



**Practicing Compassion for Ourselves and Others**

Robert Hodge and Laura Good

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## Talk I Introduction

### Robert Hodge

Compassion is one of the four Brahma Viharas (Divine Abodes) taught by the Buddha and it is one of the three skillful intentions in the Buddha's Eightfold Path, his prescription for happiness. Compassion means to be with, feel with, suffer with. The key word is "with." In order to be with ourselves or others, we need to be mindful, paying attention moment to moment to what is. When we do that, we "let ourselves be touched by life, and our hearts naturally become more open and engaged."<sup>1</sup> Bhante Gunaratana defines compassion as "the melting of the heart at the thought of another's suffering."<sup>2</sup>

Nyanaponika Thera (a German-born Sri-Lanka-ordained Theravada monk) stated "The world suffers. But most men have their eyes and ears closed. They do not see the unbroken stream of tears flowing through life; they do not hear the cry of distress continually pervading the world. Their own little grief or joy bars their sight, deafens **Talk XV Four Remembrances: Living with an Awake Heart** their ears. Bound by selfishness, their hearts turn stiff and narrow. Being stiff and narrow, how should they be able to strive for any higher goal, to realize that only release from selfish craving will effect their own freedom from suffering?"

It is compassion that removes the heavy bar, opens the door to freedom, makes the narrow heart as wide as the world. Compassion takes away from the heart the inert weight, the paralyzing heaviness; it gives wings to those who cling to the lowlands of self."<sup>3</sup>

This series was inspired by Tara Brach's book, *Radical Compassion: Learning to Love Yourself and Your World with the Practice of RAIN*<sup>4</sup>.

### Introduction

Tara titles her book, *Radical Compassion*, because she takes a broad view of power of compassion that can heal; a compassion that includes all of life including our vulnerability and humanness. "It means having the courage to love ourselves, each other, and our world. *Radical Compassion* is rooted in mindful, embodied presence, and it expresses actively through caring that includes all beings."

Throughout her book, Tara explores many dimensions of how we suffer through negative self-beliefs, shame, fear and deep longing. She employs the healing technique of RAIN, an acronym for **R**ecognize, **A**llow, **I**nvestigate, and **N**urture (the component of self-compassion). As she notes, RAIN was originally introduced by senior Buddhist teacher Michele McDonald in the 1980's. Tara has adapted RAIN to cultivate the "synchronistic power of mindfulness and heartfulness.

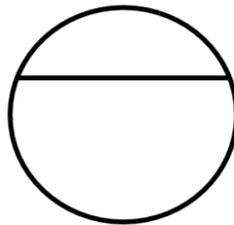
We will start by exploring each element of RAIN: what it means and how to practice each element. Putting RAIN back together, we will start by applying it first to self-compassion because if we cannot feel compassion for ourselves, we cannot truly feel compassion for others. We will see how it can be applied to those dimensions of suffering noted above. Finally, we will move from self-compassion to our relationships, exploring forgiveness, loving-kindness and compassion.

### Why do we suffer?

Why do we suffer? Tara notes that one of the reasons is that we forget who we are. “We all get lost in the dense forest of our lives, entangled in incessant worry and planning, in judgments of others, and in our busy striving to meet demands and solve problems. When we’re caught in that thicket, it’s easy to lose sight of what matters most. We forget how much we long to be kind and openhearted. We forget our ties to this sacred earth and to all living beings. And in a deep way, we forget who we are.”<sup>5</sup>

In forgetting, we go into a trance, a half-conscious state characterized by an absence of response to external stimuli. In other words, we are stuck in our mind, totally absorbed by thoughts and unaware of any external stimuli. Whatever we are suffering from, it plays over and over in our mind (mental proliferation) and we feel trapped and hopeless.

Tara illustrates the trance as follows. Draw a circle. This represents our mind. Draw a horizontal line about 1/3 of the way from the top.



The top portion represents our awareness, what we are mindful of. This includes sensory input from our body (physical sensing), eyes (vision), ears (hearing), nose (smelling), and tongue (tasting). This is being in presence. When we enter a trance, we go to the area below the line: “a hidden world of fears, aversion, conditioning, and beliefs. To the degree that we’re living below the line, we suffer.

“Being in trance is like being in a dream. We’re unaware that there’s a larger, living reality. And awakening from trance is like waking from a dream. We become self-aware, directly experiencing our inner life, the world we belong to, and the space of awareness itself. Living above the line is living in presence.

Presence has three primary characteristics: wakefulness, openness, and tenderness or love. Many spiritual traditions describe presence as an open, sunlit sky. When presence is full, like the sky it is luminous and boundless, and it provides warmth and nourishment for life. All kinds of weather systems pass through it—happiness, sorrow, fear, excitement, grief—but like the sky itself, presence can hold them all.

We’ve all touched presence. We’re resting in presence in the moments before sleep when we become still and relaxed, listening to the rain on the roof. There’s a background of presence when we gaze in wonder at a star-filled sky. We open to presence in gratitude for someone’s unexpected kindness. We may never forget the presence we feel as we witness a birth or a death. Past and future recede, thoughts quiet, and we’re aware of being right here, right now.

In contrast, trance encloses us in a virtual reality of thoughts and emotionally charged stories. We're trying to solve problems, satisfy desires, get rid of discomfort, or make our way to a future when things might be better. We are at the mercy of unconscious beliefs, feelings, and memories that drive our decisions and reactions to life. Not only that, but our unconscious wants and fears shape our deepest sense of who we are. When we're in trance, we usually feel separate or alone, threatened, and/or incomplete.

Our daily trance can feel ordinary and familiar, wrapping us in a cocoon of habit. It can carry us in pleasurable fantasy, immerse us in obsessive thinking, and tumble us in waves of painful emotion. But whatever the content of our trance, we are cut off from ourselves and cut off from our capacity to connect authentically with those around us. We're just not all there!"<sup>6</sup>

How can we tell if we are in a trance? A trance is like a disease (dis ease) with symptoms. Tara mentions some of them: unconscious; asleep in a dream; caught or possessed by emotions; dissociated; heart defended or numb; reactive to experiences; grasping or resisting.

How can we tell if we are above the line, in presence? Tara notes that this is when we are: conscious; wakeful, lucid, aware; emotions are witnessed mindfully; in contact with feelings; heart caring and tender; responsive to experiences; balanced, open and discerning.

We use mindfulness to discern which state we are in.

When we realize that we are in a trance, Tara recommends that we make a U-turn to return to the space above the line.

Here is a reflection to get started:

*Experiment with the U-turn at a time when you realize you've been lost in thought—perhaps obsessive worrying or planning, judging or fantasizing. Begin by pausing, sitting comfortably, and allowing your eyes to close. Take a few deep breaths, and with each exhale let go of any obvious tension in your mind and body. Now shift your attention fully away from any remaining stories or thoughts, and notice your actual present-moment experience. What sensations are you aware of in your body? Are there any strong emotions present? Do you feel anxious or restless as you try to step out of your mental stories? Do you feel pulled to resume your activity? Can you simply stay right here, for just these few moments, and be with whatever is unfolding inside you? What happens if you intentionally regard your experience with kindness? When you resume activity, notice if you sense any shift in the quality of your presence, energy, and mood.<sup>7</sup>*

Have you shifted to presence?

## Talk II The Steps of RAIN (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture)

Robert Hodge

### The R & A of RAIN

The first two steps of RAIN, **Recognize** and **Allow**, are the essence of mindfulness.

#### Recognize

As beings, we tend to react to situations without awareness. We are on automatic. We see a person with whom we have had conflict and we immediately have negative emotions and then might react in a negative manner. We are resisting the present experience and reacting to our negative memories of this person which our mind has brought to our attention. **We are saying no.** “I don’t want to experience this. Go away!” We forget who we are and we go into a trance, below the line into that: “hidden world of fears, aversion, conditioning, and beliefs.”

Tara notes that “our habitual ways of saying no—of resisting or avoiding our experience—create more suffering. Consider what happens when Mara (a demon – the personification of evil) appears in the shape of fear, hatred, anger, or hurt. Our mind says no by immediately assuming that something is wrong, finding something or someone to blame, and trying to eliminate the problem. Our body says no by tensing or numbing; our heart says no by becoming defensive or closing down. Meanwhile, our behaviors say no when we lash out or withdraw or become preoccupied. And while we might be somewhat aware of our “no,” for the most part we are below the line, lost in our unconscious efforts to control life.”<sup>8</sup>

How can we be open to this experience? It is by practicing RAIN start with the first component, recognition. “Recognition starts the minute you focus your attention on whatever thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations you are experiencing right now. **The key question here is this: “What is happening inside me?”** See if you can take the perspective of a non-judging witness and be curious! Take some time to notice whatever attracts your attention. There may be distressing thoughts, anxious feelings, hurt, confusion, or sorrow. Try to let go of any preconceived ideas and just listen in a kind, receptive way to your body and heart. You don’t have to search. Simply become still and notice whatever is going on.

Sometimes you’ll discover a whole swirl of experiences: confusion, anger, racing thoughts, anxiety. That’s fine, just note any part of the cluster that stands out. There are other times when you may start out feeling numb or empty. In fact, these are emotional states, too. Simply name them: “empty,” “numb.”

Recognizing is the first step of awakening from trance. It may take only a few moments, but it is crucial. You’re lifting your head above the waves of fear or anger; you’re becoming a witnessing presence.”<sup>9</sup> You are starting the make that U-turn back to presence (wakefulness, openness, and love).

To repeat, Tara notes that recognition starts the minute you focus your attention on whatever thoughts, emotions, feelings, or sensations you are experiencing right now. Remember to include the bodily sensations and not just the mental aspects. It is the bodily sensations that often will give you the first clue to practice RAIN.

Recognize is being mindful. As Bhante G. says: Mindfulness is paying attention moment to moment to what is. When we experience an unpleasant bodily sensation and/or a negative mental impression, it is time to pay attention to what is (recognize) and to keep paying attention (allow) which is the next step.

### **Allow**

The next step, once you have recognized the experience, is to **Allow** it to be. **The key questions here are: “Can I be with this?” or “Can I let this be?”** This takes courage and patience as your mind will be advising you to resist or deny. By allowing the experience to be, you are engaging with it in an open, non-judgmental manner. You are not making decisions or making commentary. You are simply allowing it to be. By allowing in this manner, you are widening your perspective, saying yes to possibility.

Consider thoughts about the current pandemic. Fear may arise with negative anticipation about what might happen in the future. Other emotions arise such as anxiety, depression, hopelessness. Our body contracts, our breathing may quicken, we have a headache. With all of that going on, can you let this be?

### **Reflection: Awakening Mindfulness**

Take a few moments to sit quietly, collecting your attention by resting in the movement of your breath.

Bring to mind a situation that elicits a moderately strong emotional reaction of hurt, anger, fear, or shame (not one that might trigger trauma). It might involve a conflict within your family or with friends, an addictive behavior, or something difficult at work. Review that situation as if you were watching a movie until you get to the part that most activates strong emotions. Freeze the frame, and deepen your attention to whatever is going on that most disturbs you.

Ask yourself, “What is happening inside me?” and notice whatever feelings are most painful or intense.

Now, become aware of your attitude toward those feelings, all the ways you might be saying no to your experience. Are you thinking something is wrong, this shouldn’t be happening, wishing it would go away, blaming yourself, blaming another—trying to change it or push it away? To experiment, send the word and energy of “no” directly into the place inside that most distresses you. Sense what happens to your body, heart, and mind when you reject what you’re feeling. And notice if you often feel this way, if it seems to be a familiar part of yourself.

