

RAIN – A Practice to Better Access Compassion for Ourselves and Others

RAIN is a simple acronym for several steps we can use to bring mindfulness and compassion to ourselves and others facing emotional difficulty.

R-ecognize what is going on (rooted in understanding);
A-llow the experience to be there, just as it is (grounded in love);
I-nvestigate with interest and care (deepens understanding);
N-urture with self-compassion (awakens and employs love).

<https://www.tarabrach.com/rain/>

NOTE: <https://www.tarabrach.com/selfcompassion1/> Includes RAIN: A Practice of Radical Compassion in a variety of languages

This tool is discussed in the context of parenting in volatile situations. No one knows how to push each other's buttons like a caregiver and their people. Intensity breeds intensity. Regaining our own sense of calm, as caregivers, is critical to de-escalating volatile interactions in our homes.

Like any skill-based home behavior tips, RAIN can be practiced initially when things are calm. Practicing RAIN as a longer, personalized, stand-alone meditation allows us to experiment with and notice what works best for us. As we find things that work we can become adept at using this approach in the heat of a contentious moment with others. It is possible to move through these steps whenever challenging feelings arise.

As we become more accustomed to using this approach to help calm ourselves on our own, we can also use it to guide our presence while present with a raging child or adolescent. Discussion includes guiding information as it appears in Tara Brach's work with examples and "customizations" that have helped increase the value of this tool in my own caregiver role.

R—Recognize What's Going On

Recognizing means consciously acknowledging, in any given moment, the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that affect us. Noting what we are most aware of. I find it personally helpful to watch for "yellow flag" or "red flag" thoughts. These, for me, are the familiar (and easily overlooked) thoughts that commonly mark my entry into a less constructive monologue with myself or litany of complaint etc. with another.

Sample flag thoughts for me include: *"Why is this so hard? If ___ would just ___ then..."* or *"Why this again? I thought we were past this but..."* I try to notice and use this type of thought as a flag prompting me to practice RECOGNIZING the presence of such thinking and to note how it is affecting me. If I am very angry about my child calling me names or threatening me in some way, I try to look beyond my own anger, to be able to recognize more fully why I am angry. *Am I afraid for my safety? Concerned my child will never learn to respond more appropriately? Am I simply tired because it has already been a full day? Am I future tripping*

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and activated by a feeling of certainty that things will always be this way and I will not be able to do this forever?

A—Allow the Experience to be There, Just as It Is

Allowing means letting the recognized thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations to simply be there, without trying to fix or avoid anything. Some also think of this as acceptance.

Tara Brach suggests some mental allowing statements including: “*it’s ok*” or “*this belongs*” or “*yes.*”

The premise of “radical acceptance” (<https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-it-really-means-to-practice-radical-acceptance/>) works better for me personally. I find I do not really believe some of the things I face are “OK” or that behaviors I encounter “belong.” An adjusted version of acceptance is helpful for me while parenting. I do not have to like or approve of something to accept or allow my experience of it. I look for ways to acknowledge the reality of my situation. I find I cannot simultaneously fight against a situation (e.g. *this isn’t fair, why me, not again, why can’t they...*) AND bring my best self to it. Once I can accept “this is happening now” “this is how things are right now,” I can begin to think and act with more clarity.

My personal goal in Allowing, is to make space to consciously determine how I want to handle things. A quote I like from psychotherapist [Sheri Van Dijk](#), MSW, RSW, “*Suffering is what happens when we refuse to accept the pain in our lives,*” This reminds me that I can accept things that I don’t like, even pain, without approving of these things. I can still hold my own boundaries and be clear about validation and accountability for my kiddo. I can move forward when I am ready. I do this best, though, once I have accepted a situation, centered, and cared for myself.

A mama mantra I have found helpful for my own acceptance. is “*Of course*” as in “*Of course I’m angry. This is hard and I am tired... this is natural, I can find my way.*”

Please experiment. Allowing or accepting includes any statement or thought that helps you hit **PAUSE**, to make space and time for more attention and self-care.

I—Investigate with Interest and Care

When we investigate, we try getting curious about our own experience. We wonder what is going on for us, take time and make space to focus attention on our own present experience. It is easy to be caught up in our child’s experience, what they are thinking, how they are behaving. We can’t assist with that in the moment if we are triggered or hooked in by their words and actions. We can’t hit pause for them, but we can hit PAUSE for ourselves. If we can do this and name what we are doing it might even provide a model for our kiddos. If they do not respond to our model, it still gives us time to re-center ourselves.

