

## The Illusion of Nonchalance

By: Kate Ferenchick

Humans fear suffering. They struggle on how to approach it, and find “solutions” on how to connect with their suffering, knowing it is a part of life. Different philosophers have different views, with Nietzsche stating that we must embrace it for growth while the Stoics argue that we should find inner peace to reduce this suffering. However, when evaluating suffering, we must look at the modern world to understand how we interact with it.

Humans today are the most vulnerable they have ever been, mainly due to the massive increase of social media and the very real possibility of having hard moments captured, which may cause suffering on a larger scale. People may screenshot emotional texts, post bad photos, or other online actions that all bring suffering through exposing our vulnerabilities. The rise of conformity has also played a role in this, as many people in society aim to conform in hopes this prevents them from suffering by being “different”. Through this, many have shifted their approach to suffering and how to escape it: Becoming numb.

The most clear example is through the rise of being “nonchalant” present in nearly every aspect of our lives. In school, a person may not engage in lectures or their passions in fear of being seen as different and too passionate, with the worry of teasing ( or other pushback) causing suffering. They may not show how much they care for their friends or properly express it. And most visible is dating. Humans have created arbitrary words to avoid real connection (situationship), embraced easy ways out rather than having hard conversations that are emotional (ghosting), and detached from their feelings. All this connects back to both the fear of nonconformity and rejection, which may bring the aspect of suffering from damaged feelings and egos. The solution modern humans have come up with is to be “nonchalant” or more clearly, numb.

More people choose to adopt this numbness rather than live their authentic lives, all to avoid the very possibility of suffering. Why pour out your emotions to someone you love, much less tell them you want a relationship, when you can be “flexible” and try to detach emotionally which may cause less suffering, at least short term? The numbness is a tradeoff from the human experience though, as we lose what makes us unique and an individual for protection from suffering.

Numbness does not let us fully live—it is avoidance, not peace. To truly live rather than somewhat live or just exist, we must be OK with the aspect of suffering. We must be proud to get a rejection, to be seen as a bit “weird”, and to mess up. The popular rise of being nonchalant has damaged humanity, as it is an easy way out and protection from suffering, but at a large toll. We have a single life, and it would be devastating to waste it on being numb when we can embrace our individualism and what makes us human: emotions, connections, and passions.