Now take a few full breaths. Then remind yourself again of the most difficult part of this situation and recall the feelings that are most painful. But this time, ask yourself, “Can I be with this?” Or alternately, “Can I let this be?” Sense that you have the space of awareness to include everything you’ve discovered, that you can fully allow it to be as it is. You can even say yes to the parts of you that are saying no and resisting what’s happening.

Experiment by directing the word and energy of “yes” to whatever you are feeling most intensely. What does it feel like in your body when you say yes? How does “yes” affect your heart? Your mind? Let the

“yes” be as full and unconditional as possible. What is your sense of your own being when you are saying yes?

Imagine the days and weeks to come. What would it be like if this situation arises again and you could name the difficult emotions, pause fully, and Allow them to be as they are? What possibilities might open up if you could pause and say yes to your inner life?”<sup>10</sup>

When practicing the first two steps of RAIN, recognize and allow, you are starting the process of letting go of no and saying yes to life. As Bhante Gunaratana notes: “Thus the more you focus on mind itself, the less solid it seems. Like everything else that exists, it is always changing. Moreover, you discover, there is no permanent entity; no one is running the movie projector. All is flux, all is flow, all is process. In reality, who you are is simply this constant flow of changing moments of mind. Since you cannot control this process, you have no choice but to let go of no. In letting go and saying yes, you experience joy and you taste for an instant the freedom and happiness that is the goal of the Buddha’s path. Then you know that this mind can be used to gain wisdom.”<sup>11</sup>

**Talk III The Steps of RAIN (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture) continued**  
**The I of RAIN Investigate**  
**Robert Hodge**

From Jack Kornfield on Inquiry and Observation:

Wisdom grows out of our clear seeing in each moment. Seeing the arising and passing of our experience and how we relate to it. It arises through our gentle and careful inquiry into the workings of the body and mind and through an open inquiry into how this body and mind relate to the whole world around us. For insight to develop, this spirit of observation and deep questioning must be kept in the forefront. We can collect and quiet the mind, but then we must observe, examine, see its ways and its laws.

As we meditate, we can learn more about desire, see what its root is, see whether it is pleasant or painful, see how it arises and affects our life. We can equally well observe moments of stillness and contentment. We can also begin to observe the inner workings of cause and effect, the laws of karma. Similarly, the law of impermanence can reveal itself under our attention, how it operates, and whether there is anything in our experience that does not change. As things change, we can also observe how attachment works and see how tension and grasping are created in our body and mind. We can see what closes our heart, and how it can open. Over time we may discover new levels of stillness in ourselves or find lights or visions or a whole array of new inner experiences. We can also discover our shadow and bring our awareness to the fears and pains and deep feelings we have long suppressed in our lives. Insights about the psychological patterns we live by will arise, and we can see the functioning of the level we call the personality. When we bring the same spirit of inquiry and awareness to our relation with the whole world around us, our observation can also show us the illusions of our boundaries and how to truly connect the inner and the outer.

Beyond these, our inquiry can lead us to most fundamental spiritual questions, the nature of our own self. If everything we see is changing, what can we identify in this process as ourself? We can see what concepts or body image or deep sense of self we hold as “me” or “mine,” as who we are, and begin to question this whole structure. And perhaps, in deep stillness, we can come to that which goes beyond our limited sense of self, that which is silent and timeless and universal.

Wisdom is not one particular experience, nor a series of ideas or knowledge to be collected. It is an ongoing process of discovery that unfolds when we live with balance and full awareness in each moment. It grows out of our sincerity and genuine openness, and it can lead us to a whole new world of freedom.

Insight meditation is a path of discovery. It is straightforward and direct, with no frills or gimmicks. It is simple, though not easy. Although the forms vary, the genuine practice of insight meditation is this single quest: to establish a foundation of harmonious action, to collect and concentrate the mind and body, and to see the laws of life by our own true, careful, and direct observation. After understanding the way of practice and realizing that meditative life involves this whole process of awakening, there is only one thing left to do. We have to undertake it ourselves.<sup>12</sup>

The first three steps of RAIN represent the first three steps of the Buddha's teaching, the Seven Factors of Awakening. This dhamma appears in the Satipatthana Sutta<sup>13</sup>, the Gilana Sutta, and other discourses of the Buddha.

In the Gilāna Sutta, the Buddha explains the Seven Factors of Awakening: "I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha in the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Sanctuary. And on that occasion Ven. Mahā Kassapa was staying in the Pepper Tree Cave: diseased, in pain, severely ill. Then the Blessed One, emerging from his seclusion in the evening, went to Ven. Mahā Kassapa and, on arrival, sat down on a seat made ready. Having sat down, he said to Ven. Mahā Kassapa, "I hope you are getting better, Kassapa. I hope you are comfortable. I hope that your pains are lessening and not increasing. I hope that there are signs of their lessening, and not of their increasing."

"I am not getting better, lord. I am not comfortable. My extreme pains are increasing, not lessening. There are signs of their increasing, and not of their lessening."

"Kassapa, these seven factors for awakening rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, lead to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding. Which seven?"

"Mindfulness as a factor for awakening rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding."

"Persistence as a factor for awakening, rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding."

"Analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening, rightly taught by me, when developed and pursued, leads to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding."<sup>14</sup>

Mindfulness, persistence, and analysis of qualities represent the first three letters of RAIN: recognize, allow, and investigate.

The remaining factors are joy, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity which actually arise after the first three factors are practiced.<sup>15</sup>

Investigate means to look more deeply into that experience that you have recognized and are allowing to be in your awareness. You are exploring what is happening in your thoughts and your bodily sensations (somatic experience). It is asking the question, "What is this?" and seeing what arises.

As Tara notes, do so with a gentle, curious attention. She cautions: "Many students initially see "Investigate" as an invitation to fire up their cognitive skills—analyzing the situation or themselves, identifying the many possible roots of their suffering. This is a common misunderstanding, and it can distract from the essence of Investigation—awakening our somatic awareness. While mental exploration may enhance our understanding, opening to our embodied experience is the gateway to healing and freedom." Remember that investigating cognitively really means that you are tapping your memory

which may or may not be accurate. Your perceptions are recommendations of the mind and may not be true!

For example, I experience restlessness and worry when I sense that I might be late for a meeting, an appointment or an airplane departure. There are probably many roots for this anxiety. I remember an experience when I was 8 or 9 when I missed the morning school bus and my father, a busy physician, had to take me to school. I was told that “this better not happen again.” As Tara points out, knowing and investigating this and other roots will not help me now. I am also limited by what I think I remember is really what happened. Instead, I must open to my embodied experience and investigate that to attain freedom.

Tara notes several questions that can follow “What is this?” “Feel free to experiment with them, varying the sequence and content.

- What is the worst part of this; what most wants my attention?
- What is the most difficult/painful thing I am believing?
- What emotions does this bring up (fear, anger, grief)?
- Where are my feelings about this strongest in my body? (Note: It’s helpful to scan the throat, chest, and belly.)
- What are the feelings like (that is, the felt sense or sensations, such as clenched, raw, hot)?
- When I assume the facial expression and body posture that best reflect these feelings and emotions, what do I notice?
- Are these feelings familiar, something I’ve experienced earlier in my life?
- If the most vulnerable hurting part of me could communicate, what would it express (words, feelings, images)?
- How does this part want me to be with it?
- What does this part most need (from me or from some larger source of love and wisdom)?

*Instead of thinking about what’s going on, keep bringing your attention to your body, directly contacting the felt sense and sensations of your most vulnerable place. Once you are fully present, listen for what this place truly needs to begin healing.*

Joseph Goldstein talks about exploring the processes of mind and body: With strong mindfulness as the foundation, the enlightenment factor of investigation also explores the basic nature of this mind and body, focusing more on the momentary process than on any particular content. The Buddha spoke often of how seeing this process clearly is the doorway to freedom: “When one perceives impermanence, the perception of non-self is stabilized. One who perceives non-self, eradicates the conceit ‘I am,’ [which is] nibbāna in this very life.”<sup>16</sup>

In summary, we are investigating the experience and realizing the true nature of things, impermanence, dissatisfaction, and selfless nature. That anxiety that I mentioned above, is just that, an attachment to nothing.

### **Meditation: RAIN Step by Step**

Sitting quietly, close your eyes and take a few full breaths. Bring to mind a current situation in which you

feel stuck, one that elicits a difficult reaction, such as anger or fear, shame or hopelessness. It may be a conflict with a family member, a chronic sickness, a failure at work, the pain of an addiction, a conversation you now regret. Take some moments to enter the experience—visualizing the scene or situation, remembering the words spoken, sensing the most distressing moments. Contacting the charged essence of the story is the starting place for exploring the healing presence of RAIN.

#### R: Recognize What Is Happening

As you reflect on this situation, ask yourself, “What is happening inside me right now?” What sensations are you most aware of? What emotions? Is your mind filled with churning thoughts? Take a moment to become aware of whatever is predominant, or the overall emotional tone of the situation.

#### A: Allow Life to Be Just as It Is

Send a message to your heart to “let be” this entire experience. Find in yourself the willingness to pause and accept that in these moments “what is . . . is.” You can experiment with mentally whispering words like “yes,” “I consent,” or “let be.”

You might find yourself saying yes to a huge inner “no,” to a body and mind painfully contracted in resistance. You might be saying yes to the part of you that is saying, “I hate this!” That’s a natural part of the process. At this point in RAIN, you are simply noticing what is true and intending not to judge, push away, or control anything you find.

#### I: Investigate with a Gentle, Curious Attention

Bring an interested and kind attention to your experience. Some of the following questions may be helpful. Feel free to experiment with them, varying the sequence and content.

- What is the worst part of this; what most wants my attention?
- What is the most difficult/painful thing I am believing?
- What emotions does this bring up (fear, anger, grief)?
- Where are my feelings about this strongest in my body? (Note: It’s helpful to scan the throat, chest, and belly.)
- What are the feelings like (that is, the felt sense or sensations, such as clenched, raw, hot)?
- When I assume the facial expression and body posture that best reflect these feelings and emotions, what do I notice?
- Are these feelings familiar, something I’ve experienced earlier in my life?
- If the most vulnerable hurting part of me could communicate, what would it express (words, feelings, images)?
- How does this part want me to be with it?
- What does this part most need (from me or from some larger source of love and wisdom)?

When do you stop investigating? When dealing with a persistent difficult experience, investigate a little at a time. Keep coming back to RAIN and each time, continue to investigate.

## Talk IV The Steps of RAIN (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, Nurture) continued Robert Hodge

### The N of RAIN Nurture

The N in RAIN stands for nurture and is about compassion, self-compassion.

As a clarification, in the original formulation of RAIN created the Insight Meditation Society teacher Michele McDonald, N stood for not identifying. This was to demonstrate that “There’s no need to identify a “me” in what just happened. It was just a passing mental and emotional event, like watching a scene in a movie or the clouds as they move through the sky. We don’t have to build and rebuild a “me” on the passing content of the body-mind. Instead, we can stand as the observer. This not-identifying is tricky, but when the first change of identity shifts from the content of mind to the observer, we can see that the content is not who we are. This is the first real shift of freedom. Eventually identification as “the observer” drops away as well, but to simply make the shift is a good place to start.”<sup>17</sup>

Tara Brach has changed the meaning of N to nurture. N as non-identification is an important concept and worthy of exploration. However, we will focus on the N for nurture

First, a word on compassion from the Dalai Lama

“Why, then, if it is so simple to be happy, do we find it so hard? Unfortunately, though most of us think of ourselves as compassionate, we tend to ignore these commonsense truths. We neglect to confront our negative thoughts and emotions. Unlike the farmer who follows the seasons and does not hesitate to cultivate the land when the moment comes, we waste so much of our time in meaningless activity. We feel deep regret over trivial matters like losing money while keeping from doing what is genuinely important without the slightest feeling of remorse. Instead of rejoicing in the opportunity we have to contribute to others’ well-being, we merely take our pleasures where we can. We shrink from considering others on the grounds that we are too busy. We run right and left, making calculations and telephone calls, and thinking that this would be better than that. We do one thing but worry that if something else comes along we had better do another. But in this we engage only in the coarsest and most elementary levels of the human spirit. Moreover, by being inattentive to the needs of others, inevitably we end up harming them. We think ourselves very clever, but how do we use our abilities? All too often we use them to deceive our neighbors, to take advantage of them and better ourselves at their expense. And when things do not work out, full of self-righteousness, we blame them for our difficulties.

