

The R.A.I.N. Tool

The R.A.I.N. acronym, developed by psychologist Dr. Tara Branch,¹ helps us respond wisely in daily life when we feel overwhelmed. The letters in R.A.I.N. stand for these ideas.

Recognize what is going on.

At the moment of a difficult event or painful thought, acknowledge what is happening. Don't stuff or ignore your feelings. Recognize it for what it is.

Allow the experience to just be there.

Don't try to change it. Just be with it.

Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, a neuroscientist who suffered a stroke and wrote about it in *My Stroke of Insight* notes that a strong emotion can actually calm down after 90 seconds. However, when we add commentary and narrative to it, the emotion continues and even strengthens. She writes, "Although there are certain limbic system (emotional) programs that can be triggered automatically, it takes less than 90 seconds for one of these programs to be triggered, surge through our body, and then be completely flushed out of our blood stream....Once triggered, the chemical released by my brain surges through my body and I have a physiological experience. ...If, however, I remain angry [the emotion related to the illustration she used in that chapter, my notation] after those 90 seconds have passed, then it is because I have *chosen* to let that circuit continue to run."²

Investigate your inner experience with kindness.

Often the first two steps are sufficient to quiet the emotion or thought. But should it persist, you may need to investigate more fully what's happening inside. How are you experiencing the sensation? What is it doing in your body? What thoughts are filling your mind? Are you being harsh on yourself for having these feelings? Often we get lost in the story we tell ourselves without questioning the story. Of course, confession of sin may be needed as well if the Holy Spirit convicts you of sinful thoughts and attitudes.

Non-identification.

This means you don't overly identify with your thought or emotion. You don't take the emotion personally. You see it simply as a passing mental event rather than as reality, a term called de-centering.³ A key to mindfulness is recognizing that you don't have to fuse to your thoughts and emotions. Emotions don't define you. You don't have to take them personally. With God's help you can dispassionately observe them like when you watch a movie.

¹ Tara Brach, "Feeling Overwhelmed? Remember 'RAIN,'" *Mindful* (blog), January 13, 2016, <https://www.mindful.org/tara-brach-rain-mindfulness-practice/>.

² Jill Bolte Taylor, *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*, 1 Reprint edition (New York: Plume, 2009), Kindle Locations 1597-1601.

³ David M. Fresco et al., "Initial Psychometric Properties of the Experiences Questionnaire: Validation of a Self-Report Measure of Decentering," *Behavior Therapy* 38, no. 3 (September 2007): 234–46, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2006.08.003>.