

RAIN Exercise

RAIN is a practice for working through painful experiences first developed by Michele McDonald. I learned this practice from Tara Brach (www.tarabrach.com). As Tara Brach uses it, “RAIN” is an acronym that stands for **Recognize**, **Allow**, **Investigate**, and **Nurture**. This four-step process is another practice rooted in appreciative attending. It is a fantastic practice for getting to the root of our pain and for then healing that pain.

Here is the practice:

- 1. Recognize.** Practice attending to the Now as much as possible throughout your day, asking continuously, “What is this?”. When there arises in awareness a strong thought or emotion, Pause. Note it. It could be shame, anger, fear, anger, self-hatred, anxiety, hurt, or another painful emotion. You can also do this with positive emotions as well. Note, “This is like this.” Feel and acknowledge your pain and vulnerability.
- 2. Allow.** Allow yourself to feel fully what is felt—the painful feelings and any thoughts or stories that go with the feeling. With radical reverence, honor whatever is arising. Honor any painful memories, thoughts, beliefs, understandings, or judgments. Practice your appreciative attending; refrain from judging, suppressing, or pushing away anything that arises. This includes not judging any negative judgments that arise. Allow yourself to see and be with whatever is arising. Let it come and let it be.
- 3. Investigate.** Having fully apprehended and lovingly allowed the contents of consciousness to be as they are, begin to investigate in the spirit of “What is this?” and “Why is this?” Be gentle, kind, and curious in your inquiry. Imagine a wise and loving part of yourself investigating your experience. There are many questions you can ask:

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- a. Why am I reacting as I am? What is triggering these thoughts and emotions? Does this situation resonate in any way with past wounds?
- b. What am I feeling in my body?
- c. What expectations, stories, or beliefs are there about this situation? Does this situation trigger beliefs that I am bad, others are bad, or this situation is bad? Does this situation resonate with past experiences where I felt I am not enough or do not have enough?
- d. Are my beliefs and stories true? How could I definitively prove in a court of law that they are absolutely true?
- e. Is there a difference between my expectations of how things should be and how things actually are?
- f. What does it feel like to have these beliefs? Do they enhance my wellbeing, or harm my wellbeing?
- g. How does it feel to let go of painful beliefs I am not 100% certain are true?
- h. How would it feel to let go of expecting things to be other than as they are?
- i. Does this situation resonate with a past traumatic experience that left me with similar feelings and painful beliefs?
- j. What is needed to soothe myself? Is it to defuse and distance myself from a negative narrative? Is it to see the harmful consequences of negative judgments so they might recede? Perhaps there is a need to give lovingkindness to myself or others. Perhaps there is a need to accept and honor myself and others just as they are.

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k. Explore what you might do to better a painful situation. What must be accepted, and what might be changed? In investigating, you might even call someone you know who is wise and supportive to brainstorm with them. What might you be able to do to soothe and nurture yourself (Act with love)? Ask yourself, in this situation, “What would love do?”

2. **Nurture.** This is a decision to heal. Put a hand on your heart. Offer yourself kindness. Feel a compassionate caring for your pain and vulnerability as your own ideal parent. You might say to yourself, “I’m so sorry for your pain.” Or you can say, “I care about this suffering.” You might reassure yourself, saying “All is well, and all will be well.” You might say, “It’s OK. I am here for you.” You might offer yourself encouragement and hope that you can endure and that this will pass. You can also visualize love flowing into your heart from people you know who love you, from your experience of other great loving beings, or from a universal loving presence, spirit, or force. Remind yourself of the sacredness of all experience. Through your attending to this moment, settle into loving awareness. Now, if beneficial, take loving action to nurture and soothe yourself or others.

After you have gone through RAIN, you can move into what Tara Brach calls “After the rain.” This is your state of presence in loving awareness, the state this exercise cultivates.

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