

Ruth King
Week 3, *Embracing the Mad Mind*
September 15, 2014
“Turn Madness into Wisdom”

So, welcome to Week Three of embracing the mad mind with Tricycle magazine. Last week I offered six faces of the mad mind in the form of six disguises: greed types, aversive types and delusional types. And I invited you, as a home practice, to pay attention to how your particular disguise was showing itself in your life, kind of flirting with you in your life. And I asked you to notice that, to welcome that, and to notice how it lives in the body a little bit. What are you feeling at the moment you notice your disguise?

And I also mentioned that a moment of noticing the disguise is a moment of mindfulness, and that's really good news and that's a good practice. I also invited you to keep a journal and to continue to pay attention to your intention—that intention, that anchor of keeping you honest and as a guiding point—throughout this course. So I'm hoping that you're benefiting from this recognition in your life.

This week, I'd like to offer a practice called RAIN, which is an acronym for recognize, allow, investigate and non-identification. So I'll walk you through what this all means. So it can be frightening to notice how we hide or to notice the impact that we have on others and it can be useful to become more intimate with these direct and sobering experiencing, as they're beginning to reveal themselves. It's useful to stay present as much as we can and not turn away from the first arrow, but to allow ourselves to feel what's there and to know that it's changing all the time. It's not going to be a permanent state.

So this week, I'd like to offer a simple practice for us called RAIN; and it's an acronym and it stands for recognize, allow, investigate, and non-identification with experience. This practice is best done in a stillness practice, in our meditation practice, where we have a chance to just be still and reflect. Let me begin with the “recognize,” the R. The “recognize” is when we just simply ask the question, “What's happening? What's happening?” We check in with our experience right here and right now. What's happening? How is my disguise expressing itself in this moment? What form is the mind taking? Sometimes it can be about like, “That's not right” or “It shouldn't be this way” or some judgment or doubt or—okay, I don't have to give all those examples.

Sometimes we'll notice the mad mind in the form of thoughts. We'll be having thoughts like, “This is right, this is wrong, this shouldn't be this way.” Sometimes

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we recognize the mad mind as an emotion, where we can acknowledge, “Oh, I’m scared” or “This is frightening.” Sometimes we will experience the mad mind as a tightness in the jaw, a shrinking in the forehead, something that contracts. So we first want to just say, “What’s happening?” and turn our attention inward to notice.

The A stands for “allow” and to allow is to accept what is right now, without judgment. And what’s really important here is to suspend judgment so that the experience can be fully felt. You want to say, “Yes, welcome. I see you.” When we are allowing, that’s what we’re doing. We also want to say “Can I be with this right now? Can I bear this experience right here, right now? Can I sit with it?” We don’t want to over shock our nervous system by taking on an intense wave of emotion if we’re not really able to allow it. So it’s important that if we feel high intensity that we not go there, if you will, or not allow it, but to change our posture, to maybe stand, to do walking meditation, or if we find a certain intensity in a certain place in our body, that we shift our attention to a place in our body that feels kind of neutral or feels good.

So allowing is saying, “Yes, I can be with this”—but only if you can bear this experience. To allow is to say, “Yes, I can be with this for now.” That’s the A, “allow.”

And then the I is “investigate.” It’s really a more intimate investigation. It’s a leaning in to what you are experiencing right now. Here you ask, “Is it possible for me to be with this experience more intimately, right here, right now?” It’s a shift from the head to the body. It’s a shift from the concept of what you’re seeing to an experience of what you’re seeing. We turn our attention inward to investigate and what we’re looking at is: “Where is this experience most alive in the body right now? Where am I feeling this experience?” So what we’re doing with investigation is we’re tracking our experiences moment to moment without judgment, without a need for it to be different.

So we’re slowing it down, opening the lens very wide and noticing what’s happening moment to moment with the changing sensations and feelings and thoughts. All of these experiences are going to be moving around quite a bit. So with “investigate,” we’re allowing ourselves to see this changing and permanent phenomenon. What we see with investigation is a myriad of mind movements and we get to see that things are changing all the time, even though our story about them may be different. So we’re tracking more what the real deal is, which is

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what our experiences are on the inside. So we want to stay close since—stay close to the here and now and track without judgment. And what we’re doing with investigation is that we’re cultivating more tolerance to be in that witnessing place of what’s happening instead of being blown away with it or carried away with what’s happening.

And then the N stands for “non-identification” with experience. With non-identification of experience, we do what we can to not be swept away by what’s happening. We have with these disguises many stories, memories, experiences and if we—our habit is that we dance with all these things that come up, we engage them and then we’re off and running. But here, what we want to do is not over-identify with regret or with thinking this is solid and true. We don’t want to over-identify with what’s happening and, when we do that, we waste a lot of energy.

