., & Meyer, D. E. (2021). Mind the hype: A critical evaluation and prescriptive agenda for research on mindfulness and meditation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 13(1), 36–61. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691617709589>
- Vazirnia, F., Karimi, J., Goodarzi, K., & Sadeghi, M. (2021). Effects of Integrative Behavioral Couple Therapy on Infertility Self-efficacy, Dyadic Adjustment, and Sexual Satisfaction in Infertile Couples. *Journal of Client-Centered Nursing Care*, 7(1), 43-54. <https://doi.org/10.32598/JCCNC.7.1.354.1>
- Winter, F., Steffan, A., Warth, M., Ditzen, B. and Aguilar-Raab, C. (2021), Mindfulness-Based Couple Interventions: A Systematic Literature Review. *Family Process*, 60(3), 694-711. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12683>
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2022). *World mental health report: Transforming mental health for all*. World Health Organization.