

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

### WELCOME

Welcome again to our course on realizing a life of love! It's good to be with you!

If you're new to this course, I strongly recommend that you review the first ten sessions because they make up the core foundation. You'll need this to benefit from the remaining sessions.

### SO LET'S GET STARTED

Again, as a reminder, the 3 As of awakening are *Attending*, *Appreciating*, and *Acting* with love. Attending leads to appreciation, which then leads to skillful loving action. Appreciation has two meanings, however: both understanding the nature of things and understanding the value or sacredness of Reality. Both of these aspects of appreciation arise from careful attending. Together, the twin practices of Attending and Appreciating, called “Appreciative Attending,” generate wisdom and reverence, which enable us to fulfill our purpose—to nurture and savor Life. Inspired by reverence for Life, we can then take *Action* to benefit all of Life—others and ourselves—with a loving heart, while enjoying each brief and precious moment of existence.

In our last session we discussed how to protect ourselves and others from harm. I hope you've been able to reflect on this and have made necessary changes to protect yourself and others from harm.

Today we will be discussing the first of several heart-mind practices that helps us cultivate the capacity for loving presence when we experience the inevitable pains and difficulties of life. The practice is called by the acronym, “RAIN.”

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

RAIN was first developed by Michele McDonald. I learned this practice from Tara Brach from her book, “Radical Compassion.” (www.tarabrach.com). I recommend you purchase and read this book. It is an excellent resource for healing what Tara Brach calls “The trance of unworthiness,” for working through emotionally painful experiences, and for coming to a place of loving clarity and presence. **You can use RAIN to counter shame and fear. You can use RAIN to uproot painful beliefs about yourself and others. RAIN can also release you from blame and promote forgiveness.** Ultimately, RAIN helps us cultivate a loving, unconditionally compassionate outlook on ourselves and others. Because of this, RAIN is a great practice for realizing a life of love.

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. Dr. Brach adds a fifth step, called “after the rain,” in which we rest in awakened, loving presence after working through the first four steps of RAIN.

**Let me now review the practice for you, and then we can go through the practice of RAIN together:**

1. **Recognize.** The first step is to recognize what is happening within—to be aware of when you’re in pain. Practice attending to the Now as much as possible throughout your day, asking continuously, “What is this?”. When there arises in awareness a strong emotion, **Pause**. Note it. It could be shame, anger, fear, 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.**

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

2. **Allow.** The second step is to 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?” Be gentle, kind, and curious in your inquiry. Imagine a wise and loving part of yourself investigating your experience. You don’t want to be too intellectual in your inquiry; this is not so much a thinking exercise as a feeling and sensing exercise. The practice is to inquire deeply into the feeling of emotional pain in your body, say for example in your throat, chest, or gut. You can then inquire into any associated feelings and images that come up for you.

**After investigating the feelings and their associated images, there are many questions you can ask. Here are a few to consider:**

- 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?

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

- b. What expectations, stories, or beliefs are there about this situation? Does this situation trigger beliefs that I am bad, that others are bad, or that this situation is bad? Does this situation resonate with past experiences where I felt I am not enough or did not have enough?
- c. Are my beliefs and stories true? How could I definitively prove in a court of law that they are true?
- d. Is there a difference between my expectations of how things should be and how things actually are?
- e. What does it feel like to have these beliefs? Do they enhance my wellbeing, or harm my wellbeing?
- f. How does it feel to let go of painful beliefs I am not 100% certain are true?
- g. How would it feel to let go of expecting things to be other than as they are?
- h. Does this situation resonate with a past traumatic experience that left me with similar feelings and painful beliefs?
- i. 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 I and they are.

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

j. 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?”

4. **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. I care 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. Then take loving action to nurture and soothe yourself.

After you have gone through RAIN, you can move into what Tara Brach calls “After the rain.” **This is your state of presence in luminous, loving awareness, the state all these exercises cultivate.**

So now, let’s go through the practice of RAIN step by step.

First, think of a difficult or painful situation you are currently facing, a situation where you feel shame, hurt, anger, despair, fear, sadness, grief, or hopelessness.

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

It might be a conflict with a friend, family member, or co-worker. Perhaps it is a difficulty with a boss. It might be a setback or failure. Maybe it's something you did or said that you now regret. It could be something someone else did or said that was upsetting. It could be a medical condition or a psychiatric condition such as depression, anxiety, or an addiction.

Once you have the situation clearly in mind. Get into a comfortable, alert position. Take a few deep breaths. Anchor your attention on the breath. If you wish, you can close your eyes.

Now bring to mind your difficult situation or experience. Visualize the situation. Remember what you and others said or did. Recall what was most distressing.

Now practice the first step of RAIN, *Recognition*. Ask yourself, “What is this?” or “What is happening inside of me?” Note what you sense in your body, especially in your throat, heart, or gut. What are you feeling? Then recognize your thoughts; what thoughts are arising about this situation? What beliefs are present? With your anchor on your breath, tap into the overall emotional tone of the situation.