To close with, I would like to share a short prayer which gives me great inspiration in my quest to benefit others:

*May I become at all times, both now and forever  
A protector for those without protection  
A guide for those who have lost their way  
A ship for those with oceans to cross  
A bridge for those with rivers to cross  
A sanctuary for those in danger*

*A lamp for those without light  
A place of refuge for those who lack shelter  
And a servant to all in need.*<sup>18</sup>

When we suffer, we can use the RAIN technique. After recognizing, allowing, and investigating, it is time to nurture ourselves. This includes a pat on the back or self-hug to acknowledge that we are doing the work, following the path to freedom.

Olivia Fox Cabane in her book, *The Charisma Myth: How Anyone Can Master the Art and Science of Personal Magnetism*, expands on the importance that Tara Brach puts on the practice of being present (which is being above the line into awareness, openness, and love). She notes that warmth (loving-kindness) is so important for caring. Cabane defines self-compassion as generating the warmth for ourselves and others:

- Self-compassion is feeling that what has happened to us is unfortunate, not unfair as in self-pity.
- Self-compassion is what helps us forgive ourselves when we've fallen short; it's what prevents internal criticism from taking over and playing across our face. In this way, self-compassion is critical to emanating warmth."
- Self-compassion is how much warmth we can have for ourselves, especially when we are going through a difficult experience."
- Self-compassion helps preserve our connectedness to others.<sup>19</sup>

Tara Brach on self-compassion: "Feeling compassion for ourselves in no way releases us from responsibility for our actions. Rather, it releases us from the self-hatred that prevents us from responding to our life with clarity and balance."<sup>20</sup>

From Ezra Bayda, a noted Zen teacher: "I realized that genuine compassion can never come from fear or from the longing to fix or change. Compassion results naturally from the realization of our shared pain. It manifests as we grow out of our own sense of separateness, isolation, and alienation."<sup>21</sup>

Kristin Neff, one of the foremost compassion researchers, defines the practice of self-compassion as a process that includes mindfulness, loving-kindness, and connectedness. The latter two components are a part of the N, the nurturing of RAIN.<sup>22</sup>

Loving-Kindness: As we nurture ourselves with loving-kindness, we respond with kindness and understanding for ourselves rather than being harshly self-critical. The "we" that we respond with is the most wise and compassionate part of our being. Imagine if you were giving kindness to another being with a similar issue. What would you do? This is exactly what you can do for yourself. Tara notes, "Calling on the most wise and compassionate part of your being, you might offer yourself a loving message or send a tender embrace inward. You might gently place your hand on your heart. You might visualize a young part of you surrounded in soft, luminous light. You might imagine someone you trust—a parent or pet, a teacher or spiritual figure—holding you with love. Feel free to experiment with ways of befriending your inner life—whether through words or touch, images or energy. Discover what best

allows you to feel nurturing, what best allows the part of you that is most vulnerable to feel loved, seen, and/or safe.”<sup>23</sup>

Connectedness: we realize that what we are going through is commonly experienced by all human beings and that everyone goes through difficult times. We are not alone. Also although we may think of ourselves as independent beings, Christopher Germer, a specialist in self-compassion notes: “Yet we yearn to feel connected to others. At the deepest level, connectedness is our natural state—what Thich Nhat Hanh calls “interbeing.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Meditation: RAIN Step by Step**

Sitting quietly, close your eyes and take a few full breaths. Bring to mind a current situation in which you feel stuck, one that elicits a difficult reaction, such as anger or fear, shame or hopelessness. It may be a conflict with a family member, a chronic sickness, a failure at work, the pain of an addiction, a conversation you now regret. Take some moments to enter the experience—visualizing the scene or situation, remembering the words spoken, sensing the most distressing moments. Contacting the charged essence of the story is the starting place for exploring the healing presence of RAIN.

#### **R: Recognize What Is Happening**

As you reflect on this situation, ask yourself, “What is happening inside me right now?” What sensations are you most aware of? What emotions? Is your mind filled with churning thoughts? Take a moment to become aware of whatever is predominant, or the overall emotional tone of the situation.

#### **A: Allow Life to Be Just as It Is**

Send a message to your heart to “let be” this entire experience. Find in yourself the willingness to pause and accept that in these moments “what is . . . is.” You can experiment with mentally whispering words like “yes,” “I consent,” or “let be.”

You might find yourself saying yes to a huge inner “no,” to a body and mind painfully contracted in resistance. You might be saying yes to the part of you that is saying, “I hate this!” That’s a natural part of the process. At this point in RAIN, you are simply noticing what is true and intending not to judge, push away, or control anything you find.

#### **I: Investigate with a Gentle, Curious Attention**

Bring an interested and kind attention to your experience. Some of the following questions may be helpful. Feel free to experiment with them, varying the sequence and content.

- What is the worst part of this; what most wants my attention?
- What is the most difficult/painful thing I am believing?
- What emotions does this bring up (fear, anger, grief)?
- Where are my feelings about this strongest in my body? (Note: It’s helpful to scan the throat, chest, and belly.)
- What are the feelings like (that is, the felt sense or sensations, such as clenched, raw, hot)?
- When I assume the facial expression and body posture that best reflect these feelings and emotions, what do I notice?

- Are these feelings familiar, something I've experienced earlier in my life?
- If the most vulnerable hurting part of me could communicate, what would it express (words, feelings, images)?
- How does this part want me to be with it?
- What does this part most need (from me or from some larger source of love and wisdom)?

#### N: Nurture with Loving Presence

As you sense what is needed, what is your natural response? Calling on the most wise and compassionate part of your being, you might offer yourself a loving message or send a tender embrace inward. You might gently place your hand on your heart. You might visualize a young part of you surrounded in soft, luminous light. You might imagine someone you trust—a parent or pet, a teacher or spiritual figure—holding you with love. Feel free to experiment with ways of befriending your inner life—whether through words or touch, images or energy. Discover what best allows you to feel nurturing, what best allows the part of you that is most vulnerable to feel loved, seen, and/or safe. Spend as much time as you need, offering care inwardly and letting it be received.

#### After RAIN

The four steps of RAIN involve active ways of directing our attention. In After the RAIN, we shift from doing to being. The invitation is to relax and let go into the heartspace that has emerged. Rest in this awareness and become familiar with it; this is your true home. Now, paying attention to the quality of your presence—the openness, wakefulness, tenderness—ask yourself:

- In these moments, what is the sense of my being, of who I am?
- How has this shifted from when I began the meditation?

In the next part of this series, we will be exploring bringing RAIN to your inner life, releasing negative self-beliefs, freeing yourself from shame, awakening in the grip of fear, and discovering your deepest longing.

## **Talk V Your Inner Life: Releasing Negative Self-Beliefs**

**Laura Good**

Tara Brach notes, “Why do we hold on so tightly to our belief in our own deficiency? Why are we so loyal to our suffering?”<sup>25</sup>

When we are experiencing emotions, it is our sense of self that is determining the quality: positive, negative, neutral. We actually have little control over this process because who think we are, our traits that make up our personality, started forming long before we were aware of it.

These beliefs formed when we were very young, and we relied on them for survival. This is nature. Psychologist Rick Hansen talks about the negativity bias, how it helped us survive as human’s evolved. He says, “ Their brain is Velcro for negative experiences, but Teflon for positive ones.”

It’s one thing if we are always looking out for something that may kill us, like a wild animal around a corner, but when we internalize that “always on guard, negative” stance, our survival mechanism causes suffering. At one time, this natural inclination may have helped us live for another day, but it sure doesn’t make us happy.

How can we release these negative beliefs about ourselves that seem to have a life of their own? In Radical Compassion, Tara Brach takes us through some techniques that we can use whenever these beliefs arise —which we know they will!

### **Dealing with the Inner Critic**

As we grow into adulthood, we may hear a voice in the back of our head: the inner critic of “you’re not good enough” or “you don’t belong”. I have yet to meet anyone who has never heard these voices! For some of us, that voice may have come from an actual person, a critical mother or father, for others it has always just been there, it feels separate from us yet also a part of us at the same time. Like this voice knows exactly what button to push!

If you are willing to let this voice or these messages be, without pushing them away just for a few moments, they may have a greater wisdom to show us. When we do the inquiry of RAIN, we might notice that the voices actually have a rhythm to them, they may come up on schedule or just when you least want them to. Just notice, are they there at three in the morning, are they there when you see on the caller ID: it’s your mother calling? Can you notice how your body reacts—a clenched jaw, an aching heart. Just concentrate

on the body at first. We’ll get into techniques in a little bit about how to soften these experiences and gain the wisdom they have to show us.

### **The Roots of the Inner Critic**

When did the roots of these negative self-beliefs get sown?

A friend of mine is about to become an empty nester after raising a large family. She finally has the time to finish her college degree and is taking classes in the many different subjects that interest her. As she

prepared a final presentation for a horticulture class, diligently memorizing Latin plant names and their properties, a voice in the back of her head kept trying to sabotage her. It was the voice of her father. Though he had long since passed away she couldn't silence his voice in the back of her head. He was a cocky former air force pilot and alcoholic who would bark orders at her and who often said to her, "you'll never amount to anything! Who are you to try!" Here she was an intelligent, modern woman in her 50's who was being reduced to a scared little girl in her head. Not only did this hurt at the deepest level, but she felt like it was the truth. Worse yet, as the prosecutor, judge and jury played out in her head she was constantly second guessing her project as she worked on it, her negativity bias was turning into confirmation bias and she was losing her focus and sense of joy and accomplishment. She was caught in the trance of unworthiness.

She has been a close friend for decades. I know her as an intelligent, loving, worldly, curious, delightful person. This is my truth about her. Not at all like the person her father said she was. But it doesn't really matter what I think of her, it can't complete with this primal message that rears its ugly head whenever she doubts herself.

Hearing the same negative criticisms from her father over and over as she grew up had become a core belief: that something was wrong with her. And while we know intellectually that the verbal abuse was a reflection of his own unhappiness and unworthiness, the hurt from the damage done lives in all of sorts of subconscious places in her: the heart, the body, her goals etc.

This hurt often is hard to name, but we know it's real. We feel it in our body and our tears. We ache, our energy falls, we feel scared or anxious, our heart races, our stomach clenches.

I had a high school music teacher who while being regarded as a "cool dude," he didn't quite know how to deal with girls wanting to be in jazz band as more than being the singer. I was self-taught on piano from a young age and could read music and play complicated jazz chords from around age 8. But without formal instruction, there were gaps in my learning. During one rehearsal while learning a difficult piece he casually said, "No! There are a lot of ninths you're missing. Don't just sit there faking it!"