Sometimes I find it necessary to step away from my kiddo before I can become curious and investigate. I will excuse myself from a scene (where there is no physical danger) letting my kiddo know – “*This isn’t working for me. I am getting too amped up, I hear myself yelling and*

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I can't be kind or really understand what you are trying to communicate right now so I am going ____ (over here on the couch, up to my room, for a walk, to put on my headphones) for ____ (naming a time) to take care of myself and then we can check back in.

This has worked better for me if I maintain my focus on me and what I will do to make space to calm and care for myself. It has not worked for me to try to get any specific response from my kiddo. Saying something like ***“I am going to my room and I'll be back once you are calm”*** could be effective for some caregivers with their people it just hasn't worked as well for me with mine.

Once in our own space, Tara suggests asking ourselves things like: ***What most wants attention? How am I experiencing this in my body? What am I believing? What does this vulnerable place want from me? What does it most need?***

I have found it helpful to experiment with investigating the physical impacts an experience has on my body. We can try to pay attention to areas of tightness or tenderness, numbness or aching, or any other sensation that seems to come out of our experience. If a narrative concept starts to give us a story about an experience this is OK. Its natural. Stories can easily re-ignite us or keep us spinning though. So, maybe try to remember - It is also OK to just notice that we are telling ourselves a story and to set the story aside. I remind myself that right now I most want to feel what is going on in my body and attend to what helps my body to help me calm down.

N—Nurture with Self-Compassion

Our kids can relax better once they feel understood and cared for, and we too can relax and prepare to think and act more clearly once we access compassion for ourselves and see how we can best nurture and care for ourselves. What do we most need? A message of reassurance? Of forgiveness? Of companionship? Of love? (accepting that it cannot come from our child or others in the family right now – we can do this for ourselves)

Tara suggests: It might be the mental whisper, *I'm here with you. I'm sorry, and I love you. I love you, and I'm listening. It's not your fault. Trust in your goodness.*

When I feel like “this is too hard, it will never end, or I don't think I can keep doing this.” I find it helpful and nurturing to validate my own experience.

Nurturing with understanding that my experience in this moment is completely rational for the circumstances - Sometimes I know why I have been “hooked” or triggered so strongly by my child's behavior. It can be:

- prior experience (fears fulfilled or expectations unmet),
- invalid information (guessing the motives of my child, assuming ill intent, or embracing thoughts that this challenge will go on forever because I don't know how long it will last), or
- my own biology (I might be tired, hungry, lonely, or in a rush).

Example - ***“I feel ____ and I am not crazy for feeling this way even if I ‘Know’ better.”***

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“I can know this will pass and still be tired and scared right now.”

Or be longer & more specific IF it helps like - ***“This is the third straight day of these outbursts, of course it feels like it’s going to go on forever and obviously this is exhausting. Feeling this way makes sense right now. This is hard right now, even though I know it is not always this way and will get better”***

Nurturing with thoughts of worthiness and self-respect and act(s) of kindness toward myself - It is sometimes helpful to remind myself that being tender, anxious, tired, or upset is a sign of humanity. It does not mean I am fragile or incapable. I can remind myself that exercising my competence right in this moment means caring for my own tenderness and allowing my child to find their own way for a bit. I do not need to force change and likely cannot force change on my own terms. I can tend to myself. I can allow myself to calm down and feel safe and cared for before deciding what comes next for me.

I might remember times when I have felt this way before and found a way back to center. If I feel in a rush to get back to “things,” I can remind myself that my kids do better when I do better and that caring for myself is caring for them. I can scan my body one more time. Maybe breathing deeply and stretching some last areas of tension, massaging my feet, playing a favorite song, taking a shower. Just a few minutes of well attuned care, offering myself the kindness my kiddo or others can’t right now, before checking back in.

After the RAIN

It can be helpful to stand in stillness, take a deep breath (or a few), to notice the quality of our own exquisite presence before checking back in. I like to feel the ground holding me up, the air moving around me, my balance and the strength of my spine (I am not easily knocked down), and the warmth and welcoming softness of my front and center (I can make room for my needs and the needs of others).

Before checking back in with others I have found it useful to ask myself some questions like – ***“Do I feel ready to ‘dance, NOT wrestle’ with my person and our challenge?”***

“Can I maintain my separate sense of self and participate willingly with another, staying curious about their effort to communicate something that still may be unclear to me?”

“Am I ready to watch for my own willful tendencies to try to assert order and wrestle my desire for calm into place?”

“Can I remind myself that a more willing dance, inviting cooperative peacemaking is likely to have a more lasting affect?”

AND we can always remind ourselves - we do not need to re-engage until all are calm or we can find something positive to engage with and let the other stuff go for now.