**Now that you’ve recognized fully what is happening, you can take the second step of RAIN, which is to *Allow* this experience to be just as it is. Remind yourself that this moment is as it must and can only be at this moment, or that “what is...is.” Practice appreciation, even saying if you want that this painful situation is sacred—existing as it is both externally in the world and as it is internally within you—it is the reality of things in this moment. You might say to yourself, “I consent,” or “I humbly allow this painful situation to be as it is in this moment.”**

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

If you notice a contraction or resistance—that your mind and body are saying “no,”—then just say “yes” to this “no.” Let be what is, even if it is an energy within you that is fighting against what is. Your intent in allowing is to let go of judgments and to not push away or attempt to control anything you are experiencing. In allowing, we are facing and embracing our pain rather than avoiding our pain so that it might be resolved, because avoiding pain only perpetuates pain.

**Now that you are allowing What Is to be without judgment, you can begin the third step of RAIN, which is to *investigate* your experience. You want to practice being a kind, curious investigator.** Remember as you do this, the work is NOT to THINK about your experience, it is to simply look deeply into your embodied experience. Sense deeply into the root of your pain. What do you find there? What images or associations come up? Look deeply, without too much thought so that you can directly know and begin to understand your experience. Many people come up with an image of a hurt, scared, or lonely child within. See if this comes up for you. What images do you experience?

**Now ask yourself the following questions about your experience:**

- What am I sensing in my body? Where are the feelings the strongest in my body?
- What most wants my attention?
- What is the most painful aspect of this experience?
- What feelings are there? Is there hurt, fear, anger, or sadness, for example.

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

- How do I feel these feelings in my body? Is there a tightness, rawness, clenched feeling, tingling, or heat?
- What do I notice in my body posture and facial expression right now?
- What painful thoughts are there?
- What painful beliefs are there?
- Are these new feelings, or have I experienced them in the past? When did I first experience these feelings?
- If the hurting part of me could speak, what would it say?
- What does this part of me most need from me or from some other source of love and wisdom?
- How does the hurt in me want me to be with it?

Now that you have investigated your experience and have sensed what is needed for healing, **you are ready for the 4th step of RAIN, *nurturing yourself with your loving awareness***. As you have looked deeply into your pain and sensed what is needed, note your natural, kind, and compassionate response to your pain. You might say to yourself, “I love you,” or “I care about you,” or “I am here for you.” Offer yourself total acceptance, loving care, and support. If you wish, place a hand on your heart. Offer yourself to yourself as your best friend or as your own ideal, loving parent. You might want to visualize the young, vulnerable part of yourself being bathed in loving light.



## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

You might visualize yourself being held in a divine, loving, radiate energy. Really open yourself and allow yourself to receive this love and nurturing.

And now, let's **shift from doing to being**. This is called **“After the RAIN.”** Relax and let go into the still, loving heartspace of kind, loving awareness. Anchor yourself in your breath. Rest in this loving awareness that is your true self. Attend closely to this experience. Notice qualities of openness, tenderness, love, and alert presence. **Now note the following:**

- Who do you sense that you are? What is the sense of your being?
- How has your sense of who you are shifted from the beginning of the RAIN practice?
- Can you sense qualities of compassion, love, and wisdom in your experience?

This is your experience of your wise, awakened heart-mind. Savor this experience and know that it is always there beneath the incessant chatter of thoughts and feelings—you can tap into it and ground yourself in your clear, spacious, loving awareness at any time.

Now that we've practiced this exercise, know that you can **“RAIN on your PAIN” at any time**. I recommend you practice this exercise several times over the coming weeks until it becomes familiar. **With practice, RAIN will become a more automatic and routine way of embracing, facing, processing, and resolving your pain.**

## SESSION 18: The Practice of RAIN

### OUR NEXT SESSION

In our next session we'll be discussing the practice of caution. Like protection, the practice of caution helps us to minimize the risk of harm to ourselves and others so that we can maintain our vitality.

**In the meantime, between now and then, I encourage you to do the following:**

1. Continue your daily presence practice—both a period of silence, solitude, and stillness in the morning and your practice of stillness in motion through the day.
2. Start your day with a morning intention to love. You might want to recite a daily intention in the form of a prayer as in the dedication to love prayer in the meditations in the resource section of my website.
3. Practice appreciative attending. Inquire deeply into your experience with a kind, curious eye, especially if you're in pain. Ask, "what is this?" and affirm, "this is sacred." Continue to let go of negative judgements as they arise.
4. Take one or more challenging or painful situations and apply the practice of RAIN to these situations. You'll find that as you practice RAIN it will become easier and more automatic.

**Please take some time after our session today to share your reflections with your fellow members of the WellMind community and to read what others have to say as well. Let us share and support each other in our exploration of love!**

© 2021 Michael McGee