It stung. Yes, I hadn't learned everything yet. I played the basic chord framework but not the +11's and dim 9ths. That's what rehearsal is for. But I was a quick learner, I got it in time. But his off-handed comment would often ring in my head any time I would hear constructive criticism: "you're faking it". As an adult I now see "imposter syndrome" almost seems like a rite of passage. Now when that phrase creeps into my head, I respond with a firm, "Stop! You're wrong." Meaning the mysterious inner critic is wrong. Realize what's going on, say ok, just a top ten tune on the radio and let it go. Plus, as the saying goes, there are no wrong notes in jazz!

### **Real but not true.**

Who we are is a sum of many different things: our roles, gender, personality traits, feelings, emotions, and we think that is who we are. The truth is, it is what we only think we are.

As Tara says: Our beliefs are real because we experience them mentally, physically, emotionally.” And yes, they affect our lives for good and for bad.

“But these beliefs —even the ones that feel most true— are only mental representations or symbols of our experience.”

We don’t have to believe our thoughts, but we need to pay attention to what they are doing to us. Our bodies have a perfect mechanism to say “Hey, stop! Look at what’s going on!” These physical sensations are absolutely real. But the thoughts that have caused them are not the whole truth. What a relief!

Jack Kornfield says, “When we bring attention to any moment of experience, we discover that we do not possess it either. As we look, we find that we neither invite our thoughts nor own them. We might even wish them to stop, but our thoughts seem to think themselves, arising and passing according to their nature.”<sup>26</sup>

Wake up to a larger awareness:

Remind yourself “I am not my thoughts” “This is just a belief”. They have formed a story about yourself that is not the same as the continually unfolding reality of what you are: an ever-changing living life form full of senses and consciousness.

Now this where some people say, “But if I am not my thoughts, who am I? Aren’t some thoughts good? Don’t they make us do good things and be good people?” Of course, but if we are to believe not only 2600 years of Buddhist teachings but most of the major world religions, our basic nature is goodness, Buddha nature or whatever you want to call it. It is the “negative” beliefs that obscure that.

### **Meditation: Uprooting Painful Beliefs with RAIN<sup>27</sup>**

Bring to mind a belief that causes you suffering in your life.

Ask yourself: “What am I believing?”

Whose voice are you answering?

Is it a parent criticizing you?

Is it a classmate from your past calling you names?

Visualize the situation: first remind yourself you are safe. who do you see, who else is there, what are they thinking and feeling?

Recognize: Your thoughts and feelings express a belief. What are you believing right now?

Allow: Pause for a few moments, and simply let the belief and accompanying feelings be there. Can I be with this?” or “Can I let this be?

Investigate: Begin by asking, “Is this really true? Am I certain this is true?”

Then ask: “What is it like to live with this belief? Approach with general friendliness and even confidence using what we know about perception.

Make a U-Turn to your body. What feelings or sensations are strong? Do you sense fear, shame, anger, hatred or self-hatred?

Widen the investigation “How has living with this belief affected my life?”

How you relate to others, on your creativity, your capacity to serve, your ability to enjoy experience, your inner growth?

Now turn your attention back to your body. Investigate hurts and fears that live under this belief.

Connect with whatever feels most vulnerable right now and ask:

“What do you most need?”

Nurture: Now bring your wisest and most loving self- your future self, your awake heart— to witness and feel your vulnerability. What message or image might bring out healing to the wounds inside you?

Offer that and be bathed in that nurturing energy.

Jack Kornfield suggests using phrases that are the opposite of what you are feeling, this is not to push down the negative feelings but to surround them with loving energy so they can “dis-charge”. The Buddha instructs his followers, “Like a skilled carpenter who removes a coarse peg by knocking it out with a fine one, so a person removes a pain-producing thought by substituting a beautiful one.”<sup>28</sup>

*May I love myself just as I am*

*May I sense my worthiness and well-being*

*May I trust this world*

*May I hold myself in compassion*

*May I meet the suffering and ignorance of others with compassion.*

These phrases may feel like a balm or they may be triggering, just notice.

After the RAIN: Notice the quality of presence. What would my life be like without this belief? Who would I become if I no longer lived with this belief?

Whatever arises is ok. Try to rest in it if you can.

### **Who We Are Beyond Our Beliefs?**

After doing this exercise several times you may start to feel a freeing up, or sense of freedom beyond a confining identity.

You may experience a realization of “non-self,” annata (Pali) or emptiness. We are free from limiting identity of fearful, separate self. In fact, there is hardly a “we”. We are realizing the purity and fullness of awareness itself and it is our essence. Instead of being aware of specific feelings or desires there is just “awareness” or there is just “compassion”.

Finally, in learning how to release negative self-beliefs know this from Jack Kornfield: “We encounter another aspect of the emptiness of self when we notice how everything arises out of nothing, comes out of the void, returns to the void, goes back to nothing. All our words of the past day have disappeared. Similarly, where has the past week or the past month or our childhood gone? They arose, did a little dance, and now they’ve vanished, along with the 1980s, the nineteenth and eighteenth centuries, the

ancient Romans and Greeks, the Pharaohs, and so forth. All experience arises in the present, does its dance, and disappears. Experience comes into being only tentatively, for a little time in a certain form; then that form ends, and a new form replaces it moment by moment. <sup>“29</sup>

RAIN, mediation, and mindfulness are tools to use when the top ten hits of negative beliefs come up in our mind. We see them arise, we let them do their dance, and we actively create the conditions that allow them to be released.

## Talk VI Your Inner Life: Freeing Yourself from Shame

Laura Good

### What is shame?

Psychology Today says “Shame is a painful emotion that responds to a sense of failure to attain some ideal state<sup>30</sup>. Shame encompasses the entire self. The thought process in shame involves self-focused attention<sup>31</sup>. The physical expressions of shame include the blushing face, slumped head, and averted eyes. It generates a wish to hide, to disappear, or even to die.” As a disclaimer we will not be talking shame that may come from trauma.

A wish even to die? That’s what it can feel like. We can all recall a feeling of intense shame when we were young. You probably can’t remember the exact details but I bet you can remember the physical sensations: the burning in your eyes or throat, the tightness in your torso, the flushed cheeks or racing heart. So there must be a biological reason for it – even though our physical lives are not at stake, it *feels* like they are. Tara Brach reminds us: not all shame is toxic. Shame wants us to survive”. Like all of the other aspects of emotional/physical evolution, shame has its place.

### The difference between shame and embarrassment

Embarrassment is a response to something that threatens our projected image but is otherwise morally neutral, shame is a response to something that is morally wrong or reprehensible”. We most likely have our own definitions and it may not make a difference in how it feels.<sup>32</sup>

### Different kinds of shame

There are two kinds of shame: unhealthy shame is the opposite of self-esteem and healthy shame that is the opposite of shamelessness.

### Unhealthy Shame

First, the unhealthy kind of shame, where we have negative self-beliefs, and when we experience negative events; we blame ourselves, like our “badness” was the cause. This can be a downward spiral and feed on itself; a negativity bias and confirmation bias that keeps re-enforcing each other. Or those who are very self-conscious, tend to often blame others in an effort to avoid blaming themselves. In order to gain a sense of control, they project their anger onto a scapegoat, like an abuser who strikes out at a partner because their superior image of themselves is threatened. Shame used as a control, like in extreme faith or cult communities is obviously an unhealthy type of shame.

### Healthy Shame

There are healthy kinds of shame. If you have truly done something wrong and hurt someone, the guilt and shame can make us correct our mistake and apologize. Healthy shame has evolved to serve our culture and society in beneficial ways. When people violate general standards that keep us healthy or safe, shame keeps us on track. For example, people are also more likely to wash their hands after using a restroom when an observer is present. The potential for shame may stop us from littering, or any extreme behavior that causes suffering. We see that now in the pandemic the shame with the mask wearing behavior as well and also how our basic survival instinct is being re-defined. There is a lot of tension because we can’t all agree on what makes us safe anymore. It’s giving us many daily

opportunities to use our practice by being mindful before we shame others. Shame also plays a protective role in removing yourself from those who don't have your best interests at heart.

### **Thanissaro Bhikkhu on Shame**

“The Buddha couples healthy shame with a healthy sense of honor: a sense that you deserve respect for holding to a high standard of conduct. In this sense, shame is a sign of high, rather than low, self-esteem.

The Buddha's insights into healthy honor and shame came from his own experience in searching for, and finally finding, awakening. His initial search for the right path had taught him that honor and shame had to be treated with discernment, as he couldn't always trust the opinion of others.”

So let's think about where our roots of shame may have come from. From the day we're born we get signals from our parents and those around us. You can imagine even in pre historic man, if he did something that put his tribe in danger, he was probably ostracized in some way. Even animals do this though it is probably not called shame. And this never feels good. We need to belong on a very basic level. But we also need to discern if the group we are belonging to aligns with our own beliefs as we get older. This is very much part of the maturation process; we find our moral compass and if may find that we are no longer able to be “shamed” or controlled by that group. This is healthy discernment.

In the Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta, the Buddha teaches his 7-year-old son, Rahula, how to examine his actions, as he would his face in a mirror, to make sure that he harmed no one—neither himself nor anyone else. Try not to cause harm, but if you *do* cause harm, this is how you go about learning from your mistakes.”

So developing a sense of shame around your actions can be helpful for example if you tell a lie. The Buddha said if you were empty of shame if you lied on purpose, you were as empty of goodness as an overturned dipper of water. So in this way the Buddha called shame a “bright guardian of the world.” He went further to say wanting to be honorable in the eyes of others is key in developing an important factor of awakening: admirable friendship.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Dealing with Shame**

Tara says, “the medicine for shame is radical compassion, the loving presence that helps us trust our belonging and essential goodness.”<sup>34</sup>

One of the best examples of how the Buddha conducted himself the night of his awakening. As he sat meditating all night under the bodhi tree, the god Mara sent demons to shake his resolve. The Buddha met them with compassion and they dissolved. Then Mara came back with a greater challenge asking what right did he have to seek Buddhahood, or as Tara says, “Who do you think you are?” Then the Buddha reached out his right hand and touched the earth. The earth goddess rose up and said, “I am your witness” as the earth shook, Mara vanished and the Buddha became enlightened.

So when you are lost in shame, or any troubling emotion, use RAIN and call on a larger presence, whatever you connect with: the earth, nature, God energy. I sometimes do what the Buddha did if I need to, I touch the earth or touch my heart and say “I have a right to be here.”

**“You alone are enough. You have nothing to prove to anybody. -Maya Angelou**

As we develop our awareness in meditation, we have the chance to see the big picture and using the RAIN technique can help us safely investigate the feelings that may arise. Having the courage to delve into shame can have many healing benefits. After all, whatever it was is over, and if shame is the remnant, we can work with it and lessen and even dissolve its emotional impact.

*There is a brokenness  
out of which comes the unbroken,  
a shatteredness  
out of which blooms the unshatterable.  
There is a sorrow  
beyond all grief which leads to joy  
and a fragility  
out of whose depths emerges strength.  
There is a hollow space too vast for words  
through which we pass with each loss,  
out of whose darkness we are sanctioned into being.  
There is a cry deeper than all sound  
whose serrated edges cut the heart  
as we break open  
to the place inside which is unbreakable  
and whole  
while learning to sing.*

*Rashani Rea<sup>35</sup>*

#### MEDITATION: LETTING IN LOVE

Sitting comfortably with your eyes closed, take a few moments to breathe, feel into your body, and relax obvious areas of tension.

Bring to mind a situation where you are filled with self-judgment or self-aversion and unable to hold yourself with compassion. Visualize what’s going on, and remind yourself of the worst part of this situation, what really makes you feel that “something is wrong with me.”

