

JOURNALING PROMPT:

Dealing With Challenging Emotions (RAIN)

This journaling prompt is based on a mindfulness technique that many people associate with Tara Brach, although the RAIN acronym was first coined by Michele McDonald.

The wording has been modified a bit over time. These days, RAIN as it is usually taught stands for **Recognize, Allow, Investigate, and Nurture**. These four steps are a wise and self-compassionate way to respond when we are experiencing challenging emotions.

While this is more typically done as a meditation, RAIN lends itself beautifully to journaling — which can, after all, be a powerful mindfulness practice if you approach it in the right way.

You can use this prompt any time you're experiencing feelings you find difficult or challenging — to help you get clear on the feelings and what's behind them, to stop fighting with them, and to offer yourself kindness instead.

Step 1: Recognize

This step is about recognizing what's going on in this moment.

Begin by taking a couple centering breaths, closing your eyes, and coming into contact with yourself — offering your inner self your full attention.

Then briefly name what you're noticing — perhaps writing down just a few words or phrases that capture your state of being in this moment.

Step 2: Allow

This step is about allowing your experience to be what it is — rather than trying to fight, fix, or avoid it. Because, as Carl Rogers has said, "The curious paradox is that when I accept myself just as I am, then I can change."

Write a few sentences on the page of your journal affirming this acceptance or inviting yourself to allow things to be exactly as they are.

This might sound something like, "It's ok to be feeling this way" or "I'm going to let go and allow things to be what they are." Find your own words that work for you.

Step 3: Investigate

Here you're getting curious about what's going on in this moment.

Take a few minutes now to explore — without judgment — what's going on, and the meanings or implications of that experience.

Answer one or more of the following questions (or find your own powerful question)...

- What most wants my attention here?
- How am I experiencing this in my body? What might those feelings be telling me or asking for?
- What does my heart have to say about this? What feelings or yearnings have I not yet acknowledged? What are they telling me or asking for?
- What am I believing? What stories am I telling myself about this? How are those beliefs or stories impacting me?
- What larger perspective could I invite here? What if I look at this through a spiritual lens?
- Does anything about this feel familiar? Am I playing out old patterns it's time to let go of?

One important thing to guard against here is getting too intellectual or analytical about this. You're far more likely to uncover true wisdom and insight if you stay in contact with your whole self — body, heart, mind, and soul/spirit.

Step 4: Nurture

This step is about offering yourself care and compassion. It's about responding with exactly what you need most.

Read back over what you've written so far.

Then invite your "Wise Self" to respond compassionately with whatever you most need to hear right now — whether that's love, forgiveness, reassurance, perspective, encouragement, companionship, empathy, advice, or something else.

Step 5: Closing

Again, read over what you've written, and then offer yourself a few words of gratitude for the gift you've just given yourself — and perhaps name for yourself what your next step will be.

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