

Guided Reflection: Bringing RAIN to Difficulty

Sitting quietly, close your eyes and take a few full breaths. Bring to mind a current situation in which you feel stuck; one that elicits a difficult reaction such as anger or fear, shame or hopelessness. It may be a conflict with a family member, a chronic sickness, a failure at work, the pain of an addiction, a conversation you now regret. Take some moments to enter the experience—visualizing the scene or situation, remembering the words spoken, sensing the most distressing moments. Contacting the charged essence of the story is the starting place for exploring the healing presence of RAIN.

R: *Recognize what is happening.* As you reflect on this situation, ask yourself, “What is happening inside me right now?” What sensations are you most aware of? What emotions? Is your mind filled with churning thoughts?

Take a moment to become aware of your “felt sense” of the situation as a whole. Can you feel how the experience is living in your heart and body, as well as in your mind?

A: *Allow life to be just as it is.* Send a message to your heart to “let be” this entire experience. Find in yourself the willingness to pause and accept that, in these moments that *what is...is*. You can experiment with mentally whispering words like “yes,” “this belongs,” or “let be.”

You might find yourself saying *yes* to a huge inner *no*—to a body and mind painfully contracted in resistance. You might be saying *yes* to the part of you that is saying, “I hate this!” That’s a natural part of the process.

At this point in RAIN, you are simply noticing what is true, and intending not to judge, push away or control anything you find.

I: *Investigate with a gentle attention.* Now begin to explore what you are experiencing more closely, calling on your natural interest and curiosity about your inner life. You might ask yourself: *What about this most wants my attention?* or *What most wants my acceptance?* Pose your questions gently, your inner voice kind and inviting.

Notice where you feel the experience most distinctly in your body. Are you aware of heat, tightness, pressure, aches, squeezing? When you have found the most intense part of your physical experience, bring it into your face, letting your expression mirror, and even exaggerate, what you are feeling in your body. What emotions are you aware of as you do this? Fear? Anger? Grief? Shame?

As you continue to investigate, you might find it helpful to ask: *What am I believing?* If this leads to a lot of thinking, drop it. But you might find that a very distinct belief emerges almost as soon as you ask. Do you believe that you are failing in some way?

That someone will reject you? That you will not be able to handle whatever is around the corner? That you really are flawed? That you will never be happy? How does this belief live in your body? What are the sensations? Tightness? Soreness? Burning? Hollowness?

As before, send the message of *yes* or *this belongs* or *let be*, allowing yourself to feel the fullness or intensity of the difficult experience. As you contact and allow what is happening, what do you notice? Is there any softening in your body and heart? Can you sense more openness or space? Or does the intention to allow bring up more tension, judgment and fear? Does it intensify or change what you are feeling?

Now ask the place of most difficulty: *What do you most need?* or *How do you want me to be with you?* Does this suffering part of you want understanding? Acceptance? Company? Forgiveness? Love?

N: Nurture. Let yourself attend from your most awake and wise heart. As you sense what is needed, what is your natural response? What does this vulnerable place most need to remember, experience or trust? You might offer yourself a wise message, such as *I'm sorry, and I love you* or *Trust your goodness* or *It's ok, sweetheart* or *I'm here, and I'm not leaving*. This place might also find touch healing, and you might gently place your hand on your heart.

Feel free to experiment with ways of befriending your inner life—whether through words or touch, images or energy. Discover how your attention might become more intimate and loving.

After the RAIN. As you offer this unconditional, kind presence to your inner life, sense the possibility of relaxing back and being that awareness. Get familiar with the quality of presence that is here. Like an ocean with waves on the surface, feel yourself as the tender, wakeful openness that includes this changing life.

Can you sense how “who you are” is not identified by or hitched to any particular wave of fear or anger or hurt? Can you sense how the waves on the surface belong to your experience, but cannot injure or alter the measureless depth and vastness of your being?

Take some moments, as long as you’d like, to simply rest in this spacious and kind awareness, allowing whatever arises in your body or mind to freely come and go. Know this natural awareness as the innermost truth of what you are.

*Adapted from **True Refuge** by Tara Brach*

Copied from her website