Allow yourself to contact the vulnerable place in your body that feels that you are bad, unlovable, or unworthy. Try to open to the felt sense of shame by paying particular attention to your throat, heart, and belly. You might find that breathing in and out of that vulnerable place helps to sustain your attention.

From this inner place, imagine the kind of Nurture that would feel most comforting, most healing. Would it be words that affirm your goodness and worth? A hug? A tender and accepting presence?

Now sense who you most wish would be the source of that Nurture. Whose love would feel most healing? Whose care would you most trust? You might imagine a dear friend, a child, a dog, a tree, a grandparent—even one who's no longer alive. You might bring to mind a teacher or a spiritual figure, such as the Buddha, Kwan Yin, the Great Mother, Jesus. You might experience a formless presence of your own high self, your future or realized being.

Feel how much you long to be truly seen, loved, held. Then, either silently or in a whisper, call on the source of loving you have chosen. You might say, "Please love me," "Please hold me," or "Please take care of me," and repeat softly whatever words most fully express your longing.

Imagine being heard. Imagine that your vulnerability and longing are felt by that presence. If the being has eyes, imagine them looking at you, receiving you, with total love, understanding, and care.

Sense their love as an energetic presence that surrounds you and soaks into you. Be like an absorbent sponge, letting it in. You might feel the love filling your body like a warm glow, or visualize it as a flow of golden nectar, penetrating into the hollows and crevices, soothing and healing the most wounded places inside you.

Allow yourself to bathe in this loving . . . o surrender and let go into the loving more and more fully. . . to dissolve into oneness with that loving presence. Become the tender field that your small self is floating in, the loving awareness that is holding your life. As you get to know this heartspace, it will increasingly feel like home.

Before ending the meditation, take some moments to listen. Is there a message from this heartspace, something to remember, that feels important?<sup>36</sup>

## **Talk VII-Your Inner Life: Awakening from the Grip of Fear Part I**

### **Robert Hodge**

From a physician (Dr. Susan Murray) on fear and the pandemic: “I have been thinking a lot about fear lately, and how much it behaves like a virus. How it can spread insidiously, person to person, or airborne, through new media and old, faster than we can contain it. How it induces so many of the same symptoms as a virus does: sweating, palpitation, nausea, shivering, and sometimes an almost overwhelming desire to curl up under a blanket in a dark room and stay there. How once fear has infected you, it is hard to get rid of, but extremely easy to pass on to others.

Most health care workers I know are brave people who perform demanding jobs in difficult circumstances. But one of the terrifying things about an outbreak of transmissible disease is that it’s not just our own life and health that we are being asked to put at risk in caring for patients. We risk being the vector that brings the illness home to the people we love — to our children and partners and parents — and that can be truly terrifying. It is easier to risk our own safety than to threaten the people we care about. Without support, without proper education, training, and contingency plans in place to help protect health care workers and their families, fear can run riot through a hospital or through a community. If we are not prepared to fight fear and ignorance as actively and as thoughtfully as we fight any other virus, it is possible that fear can do terrible harm to vulnerable people, even in places that never see a single case of infection during an outbreak. And a fear epidemic can have far worse consequences when complicated by issues of race, privilege, and language.”<sup>37</sup>

#### **What is fear?**

Fear is the anticipation of future pain.<sup>38</sup> Our suffering comes from the anticipation of loss. Nothing is happening to us in the present moment; yet we are convinced that something bad will happen in the future. And we become anxious and fearful.

Fear can be useful. In the *Gift of Fear*, Dharmavidya David Brazier notes, “Fear is a part of human nature, so there is little point in forcing ourselves to overcome it or pretending to be unaffected by it. In fact, we do so at our peril.

Here’s a little story I heard about fear. There was a monastery in the mountains in China. Wild deer would come onto the monastery’s beautiful grounds. The monks loved the deer and enjoyed feeding them. When the abbot heard about it, he came out shouting and waving his arms and attacking the deer with his staff. The deer became alarmed and ran away. The abbot put up a notice saying there must be no more feeding the deer and any deer seen on the property were to be chased off. The monks protested, saying, “We came here to learn kindness and compassion. What sort of example are you, getting so mad at these gentle animals? This can’t be right.” The abbot addressed the community: “Look, there are hunters in these mountains. The only defense these animals have is their fear. If you take that away from them, they will all be killed very soon.”

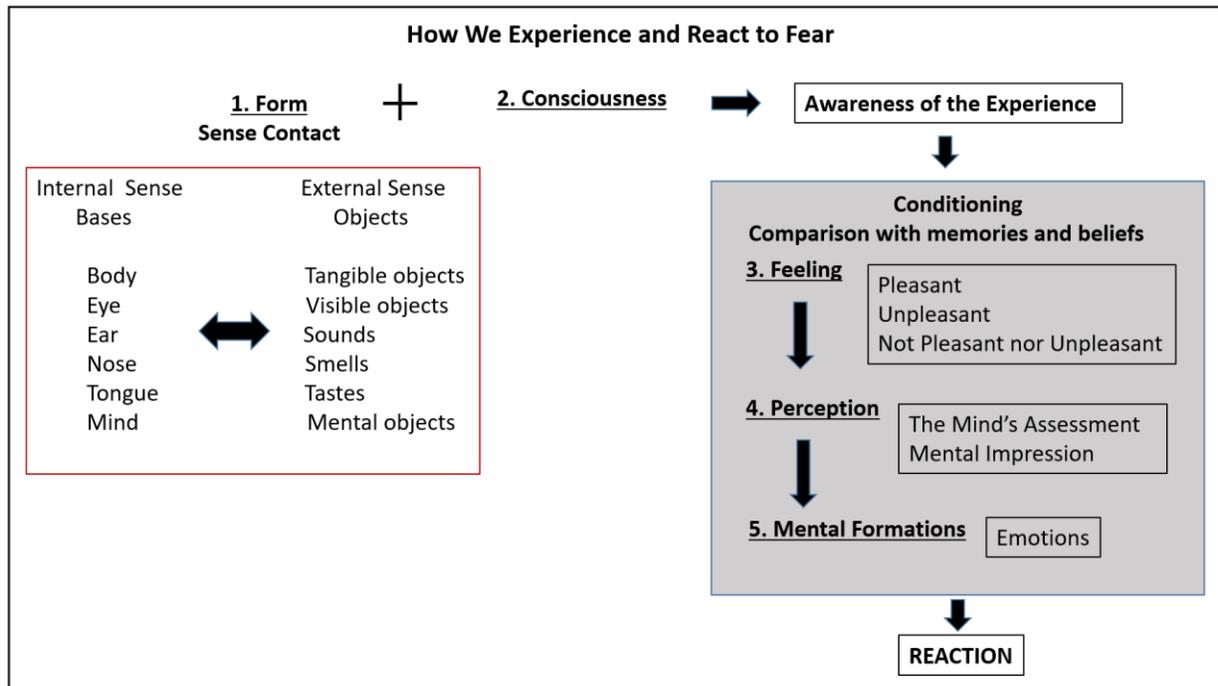
If we did not have fear—if we were truly fearless—we, like the deer, would be in terrible danger without knowing it. We have awareness in order to be wary. The most primitive animal will shrink away from noxious contact. Consciousness itself is closely related to fear, and to grasping as well. If we did not need

to get things, or to run away from things that want to get us, then we would probably not have developed consciousness at all. We would not need it. Rocks do not need to be conscious. They are all-accepting. Acceptance is also one kind of Buddhist ideal, but it would be a mistake to take it to an extreme. We are not aiming to be rocks.”<sup>39</sup>

Fear is a survival mechanism, but it arises in many non-survival settings. For example, “The emotion of fear alerts us to the possibility of negative feedback if we don’t put more time into a paper for class or a report we are preparing for work. The emotion of fear lets us know that if we don’t pay more attention to our marriage, we may end up divorced and alone. This more complex response to danger comes into play as we assess whether or not to seek medical attention for pain in our chest. The emotion of fear arises with any threat to our well-being, whether physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual. It can guide us to respond in a healthy way or, as we each have experienced, entrap us in the trance of fear.”<sup>40</sup> In the trance of fear, the emotion of fear is working overtime.

How did the Buddha explain how fear arises? Fear arises when our consciousness comes into contact with one of our internal sense objects (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, mind) contacting an external sense object (sight, sound, smell, taste, bodily sensation, thought). An unpleasant feeling arises triggering a perception (identification, mental impression) from our memory that triggers the arising of the mental formation, fear. For example, you are headed to the airport to catch a flight and when you check the time (your eye has made contact with your watch), you note that you are running late. An unpleasant bodily feeling arises. The mind adds to your perception of being late by recalling a past memory of an unpleasant experience when you missed a flight and suffered the consequences of being stranded. Fear arises. You are caught in the trance of fear and are below the line. The rest of life has faded in the background and you are totally absorbed by this situation. We have temporarily lost our perspective and freedom. Your reaction to this fear might actually prove harmful if, while in this trance, you drive recklessly to the airport.

The diagram below shows how the process works.



### Recognizing Fear

In our culture, fear is not something we readily admit to because we believe that others will perceive this as weakness. We fear fear itself! When I was younger, I did not recognize fear in myself. I had an uncomfortable feeling arise in the body when I anticipated that the future would hold suffering. I could not allow being with this feeling and I didn't know what to investigate. Instead of dealing with fear, I put more effort in trying to control situations or plan to prevent this feeling from arising. This did not work. It was only when I recognized that I was dealing with fear that I could begin to work with it.

### The Suffering of Resisting Fear

Tara notes: "When we pull away from fear and other painful emotions, we also pull away from our full presences and vitality."<sup>41</sup> We are in a trance and may exhibit many types of emotions; depression, restlessness and worry, mental and physical laziness, ill-will, doubt, desire to withdraw. Basically, the range of emotions are included in the five aggregates of clinging. Clinging because we remain in trance. We are living below the line.

There are various common strategies for dealing with fear:

1. Seek distractions
2. Ignore it
3. Resist it
4. Try to anticipate situations that might cause fear to arise and avoid them.
5. Come up with a plan A,B,C,D to deal with any possible outcomes.

None of these works very well.

Ajahn Chah in a dharma talk, *In the Dead of Night*, notes (substitute fear for suffering): “Now people don’t want to see suffering, they don’t want to experience it. If they suffer here they run over there. You see? They’re simply dragging their suffering around with them, they never kill it. They don’t contemplate or investigate it. If they feel suffering here, they run over there; if it arises there they run back here. They try to run away from suffering physically. As long as you are still ignorant, wherever you go you’ll find suffering. Even if you boarded an airplane to get away from it, it would board the plane with you. If you dived under the water it would dive in with you, because suffering lies within us. But we don’t know that. If it lies within us where can we run to escape it?”<sup>42</sup>

Ezra Bayda describes his personal experiences with fear in *Being Zen*, in the chapter, Practicing with Fear. He noted five stages in dealing with fear:

- Stage 1 Gradually becoming aware of how much fear there is in everything we do
- Stage 2 Trying to get rid of fear – confront, struggle, overcome (this doesn’t work)
- Stage 3 Becoming a Zen Student ((concentration practice – calming but doesn’t work)
- Stage 4 Realization that fear is part of the path so willingly let it in.
- Stage 5 Seeing fear as a signal when we are stuck, where we are holding ourselves back, where we can open to life.

In the next talk, we will explore the RAIN approach to dealing with fear.

## **Talk VIII Your Inner Life: Awakening from the Grip of Fear Part II**

**Robert Hodge**

### **The RAIN Approach**

In Radical Compassion, Tara notes: “In my experience, fear does not stop arising. Our life is inherently insecure: We lose people we love, relationships fail, we fall short in our work life, our bodies will die, our globe will keep erupting in violence, our earth will continue to experience threats to its biosystems and species. Ultimately, we have no control over living and dying.

