

THE RAIN METHOD

Another valuable informal practice for working with mindfulness, and developing both awareness and acceptance, is RAIN:

- R** **Recognise when a strong emotion is present**
- A** **Allow or acknowledge that it is there**
- I** **Investigate the body, thoughts and emotions**
- N** **Non-identify with whatever is there**

R RECOGNISE WHEN A STRONG EMOTION IS PRESENT

This involves stepping out of denial and acknowledging what is present in our experience. When we deny our experience we create conflict in our mind that intensifies our experience of claustrophobia and pain. Take anger as an example: when you feel anger arising, acknowledge it and name it. By doing this you invite it into awareness with the result that the emotion loses some of its power over you. Simply recognising what is happening, instead of automatically reacting to it, allows you to shift from a passive to an active stance, which already gives rise to greater freedom.

A ALLOW OR ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IT IS THERE – ACCEPTANCE

Even though you may have acknowledged an emotion there might still be resistance to it. Resistance adds another layer of conflict and suffering to what is already there. It is like adding fuel to fire. Through acceptance we face the facts of our experience honestly and take them on board. In the case of anger you might say to yourself – “Anger is present, so I will open to it and work with it rather than trying to push it away.”

When things are accepted they become workable and genuine change becomes possible. We can learn to allow our experience to be the way it is. Being open to what we are experiencing does not mean wallowing in our feelings or acting them out. Instead, it involves giving ourselves space to feel what we are feeling – gently holding our feelings in our awareness, softening around them and not imposing judgements on them. In so doing, we can open more fully to what we are experiencing, which brings us more fully into the present. Instead of trying to judge, explain or manipulate how we feel, we can simply maintain an open presence in the face of it.

I INVESTIGATE THE BODY, THOUGHTS AND EMOTIONS

Once you have acknowledged a difficult emotion and accepted it, you can then investigate it more fully. You need to be willing to inquire into what is going on inside you, instead of just assuming that you know what your experience signifies and reacting automatically.

Often we think we know what we are experiencing – “I’m angry, that’s all” or “This is just an old hang up from childhood” – without understanding what is really happening. If we reflect more deeply, we discover that there is more to any experience than we can know at first glance. So we need to be willing to ask ourselves “What is going on here?” and really look with an open mind, instead of assuming that we already know. Investigation does not involve analysis, but rather paying close attention – as if we are looking at it from every angle. In doing this we cultivate a quality of curiosity and interest.

N NON-IDENTIFY WITH WHATEVER IS THERE

Inquire of every mental state or emotion that arises – is this really who I am or is this just an experience that is moving through me? In the case of anger notice if you are identifying with it. Has it become who I am in this moment?

We notice how identifying with it causes our mind to contract around it tightly so that our mental landscape becomes closed in and painful. Through paying attention and inquiring in this way, and through the previous stages of RAIN, there is a gradual dis-identification – it is as if our mind relaxed its tight grip on the anger, and there is a greater sense of spaciousness in the mind. Through this spaciousness the difficult emotion is given space to unravel, work its way through us and change.

In this way RAIN can help in taking you through Mindful Acceptance – Mindful Space [spaciousness] – Mindful Change.