

Mindfulness Practice (RAIN)

Recognize: We are present to our experience (the disturbing feeling or thought) and observe it from the witness, bringing awareness to it. We don't react, avoid or distract ourselves from what is. Then we name it ie. "Oh, there's that feeling of _____". UCLA research has shown that when we name a disturbing emotion, it activates the prefrontal cortex and calms the amygdala.

Allow: We welcome and accept the feeling without judging it or choosing to like or dislike it, want it or want to push it away. Instead, we view it with curiosity, open-mindedness, acceptance and love (COAL). We learn to accept and make peace with what is.

Investigate: We bring our attention into our body and open to the bodily felt sense of the experience. We inquire "Where is this feeling in my body?" Stay with the bodily-felt sense of the feeling. (See the Somatic Focusing handout to help with this step).

Nurture: We realize that we are not the thought, sensation or feeling. We do not identify with the experience; instead we are the observer/witness of it. We then dis-identify with it. Finally, we nurture ourselves. Richard Moss, MD describes it this way:

With sacred attention we focus on the quality of attention we offer ourselves as we notice our thoughts, sensations, reactions and feelings. We offer our attention with a quality of exquisite receptivity and tenderness, no matter what we're experiencing. This intimate viewing of ourselves by our awareness is the most fundamental of all relationships. In it we create the possibility of a conscious, empathetic connection between me (ego/self) and our awareness (witness/Self). This wise presence (Self) can become our trusted friend and inner companion. The key to cultivating the healing potential of the self-Self relationship is the quality of attention – the steadiness, gentleness and acceptance of the "gaze" we turn toward ourselves. This quality of presence is the most crucial element of the inner relationship we can create with our feelings, experiences and our suffering. We hold it all with a mother's unconditional love... with complete, unblinking empathetic attention. As we do this, we experience that part of us that is always more than whatever we are feeling – as an empathetic, ever-present friend. This attunement to ourselves fosters neurogenesis in the prefrontal cortex.

Self-compassion is the key to healing. We take ourselves into our own heart and learn to self-soothe and nurture ourselves.