

Feeling anxious? Soothe your mind with RAIN

Let's explore a technique called **RAIN** which stands for **Recognise, Acknowledge and Accept, Investigate, and Nurture**. RAIN is a modern version of an ancient Buddhist way to cope with life's hardships as well as cultivate hope for a better future. The practice works as it helps interrupt excessive rumination by encouraging calm reflection. This creates a resourceful state of mind enabling you to choose how you wish to respond rather than being trapped in a loop of negativity.

Here's how to apply it:

Recognise. Find a quiet and private space. Have a pen and paper to hand. Close your eyes. Focus on your breathing. Breathe in for the count of 3, hold for the count of 4 then out for the count of 5. Do this at least twice. Now spend a few minutes tuning into your thoughts, notice them objectively then let them go without judgment. Open your eyes. Describe what you have seen without self-criticism. Naming your thoughts and emotions helps depersonalise them. For example, try replacing 'I feel anxious' with 'There's anxiety'. Now you are better equipped to deal with these feelings because you have a calm and objective viewpoint.

Acknowledge and Accept. Next acknowledge what you are experiencing, feeling and thinking. Accept it as the present reality. Allow yourself to be with it in a kind and loving way as you would with a friend. Accepting our current sensations, thoughts and emotions does not mean we are passively tolerating the things we do not like. Rather it allows us to recognise our humanity and the way things are right now. Then we can move on to what we can do about it.

Investigate. Ask yourself the following questions while maintaining a gentle curiosity:

- What do I need now?
- Who and what can support me?
- What resources (internal and external) are available to me now?
- Which of my strengths can I draw upon?
- What are some actions I could take to help myself?

What is the first simple thing I can do that is within my control? Note down your answers so that you can come back to these at the conclusion of the exercise.

Nurture. Now reflect on what you have observed. It is not about suppressing or punishing yourself – it is a self-compassionate way of acknowledging that all your feelings are valid, but some are not helpful. What might be a more helpful emotion for you? Gently lead your mind in that direction. Take a few nourishing breaths then review what you have written and decide which actions you will take. It doesn't need to be a big step just something that will boost your wellbeing and sense of self-efficacy.

Applying RAIN takes courage and effort so be patient with yourself. It also helps to remember that thoughts and emotions are not who you are; they are part of an experience you are having.

Source: Radical Compassion by Tara Brach (2019)