Here, we get a bit more perspective. We shift away from taking things so personally to witnessing what arises and passes away. So we might ask, “What’s disturbing us? What it needs. What does this experience need from me right now?” And pause here and be open to what that revelation might be, what that answer might be. It may be simply that you continue to look without turning away. It may be that you offer some kindness and you can imagine taking this disturbance may be in locking it in your arms like a child that’s hurt or maybe what’s happening needs your forgiveness.

So just imagine and just pause here and notice what this disturbance might want from you. And then you want to take a moment to imagine yourself offering this disturbance what it needs—making that offer and pausing there to see what happens. What happens when you offer this disturbance what it needs? Notice what happens, what changes, what body sensations you’re having, continuing to witness without judgment. How does this offer change your experience? As you continue to practice with non-identification, you begin to see that what is occurring is not personal, it’s not permanent and it’s often not perfect, but it’s constantly changing. And we rest into the ride of non-identification, we rest into witnessing our experiences as if we’re in a big movie screen and we’re watching the big movie on the screen.

We get to see what’s happening and track what’s happening, without merging with what’s happening. With non-identification, one of the things we begin to recognize is that our experiences are impermanent and left to their own devices,

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without being interrupted or disturbed, our experiences come and they go. So we can learn to notice this with the sense of relaxation and ease over time, with our practice. We can see it for what it is. It's suffering. It's the first arrow and we don't have to pick up our habituation of responding to it. We don't have to attend every argument that we're invited to. So let's practice together.

I invite you to first of all, look around the room and just become oriented in this space. Notice the colors on the wall, the pictures, see if there is an image in the room that relaxes you in any way. You can also notice where the exit is. Sometimes our intense emotion wants to know how to get out of dodge if it needs to, so just knowing where the door is can be helpful. And then come back to noticing yourself, sitting here, being on the cushion and relaxing.

And you can close your eyes now and just feel the safety on the inside. Notice yourself making contact with your seat and with your breath. You can adjust your posture if you need to, so that you can fully occupy this moment. Take an intentional breath here. Inhale and hold and exhale. Once more, inhale, hold and exhale and open your awareness to the body sitting, breathing, settling and being safe.

And allow this experience of safety to expand a little with each breath, perhaps spreading throughout the body, touching all or your organs and cells. With relaxed awareness here. And in this place of calm, call to mind a situation with someone or something in your life that is very stressful, something that's very disturbing in your life, something difficult to bear or hard to forgive and let go of. Bring that situation to mind and take your time here with soft awareness. See the situation clearly in your mind. What's happening? What's happening?

Notice the dance of disguises, notice the mad mind. What's happening? And you might ask here, “Can I be with this? Can I bear witness? Can I allow this?” Pausing here, allowing, staying connected with the breath. Allowing it to be free. Noticing in the body where the disturbance is most alive. Where in the body do you feel the aliveness of this disturbance? Is it in your chest? Is it hot or cool? Is it a thought? A tightness in the stomach? Begin to track your experience, your changing experience, allowing a kind view, noticing how it changes.

The changes may be gradual or they may be abrupt. Just staying close in, recognizing, allowing and investigating with intimacy with a gentle allowing, a kind allowing of seeing what's happening. You might ask now, “What does this experience need from you?” Listen for the answer in your silence. And imagine

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yourself making this offer and see what happens, what changes. Continue noticing and resting in kind awareness.

So this is the practice of RAIN: recognizing, allowing, intimate investigation and non-identification with experience. It can be a profoundly useful tool when you're dealing with the mad mind, with intense emotions, because it allows you to strengthen the executive function of the brain by cultivating a practice of witnessing and that's what the mad mind needs. It needs to be witnessed, known, touched and not clung to. So RAIN is a practical way to turn suffering into a mindful inquiry and this will be your home practice for this week. Again, the home practice is to reflect on your intention, to keep that alive and have it be a real source of fuel for you throughout your day—your intention.

And now to bring the practice of RAIN into your mindfulness practice, your stillness practice, and apply it when you find yourself dealing with an intense emotion. And again: journal your insights, capture what you're starting to understand and make sense out of, the dots you're starting to connect. Capture that in your journal. And I'll leave you with this poem by Dorothy Hunt.

“Do you think peace requires an end to war? Are tigers eating only vegetables? Does peace require an absence from your boss, your spouse, yourself? Do you think peace will come from some other place than here, some other time than now and some other heart than yours? Peace is this moment without judgment. This is all. This moment and the heart space where everything that is, is welcomed. Peace is this moment without thinking that it should be some other way, that you should feel some other thing, that your life should unfold according to your plans. Peace is this moment without judgment, this moment in the heart space, where everything is, is welcomed.”

So we'll see you next week for our fourth and final session.