

RAINS

Adapted by Susan Stone

When a difficult emotion arises, a powerful way to transform your relationship to it is to practice with RAINS. Use the acronym when a difficult emotion arises or as soon after as possible.

R—Recognize that you're experiencing a difficult emotion.

Recognize “this is (fear, anger, vulnerability, etc.)” Don't try to avoid, bury, or ignore. Don't barrel through your day, beset with heaviness and dread or go through the motions of living as though the emotion were just part of the scenery. The emotion is taking a toll on your precious life. It is pleading for your loving attention, like a child or a puppy. Recognizing the presence of the difficult emotion takes no extra time; it can happen in a blink of an eye.

A—Allowing the difficult emotion without judgment.

Allowing the difficult emotion to be present doesn't mean liking the emotion. It means accepting it without judgment. Allowing is a receptive response, a wholesome pause. While this is easy to say, it is hard to do because we tend to judge such emotions. No one likes difficult emotions, and we naturally want to get rid of them. In addition, as spiritual practitioners, we tend to assume that we shouldn't have difficult emotions, that we should be able to meditate them away, and when we can't we may judge them as practice failures. Allowing means recognizing that difficult emotions are as normal expressions of human life as are pleasant emotions. They belong.

I—Investigate

Actively turn towards the difficult emotion and investigate it by dropping the story around it. Shift attention away from the circumstances that caused it to arise and from cogitation about what may happen in future, catastrophizing or building a horror story. Instead, lean into the emotion. Notice the physical sensations that the emotion has triggered in the body. Put your hand on the spot. Even if you are unable to identify the physical sensations, the effort to do so will create some distance from the emotion. You will not simply be carried away by it.

N—Non-identification

Taking a step back from the difficult emotion with your attention enables you to notice that you are not that emotion. The emotion doesn't define you. You are more and other than it. You are in a position to notice that all people experience difficult emotions at times. You aren't alone. You can view it impersonally as the fear (anger, anxiety, etc), not my fear (etc). This aspect of the RAINS practice enlarges your perspective. You relate to the emotion, not from it.

S—Self-compassion

Self-compassion means bringing compassion to yourself when experiencing a difficult emotion. It helps to realize that the emotion is in a way trying to protect you, to defend you

from a perceived threat. Whatever the circumstances surrounding its arising, embrace yourself. Use a kind and caring inner dialogue, perhaps addressing yourself with an endearment. In this way, you are creating a caring relationship with yourself. By bringing compassion to that raw place, you are creating softer space around the emotion and within yourself.

When you first practice with RAINS, it is a tool. However, eventually it becomes automatic, a way of being. You become more compassionate, wiser, and less conflicted. You will be freer to take effective action and will promote inner growth and happiness.