And yet..., it is possible to experience the natural contraction of fear with radical compassion. Fear, a changing state, can be held in vast tenderness, a trait expressing our deepest nature. Through the practice of RAIN, we can discover this heartspace—a loving presence larger than our small, frightened self—that includes anxiety or fear without becoming possessed or consumed by it.”<sup>43</sup>.

### **When in the Grip of Fear**

When in the grip of fear, you can use RAIN to make that U-Turn. Recognize, Allow, and Investigate; then, make sure that you nurture yourself through self-compassion (loving-kindness and connectedness as noted in Talk IV, the N of nurture.

### **Resources for Building Resilience to Fear**

Because as Tara noted, fear does not stop arising, we can build our resilience to help stay above the line. In the Buddha’s teaching of the Eightfold Path, he mentions practicing Skillful Effort to deal with negative and positive mind states.<sup>44</sup>

Skillful effort is about being aware of our thoughts and dealing with them. Thoughts arise in the mind; they are either wholesome or unwholesome. If we allow unwholesome thoughts to continually occupy our mind, we will develop unwholesome habits which will lead to suffering. Skillful effort is how we can embrace the wholesome thoughts and address the unwholesome ones.

In cultivating a garden, we spend our effort doing four things. We prevent weeds from arising. We pull out those weeds which have arisen. We plant seeds of the plants we want to grow. Once these plants arise, we protect and nourish them.

Our efforts are the same for our garden of thoughts in the mind. We direct our effort in four ways:

1. We prevent the arising of unwholesome thoughts.
2. We overcome unwholesome thoughts which have arisen.
3. We strive for wholesome thoughts to arise.
4. We maintain those wholesome thoughts which have arisen.

Tara includes a reflection for steps 3&4: building and maintaining a positive mind state:

### **REFLECTION: INSTALLING A POSITIVE STATE**

Installing is possible whenever a positive inner state (moments of calm, confidence, love, safety) arises naturally or when we have intentionally evoked the state. Once it is there, do the following:

- Bring your intention, interest, and attention to sustaining the experience, staying with it for at least fifteen to thirty seconds.
- Allow it to fill your body; invite it to become as big as it can be. Involve all your senses: What are you seeing and hearing? How is your body experiencing touch, temperature, energy, movement? Is taste or smell part of the experience?  
Intend that the experience sink into your cells, the way light fills a room, or water soaks into a sponge. Sense that you are letting in the felt experience, surrendering to it, receiving it into yourself.
- Take a few moments to reflect on what feels meaningful or significant about the experience.<sup>45</sup>

### **Increasing Inner Safety**

When we are in the grip of fear, we don't feel safe; we feel isolated and vulnerable. Tara notes three primary pathways for increasing inner safety through meditation: attention to body and breath; wise and loving messages; and mentally evoking a person, place activity, or memory.

Below are two meditations: Nurturing the seeds of safety and handing it over.

### **MEDITATION: NURTURING THE SEEDS OF SAFETY**

There are three pathways: Body and Breath, Wise and Loving Messages, and Mentally Evoking a Person, Place, Activity, or Memory.

#### **Body and Breath**

- Ground yourself by becoming aware of your body and making sure you are in a stable and comfortable position. Feel how your back, bottom, and feet are pressing the chair or floor; feel your weight and the sense of gravity, how the earth is holding you up.
- Scan your body, and consciously relax whatever tension you find.
- Focus on your breath, slowing to a long in breath and long out breath (approximately five to six seconds each). Breathe without pausing between the inflow and the outflow, relaxing with the outflow and letting the entire breath be smooth and easy. (This is known as "coherence breathing." It directly calms the body and mind.)
- Place your hand(s) gently on your heart, belly, or cheeks.

#### **Wise and Loving Messages**

- Self-message, such as "I'm here. I'm with you."
- Prayers/blessings of loving kindness: "May I feel safe from inner and outer harm."
- Mantras or phrases with sacred meaning, such as "Orn Mani Padmi Hum (OM MANI PEME HUNG)." (As our minds awaken, we discover the jewel of compassion.)

#### **Mentally Evoking a Person, Place, Activity, or Memory**

To identify which of these might serve as a good potential resource anchor, reflect on the following questions when you are not in the grip of fear. Pay attention to your body, and notice which most bring you a sense of ease:

- *With whom do you feel connection or belonging? Feel cared for or loved? Feel at home, safe, secure? You might scan family, friends, teachers, and healers—those you know and also those*

beings you feel connected to but have never met; those who are living or who have passed; pets; archetypal or spiritual figures like the Buddha, Kwan Yin, Jesus.

- *When and where do you feel most at home—safe, secure, relaxed, or strong?* Here you might consider where you feel a sense of sanctuary—in the natural world, in a church or temple, at home, in a coffee shop.
- *What activity brings a sense of safety, security, and/or strength?* Notice if there is something you do—helping others, swimming, drawing, dancing—that connects you with your inner resources.
- *What events from the past—particular experiences—are reminders of when you’ve felt strong, safe, and empowered?* This might include any time of accomplishment or mastery, of learning or service, of being in relationship with others.

After reflecting on these questions, choose the person, place, activity, or memory that currently best offers a sense of safety. This is, for now, your resource anchor, your portal to a positive state.

Deepen your attention by bringing this resource anchor alive with all your senses. For example, if it’s a person you feel at home with, let the image of the person be clear and close in, remind yourself of sounds and words that might have been spoken, and recall a reassuring touch or look.

After you access your resource anchor through one of these three pathways, notice the feelings that arise in your body—the felt sense of ease, safety, or comfort

End your reflection by taking fifteen to thirty seconds to install these positive experiences of safety or security, immersing your attention in the feelings, and letting them sink in and fill you.

### **MEDITATION: HANDING IT OVER**

*Explore this meditation whenever you find yourself obsessing, worrying, and anxious about outcomes. Notice what happens when you entrust your difficulties to a larger universe.*

Find a comfortable position, close your eyes, and relax any obvious areas of tension.

Take some moments to Recognize and Allow any experience of anxiety or fear. Investigate by sensing what you are believing (what bad thing is going to happen) and by experiencing where the fear is felt most strongly in your body. Deepen the Investigation by directly contacting and opening to the sensations.

Now bring to mind some benevolent entity or formless being—god, spirit, intelligence of the universe, Jesus, Buddha, Divine Mother, Nature—that you sense as wise, compassionate, and all-embracing.

Imagine taking the full mass of the fear you’ve been carrying and handing it over—offering it into this larger field, this vaster being. It’s no longer your “job” to worry or to carry this alone. Your small self is not in charge. Let the fears or worries be held in the hands of something larger.

Visualize and sense the “handing over.” You might try enacting it physically, raising both hands toward the heavens and lowering your head. How do you feel when you are not holding the weight of this burden?

**After the RAIN:** If there is no problem to solve, what is this moment like? See if you can relax and rest in an easeful space.<sup>46</sup>

From Zenju Earthlyn Manuel: “I walk on the path fully equipped with all of the emotions of a human being. Meditation assists me in seeing the roots of the emotions, and that all emotions are old. When I notice terror rising to the surface, I note, “I am in the past.” Then, I ask, “What is going on here, right now?” When I am angry or enraged, I know to say, “I am terrified of something.” I refrain from being ashamed of experiencing these emotions. Only through acknowledging and releasing blind emotions can I experience the inner unencumbered and harmonious being that is always present despite the suffering.

We cannot fully practice any call for liberation without our lives being fully exposed. There is no hiding.”<sup>47</sup>

## Talk IX Your Inner Life: Discovering Your Deepest Longing Part I

Laura Good

Before we get into discovering your deepest longing, I wanted to say a few words about what has been going on the last week, which is only a public manifestation of what has always been going on inside the hearts and minds of humans-forever.

We act out when threatened, it is our biology to survive. This drive comes from deep within us, we can't not be this way. Yet it's the action that can cause either healing or suffering. Sometimes we can't pause, the pain is too great--the moment too all consuming – we have to DO something.

No matter how painful or how much you disagree with some one's actions, the action did not happen by itself. The Buddhist concept of dependent origination, that everything is connected, tells us we may never know the millions of causes and conditions that lead up to every moment and that moment affects millions of other moments. But accepting that concept doesn't give us license to throw up our hands, in fact the opposite is true: what we think matters, what we say matters – the more we develop our awareness the more we can cultivate responses that can actually ripple out positively.

As hard as it is to not start “othering” police or protestors or even our leaders: their actions came from deep within them. Before responding to their choices, can we offer compassion for ourselves: we feel the hurt, the loss, the frustration. And then can we offer compassion to those we disagree with, deeply disagree with.

Their views came from a big web of conditions. But we are part of that web like it or not. So while I can't say exactly what specific action to take, I can say pause, acknowledge the pain and anger, see how it goes through your body. Be fearless in allowing it in without pushing it away. You will be ok. And then, if an action is warranted that benefits all beings, sit with it first.

From Tricycle: “Thai forest monk, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, recently translated the Sutta Nipata (“The Discourse Group”). Made up of 72 suttas in total, the *Sutta Nipata* contains some of the most well-known canonical poems (like the *Metta Sutta*) and presents the Buddha's thoughts on such topics as racism and classism.”<sup>48</sup>

While the brahmins at the time we concerned with the true self, the Buddha was more concerned with how to put an end to suffering. In contrast to the brahmins, there's nothing about birth or social status that makes a person good or bad. People are good or bad solely in terms of their actions, and so that's how they should be judged—not by the color of their skin.

### **Inquiry: Deep Longing**

Ask yourself, without any judgment of what comes up: What is your deepest longing?

At first, childhood wishes may arise: “I've always wanted to be a pro baseball player” or “I wish I could be a better public speaker” or “I wish I could be confident enough to stand up to \_\_\_\_\_”

Go deeper and ask yourself again: “What is my deepest longing?” Beyond wishes or accomplishments or fame or riches, “What is my deepest longing?”

Again, without judgement, each of those wishes holds a nugget of what's beneath:  
Is it financial or physical safety? Does it feel like a hole in our stomach or heart? Is it a yearning to be accepted completely including imperfections? Is it a yearning to be loved and valued just as I am? Can you go further and reduce this feeling to a few words: Safety, love, peace.  
Now imagine what you think it would be like to embody those states. Is it even a hole that can be permanently filled? Is it simply the human condition?  
It is hard to know exactly what this "hole is" because we are not dealing with only what we can be conscious of. There may be obvious factors: perhaps you had an emotionally or physically abusive parent. Perhaps your drive to make money comes from never having enough, but your deepest longing is deep! There are many forces at work that have contributed to this yearning, many causes that planted seeds and we only are aware of them when the weather is right for them to pop up. Are they weeds or flowers? We can't expect to be our own psychological experts, but there are ways to explore this feeling skillfully.

### **The difference between desire and our deepest longing.**

Tara tells us that the word desire comes from the Latin verb for "missing" or longing. Desiderare means "being away from the stars" So this could be the source of yearning for connectedness: we originally all came from the stars, all matter is made up of its dust." While this may sound metaphysical, we can all relate to that feeling that "something is missing from life" Our primal biology drives us to fill our basic needs and when they are not met we search for tangible substitutes: power, money, sex, food, pleasure. If we can't get the "small wins" the desire can grow into craving or addictive behavior.

She says, "substitutes provide a temporary fix that keeps us hooked, but they never truly deliver". So we can see why the seeds of addiction may start to grow. Instead of allowing the mystery of a deep longing, we keep trying to fill that with things that can be fill it. But ultimately, we all know these don't fill the hole for long.

