

CALMING RAIN

The past month has been wet and soggy in my part of the world. We have had our typical “Rain Forest” winter rainy season. While I appreciate the depth of greenness this rain brings, the grey, gloomy days can take a toll! I decided to google rain and look for a different perspective. After all, when you can see how other areas in the world, perhaps need rain to relieve drought, or how it causes flooding, it brings gratitude where angst or depression might creep in. What showed up in my search was something I was not expecting.

Mindfulness is all the buzz right now; it has been around for a long time but is enjoying a surge in popularity. Mindfulness is derived from Buddhist roots and was clinically innovated by Jon Kabat-Zinn. Mindfulness involves being aware of our experiences moment by moment – being present. To put it simply, we allow ourselves to be aware of and accept/own our thoughts and feelings without judging them. Due to the surge in popularity, there are many studies being conducted, and just as many classes being offered in mindfulness.

RAIN is a technique taught in mindfulness, it is an acronym for R- Recognize, A- Accept, I- Investigate, N- Non-Identify.

All emotions we experience derive from just two – love and fear. Let’s face it, when we are experiencing an emotion from the love side, we don’t tend to dwell on it or say “why am I having this emotion?” We are able to flow easily with “love” emotions. It is the emotions that arise from the fear side that tend to twist our insides and get our minds and hearts racing.

It is thought that the best way to transform any strong emotions we have or experience is to befriend them. Easier said than done, but by incorporating the RAIN technique, we are directing our attention in a clear, systematic way that could help us deal with any strong emotions we experience.

First RECOGNIZE it for what it is. You are experiencing an emotion. You open up to this emotion by asking “what is happening inside me right now”. Then allow the curious explorer to take over as you focus inward. No need to do anything in this moment but truly see what is going on with you. You are to listen to your body without preconceived thoughts about what is happening, but rather allow your body to tell you what is going on.

During this exploration, ACCEPT whatever you are going through, and allow it to be. Don’t try to push away from it, don’t try to hide from it or shame yourself out of the emotion. Say “yes” to it, and continue exploring it, allowing it to wash over you. Be fully present with the emotion you are feeling, allowing it to happen. Just observe what, and where in your body, this emotion is speaking to you. Do not feed it with words or thoughts, just let it be.

Once you are aware of how the emotion is going through your body, INVESTIGATE it with kindness. Get to the truth of the matter by asking questions “what most wants my attention?”, “what am I believing?”, “what does this feeling want from me?”, “what triggered this emotion?”, “when have I felt this way before?”, “how realistic is my thinking?”, “are there actions I can take right now to help myself or another person?”, “what do I need?” In this inquiry, compassion and non judgement are all that is required, along with a willingness to accept the truth of whatever comes from the questions.

Perhaps the hardest part of this whole technique is NON-IDENTIFY, which comes next. What you are feeling does not in any way define you. "I am angry" identifies you as the emotion, whereas "I am experiencing anger right now." identifies the emotion you are feeling. If you can come to the point of observing what you are experiencing like you would watch a movie on a big screen, this will take you out of your way for a brief period of time. Most of the time, our experiences that cause or trigger strong emotions in us, pass. It might take some time, but "this too shall pass." A new job will come along, you will move past your divorce and new love will enter, your health will improve, etc. History, our personal history, proves this to us, that no matter what we have gone through in the past- here we are today experiencing something different.

Mindfulness is a wonderful tool to help us stay present, and living each moment we have to the fullest that we are capable of. As will all wonderful tools, if a person is too overwhelmed with many challenges crossing their path, it might not work. At that point professional help should be sought, there is no shame in asking for help, and at the end of the day, life will be better for it.

Without realizing or naming it, I have been doing the above, for many years now. I have always found it serves me well when I am feeling overwhelmed and I just cannot turn off my mind from running down an untoward path I have no intention of taking. Give it a try, or a version thereof, next time something triggers a strong emotion within you. See if RAIN can wash away some of your fears and ease your mind.

Namaste
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