Tara talks more in the chapter about different addictive behaviors and I will leave that to the professionals. But regardless of how this longing manifests, we can all relate to that feeling of wanting something you don't have. Sometimes we can specify exactly what we think will satisfy us, sometimes it can be a general feeling of disconnectedness or emptiness, but either way, the desire to be or have something that is not present keeps pulling us into an imagined future. This can cause a lot of suffering. Chronic wanting prevents us from being in the moment, seeing how it really is. And then it feeds itself. We're not fully in this moment so we reach for the next, then the next, always on our way to somewhere else that will fill that hole.

I would say that desire is something that our memories and minds can see is possible to fill where deep longing deals with bigger concepts beyond our "selves". Desire may start to point the way to what we long for but the underlying concepts of what we are really searching for goes beyond material things. We all know the feeling of wanting something, projecting into the future of what we think it will be like only to have the real moment not live up to our imagining, whether it is a job, house, relationship or piece of chocolate cake.

It is not bad to want good things, especially if they help us and others be safe, healthy, and happy. But clarifying what it is we really want, what we really long for, helps us live more fully in the life that is already here.

What holds us back from living the life that is here? Wanting life to be different than it is.

How do we live the life that's here without (or less suffering)? Develop equanimity.

### **The Eight Worldly Winds**

The Buddha knew life was stressful and that having equanimity was key. How do we do this? Realize that equanimity is not something to be "achieved" It's more of result of our mindfulness, and practicing the other Brahma Viharas (Loving-Kindness, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy). Meditating on how any situation or feeling falls into the Eight Worldly Winds can help us. (fame and disrepute; praise and blame, gain and loss, pleasure and pain).

It is not wrong to have these longings. It is who are: Buddha Nature. The yearnings to love oneself, to love others, and to be loved by others are universal.

The Zen poet Ryokan wrote "If you want to find the meaning, stop chasing after so many things."<sup>49</sup>

## **Talk X Your Inner Life: Discovering Your Deepest Longing Part II**

**Laura Good**

### **Compassionate Action**

Jon Kabat-Zinn says that as long as you are breathing, there is far more right with you than there is wrong with you. So, take a deep breath of gratitude.

“Practicing mindfulness of gratitude consistently leads to a direct experience of being connected to life and the realization that there is a larger context in which your personal story is unfolding.” -Phillip Moffitt

We can be grateful that these circumstances remind us how connected we are with everything. And grateful for our practice which connects us with life, true life as it is every moment.

Let's be grateful for the fact that very freedom we've enjoyed has come because someone before us took risks, called out wrongs and in ways large and small fought for those freedoms we enjoy and may take for granted.

Think of it: voting, civil rights, chemical labeling, clean air, safer cars etc., and it's obvious how those freedoms still need to be protected because even when won, it is not forever. They are subject to some people's need for their own gratification at the expense of others.

Right now, we are experiencing so much uncertainty before our eyes. And even when quarantined, we are experiencing it together, alone AND together. We'll continue our investigation into getting in touch with our deepest longings and how we can use that as a touchstone when faced with uncertainty.

### **How do we meet life's difficulties with an open heart?**

Earlier, we explored the Buddhist concept of dependent origination: that everything is connected and came from millions of causes and conditions only a few of which we can know about. Some of the racial protest images of the last few weeks are so disturbing. It's painful whether we see the images or not. As hard as it is, this is time for clarity for each of us to see how these inequities align with our deep principles, for the truth to be held in each of us. Humans are capable of so many good and bad things, by reminding ourselves how we decide how we are going to express our humanness, we can be containers of goodness and have that be the root of our actions.

“The truth is that we're in the death throes of what seemed comfortable but was actually constructed from convenient, yet ill-fitting illusions.” Thanissara

The truth is the world is *always* uncertain, and what's happening now didn't happen out of the blue. Pandemics happen, no amount of thinking or hoping will prevent nature from being nature. The virus wants to survive just as we do.

Protests happen because when inequality and unfairness get to a tipping point, we don't just sit there. Our biology kicks in, with anger, planning, physical action, defining and raising our voices, just like the virus, it becomes a matter of survival.

In order to survive, viruses mutate and if we as a society are going to survive, we also must change, consciously. This is a tremendous opportunity to let what no longer works fall away, to actively play a part in a better now and tomorrow. To have your personal story matter.

How do we do this if we are at risk? If doing anything in a group is a threat to our health? Simple: use skillful means. Use your practice to find out what that means for you. Later we'll talk about how to use your deepest longings to do that.

First, let's use RAIN. RECOGNIZE that what is going is hard: our society is demanding change from a system that has systemically oppressed certain groups of people for thousands of years. We can all relate to this whether it is with our gender, our skin color, our access to education, employment, safety, or lack thereof. Acknowledging our own hurt, frustration or oppression does not discredit anyone else's. We all know what it feels like for us, and we can give space for others to express the same. This may have many layers, it's not complicated. We can clearly see where some people's greed and fear have caused suffering by purposely oppressing others.

Racism takes its toll on everybody sooner or later. It is a collective trauma because some of us have benefited from it even if we were not the original perpetrators.

If you feel defensiveness arising ('I may be white but I didn't enslave people, I don't see color, it's been hard for me too, etc.) name it without judging and name how it feels in your body: "defending -tight stomach, clenched teeth" keep naming it and breath into it."

As we ALLOW those feelings and breath into them, see if they eventually soften, perhaps emotions start flowing, it's part of the release. Perhaps there is even more anger, if so allow the anger to be clarifying and of course there is anger: we were all born into this system and there have been those who consciously have kept it going for their own greed and gain.

INVESTIGATE: what do these feelings make me want to do: lash out, cry, write a letter, read about racism? What if what comes is, I had nothing to do with this? Don't judge, investigate. These are all pointers to eventual skillful actions. They are also pointers to our moral compass to how our beliefs align with our actions.

We know on the deepest level that we are all human beings who deserve to have certain rights and freedoms. We know this because when we don't, there is external conflict that comes from internal conflict. No one is born automatically hating others. We wouldn't survive if we did. We may have basic biological preferences (rather be fed than hungry, rather be warm than freezing). Hate never heals hate.

Ayya Khema notes: "By nature [the heart] contains both love and hate. It contains ill will, rejection, resentment and fear, and also love. But unless we diminish the hate and enlarge the love by doing

something about it in our daily life, we have no chance of experiencing that peaceful feeling that lovingkindness generates.”<sup>50</sup>

### **NURTURE: How to heal so we can help.**

Just as our trauma is collective, our healing is collective as well.

Resmaa Menakem is a therapist who specializes in healing trauma by focusing on the body. In *My Grandmother's Hands*, he says: “As every therapist will tell you healing involves discomfort -so does refusing to heal. And over time, refusing to heal is *always* more painful.”<sup>51</sup>

Is your deepest longing to not suffer? It won't happen in a vacuum. If we close our eyes to others' suffering, that causes suffering. You alone do not have to solve the whole problem. We don't have to be perfect to act skillfully.

We offer loving kindness as we get in touch with how it all makes us feel. Do not be afraid of “going there” to heal, we need to see what the wound is. We can do this. We nurture ourselves, we develop our loving kindness muscle so it become so strong and automatic it aligns with our deepest longing; to be who we are, to love and be loved. The desires to be loved, considered and respected are universal.

Are you willing to let go of what you think the world should look like for you (or your retirement, etc.) what it would take to fulfill your deepest longing. Can you just breath into that possibility. Can you trust that you are already connected to something bigger, life itself just as the Buddha did on the night of his enlightenment, as he touched the ground and said “ I am part of this earth. I have a right to be here” We long to feel connected because when we are caught in a trance, we feel like we aren't, but we are. It is our deepest longings that remind us to live, to express who we are which is at the base, goodness.

### **How to use Compassion and Love in Action**

Pay a peaceful protester's bail, donate food from your garden to a local pantry, call congressmen, register people to vote, are there young people in your life that need role models, read books on racism and talk about it with them. Be an ally to who you can.

If any of this, or all of this feels uncomfortable, sit with that. You have the skills. Let it be than let it go and see what arises when you offer yourself compassion. See what arises when you offer compassion to the protesters, to the police. The world needs you compassion in whatever way you can give it.

## **Talk XI Your Relationships: A Forgiving RAIN Part I**

### **Robert Hodge**

What is forgiveness? Forgiveness is all about ill-will, one of the five hindrances<sup>52</sup> that push us below the line. The other hindrances are desire; mental and physical laziness; restlessness and worry; and doubt. Forgiveness is the process of releasing/letting go of ill-will, hate, anger, resentment. It is a process because forgiveness, if we work at it, unfolds over time. This unfolding can benefit from using the practice of RAIN.

In our relationships with others, we have all been wounded by what we perceive as neglected, not seen, rejected or more seriously, chronically abused, devalued, or systematically oppressed. This could be due to our gender, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Our response to this wounding is usually anger and resentment. However, this does not resolve the problem. Anger is an essential survival emotion, but it can only be put to skillful use if it is perceived as initiatory rather than predatory (chronic). As Ruth King notes: anger is not transformative in the positive sense. While the energy of anger may catalyze us, it can't sustain us in the long run. That is why being mindful of when anger arises so that we can investigate (more later) and let it go. Otherwise we cling to anger and suffer accordingly.

#### **Reflection: Why do we hold so tightly to ill-will (blame)?**

James Baldwin notes: "I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with the pain."<sup>53</sup>

Let's work with this. Please bring to mind someone with whom you often feel anger and blame. Then ask yourself, "If I let go of judging this person as bad or wrong, what painful feeling would I have to feel?"

Bring to mind a word or phrase for what you feel. Do any of the following resonate with you?

- Powerless, out of control
- Afraid—they would just go on hurting me
- If they're not wrong, then I'm the one who is wrong
- Hurt
- I'd have to take responsibility
- Accepting a painful loss
- Grief
- I'd have to accept that life isn't fair
- Unlovable
- Unsafe

Forgiving is hard because we'll do almost anything to avoid the vulnerability inside us. It's also hard because we often fear that forgiving means excusing harmful behavior: "You hurt me, but it's ok. I forgive you, so you don't need to take any responsibility."<sup>54</sup>

### **What is forgiveness?**

The verb, forgive, can be confusing because it can be interpreted in many ways. If you say to someone, "I forgive you.", what do you mean? If someone asks you to forgive them, what do they mean? The dictionary definition of forgive is to cease feeling resentment against an offender or to cease your ill-will towards another being. However, the person to whom you say, "I forgive you." may interpret this as "What are you forgiving me for? I didn't do anything wrong." Likewise, if someone asks you to forgive them, they may mean: "If you forgive me then we can resume our previous relationship and forget all about what has happened."

To repeat, forgiving is just letting go of your ill-will towards another being. To be clear, it is more skillful to say what you mean such as "I am no longer angry with you" rather than "I forgive you."

Tara defines forgiving in several ways:

Forgiving means letting go of the protective armor of blame and/or hatred that encases your heart.

Forgiving means never putting anyone (including yourself) out of your heart)

Forgiving is the compassion that arises when we've brought full presence to the suffering of hurt and wounds.

Notice that none of these definitions have any requirement to be in contact with the other person. Forgiveness (letting go of your ill-will) is what you can do alone.

### **Misunderstandings of forgiveness**

The following is what forgiveness is not:

- Forgiving does not mean that we gloss over or deny the seriousness of an offense against you.
- Forgiving does not mean that we should deny or suppress our anger or fear, hurt, or grief
- Forgiving does not mean that we condone, excuse or release from legal accountability
- Forgiving does not mean passivity or inaction.
- Forgiving does not mean an obligation to reconcile.
- Forgiving does not have to be done on our own.
- Forgiving is rarely a one-shot or quick process

### **Using RAIN**

Using RAIN terminology, once we have **R**ecognized that we harbor ill-will towards another and that we will **A**llow that wounded feeling (anger, hurt, rejection) to be with us, we can start our **I**nvestigation.

We can investigate to see if we are in the trance of the unreal other and the unreal self. Tara tells the story of the conflict between Stefan and his father: "Stefan and his father were at a poignant impasse. Both were trapped in their roles: the unsatisfactory son; the hostile, belittling father. Both had hardened into Unreal Others, two-dimensional characters in each other's inner movies, rather than real, complicated, subjective beings with their own passions and cares, hurts and insecurities. Both were relating from the narrow confines of an Unreal Self."<sup>55</sup>

T.S. Eliot stated:

*“We die to each other daily. What we know of other people is only our memory of the moments during which we knew them. And they have changed since then. To pretend that they and we are the same is a useful and convenient social convention which must sometimes be broken. We must also remember that at every meeting we are meeting a stranger.”<sup>56</sup>*

### **Reflection: Unreal other and unreal self**

Let’s explore the unreal self.

Bring to mind a recent conflict with a friend, partner, or family member. Now view this as a movie, including what triggered the conflict, and then freeze the frame at a high point of tension.

In those moments, what are you focused on in the other person? Is it a facial expression communicating anger or vengefulness, aversion or disrespect? Words or a tone of voice conveying those emotions?

Are you seeing them as a bad, Unreal Other?

- What happens when you consider the challenges they face? Might they be feeling hurt, stressed, anxious, deficient, upset with themselves?
- What happens when you remind yourself of the things you value about them—the ways they can be caring, helpful, creative, engaging?

Now shift your attention to yourself:

From the perspective of a witness, how do you imagine you look when you are caught in blame? How do you sound? How does your body feel? Your heart? Are you in the role of angry or hurt victim? Self-righteous judge? Threatening aggressor?

- Do you like yourself this way? Is this who you really are?
- What are you forgetting about your own pain and vulnerability?
- What are you forgetting about your goodness, about what really matters to your heart?

When we unconsciously perceive people as bad, Unreal Others, it’s easy to hurt them. We no longer see them as the subjective, feeling beings that we are. And as Tara will discuss later in our series, this Unreal Othering is also the tragic grounds for oppressing whole groups of people whom we deem inferior, dangerous, or hostile because of characterizations such as race or class, religion or political views, and sexual orientation or identity. Still less recognized: our Unreal Othering and violence toward non-human species.

The good news is that our evolving brains have the capacity for mindfulness and compassion. We can emerge from trance, we can see ourselves and others more clearly, and we can cultivate a forgiving heart

In the next talk, we will go deeper into forgiveness.

## Talk XII Your Relationships: A Forgiving RAIN Part II

### Robert Hodge

#### Why is forgiveness important?

If we do not forgive (cease our ill-will), we suffer, not the other person. We are frustrated. We want the other person to have behaved differently toward us. In other words, we want life to be other than it is. We have a fixed belief that the other person was wrong.

We keep our feelings of resentment and ill-will. Resentment means to feel again and if we keep our ill-will, resentment arises over and over in the body and the mind. We have painful sensations in the body and recurrent unpleasant thoughts in the mind. **Only you suffer.** As Malachy McCourt once said, “Resentment is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.”

Tara Brach notes, “We maintain the intention to forgive because we understand that not forgiving hardens and imprisons our heart. If we feel hatred toward anyone, we remain chained to the sufferings of the past and cannot find genuine peace. We forgive for the freedom of our own heart.”<sup>57</sup>

Jack Kornfield notes: “There’s a story of two ex-prisoners of war. One says to the other, “Have you forgiven your captors yet?” And the second says “No, never.” And the first one then says “Well, they still have you in prison, don’t they?””<sup>58</sup>

As Joseph Goldstein notes, “All this doesn’t mean that we’ll never get angry or annoyed. Rather, as the Dalai Lama said, “Sometimes I do get angry, but deep in my heart I don’t hold a grudge against anyone.” By focusing on the good in ourselves and others and feeling gratitude for the good others have done for us, we can more easily open to a place of forgiveness, not holding on to old grudges and hurts. Sometimes we let go of these in a moment; sometimes letting go of them is part of a longer process. At the beginning of a meditation period, it can be helpful to ask for and extend forgiveness. And even with people we find difficult, we can reflect on our basic intention of goodwill.”<sup>59</sup>

As Jack Kornfield notes, “Forgiveness is, in particular, the capacity to let go, to release the suffering, the sorrows, the burdens of the pains and betrayals of the past, and instead to choose the mystery of love. Forgiveness shifts us from the small separate sense of ourselves to a capacity to renew, to let go, to live in love. As the Bhagavad Gita (a verse Hindu scripture in Sanskrit) says, “If you want to see the brave, look to those who can return love for hatred. If you want to see the heroic, look to those who can forgive.”<sup>60</sup>

Ezra Bayda notes: “I heard the Buddhist teacher Jack Kornfield tell a story about a golfer who was awarded a check for winning a tournament, and when he was walking to the parking lot a woman came up to him and told him a heart-wrenching story about her sick child. She told him that if the child didn’t get help soon, he would die. The golfer promptly signed his check over to the woman. A month later one of the golfer’s buddies told him that he heard about what happened in the parking lot and that he also heard that the woman was a con artist and didn’t even have a sick child. The golfer replied, “That’s the best news I’ve heard in a long time—a child isn’t going to die.”

The golfer obviously did not get caught in the fear of betrayal that would have led him to feel mistreated, and to consequently harbor resentment toward the woman. If he had taken the path of bitterness, no doubt many people would have agreed with him. But instead, he was able to listen to the voice of the heart, the heart that is naturally concerned with the welfare of others, rather than the hard-hearted habit of holding grudges.”<sup>61</sup>

### **What did the Buddha say about forgiving (letting go of ill-will)?**

Forgiveness is about overcoming ill-will against another person. The Buddha said "There are these five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely. Which five?"<sup>62</sup>

In summary, the five approaches are:

- Develop good will toward the other person  
Give loving-kindness
- Develop compassion toward the other person  
You know that that person is suffering. Wish that person to be well despite any difficulties
- Develop equanimity toward the other person  
Recognize that everyone has skillful and unskillful actions.
- Pay no mind and no attention to the other person  
Be mindful and ignore the triggers that arise
- Direct thoughts to his/her being the product of his actions.  
Recognize that we create our own karma.

### **The Stages of Forgiveness**

Tara notes three stages of forgiveness:

1. Intending to Forgive
2. Making the U-Turn with RAIN
3. Including the Real Other in Our Heart

I would add a fourth stage – Determining the boundaries of the relationship. Even though you may hold no ill-will, it is important to consider boundaries. How do I want to relate to the person, if at all, in the future?

As you go through the stages, you address the inner process of healing the woundedness beneath the blame and you bring a compassionate attention to the other person involved.

In the first stage, intending to forgive, you have realized through mindfulness, that letting go of your ill-will is a skillful thing to do. This is the **Recognize** of RAIN.

In the second stage, making the U-Turn to come out of the trance with RAIN, you ask yourself, “What am I unwilling to feel (or running from) inside me?” This is the **Allow** of RAIN. This enables the U-turn, shifting my attention from the other person to the vulnerability under my armoring of blame (ill-will).

In the third stage, including the real other in our heart, you ask yourself, “What is really true about this person? How might they be struggling? What matters most to them?” This helps me remember the person’s humanness, suffering, and goodness.”<sup>63</sup> This is the Investigate of RAIN.

In the fourth stage, determining the boundaries, you ask yourself, “What is my deepest intention in this relationship? This reminds you that you can keep a person in your heart and set appropriate boundaries for contact. This is the Nurture of RAIN.

Tara mentions two meditations that specifically address the inner process of healing the woundedness beneath the blame and bringing a compassionate attention to the other person involved. She notes: “Please consider the first part below as a “stand alone” meditation and practice it as long as it takes (days, months, years) to feel well established in self-compassion. Then, when you are ready, practice them both as a sequence.

Sit in a comfortable way, closing your eyes and coming into stillness. Take several full breaths, and with each exhale, release any tension you are aware of. Begin by reflecting on your intention to cultivate a forgiving heart that includes yourself and all beings.

#### PART I: RAIN to the Wounds Beneath Blame

Scan your life, and sense where you might be feeling unforgiving toward someone and caught in anger and/or blame. Remind yourself of what happened (or is happening) to cause these feelings. You might ask yourself,

“What is the worst part of this? What about this most upsets me?”

“What am I believing about this person?”

What am I believing about how they are relating to me?”

**Recognize:** Mentally note whatever feelings and thoughts are predominant as you bring this person to mind.

**Allow:** Pause and Allow this experience to be here, as it is, without any judgment or effort to do anything.

**Investigate:** Now make the U-turn, letting go of thoughts of the other person and bringing your full attention to what is happening inside you.

Discover how your upset feelings and thoughts about the person express themselves as feelings in your body: Where are those feelings strongest? What are they like? Take your time to fully enter and feel the part of you that is most distressed.

You might ask this hurting part the following: “How do you want me to be with you? What do you most need? Is it acceptance? Protection? Understanding? Forgiveness? Compassion? Love?”

**Nurture:** Call on your wisest, most loving self (your future self, your awakened heart). Imagine that you can listen and respond from your future self: How might you offer what is most needed? Is there a touch (like your hand on your heart), a message, or an image that helps that wounded part receive what it needs?

Take some moments (thirty seconds) to bring Nurturing to this part and to sense how this part experiences the compassion that is offered.

(Note: If it is difficult to access your own awakened heart, you can call on whatever source of loving feels most accessible—a friend or family member, a deity, your dog—to help Nurture the inner part.)

After the RAIN: Notice and rest in the sense of who you are when you are offering and receiving inner Nurturing.

## PART II: RAIN of Forgiveness to Another

After completing part 1, bring your attention to the other person. Sense that you are viewing that person from the awareness of your future self—witnessing him or her with your wisest, most compassionate heart. (You might experiment and imagine that you are doing this reflection ten to fifteen years in the future.)

**Recognize:** Mentally note whatever you observe about the other person.

**Allow:** Pause and Allow this experience of the person to be there, just as it is.

**Investigate:** You might ask yourself this: “What is the vulnerability—the fears, hurts, unmet needs—that might drive this person to cause suffering? How does this person have a leg in a trap?”

**Nurture:** Offer forgiveness through the following phrases, or through your own compassionate words and/or visual images: Mentally whispering the person’s name and saying, “I see and feel the harm you have caused, and I forgive you now.” Or, if you’re not yet ready to forgive, “I see and feel the harm you have caused, and it is my intention to forgive you.” Repeat several times.

If you do feel able to include this person in a forgiving heart, you might follow the forgiveness phrases with whatever caring wish resonates for the healing of this person’s suffering.

**After the RAIN:** Notice the quality of heartspace that has arisen, and let it be as large and inclusive as it is. You might inquire, “Who am I when resting in a forgiving heart?”

With forgiveness practices, it is common to judge ourselves for how well or fully we are able to do the meditation. Let go of any judgments you are carrying, and honor the sincerity of your intention to open and free your heart. End the meditation by releasing all ideas of self and other. Simply rest in the experience of tender awareness. If a thought or feeling arises, sense the capacity to include this entire living dying world in the vast space of a forgiving heart.”<sup>64</sup>

## A Forgiveness Meditation by Sharon Salzberg

In her book, *Real Love: The Art of Mindful Connection*, Sharon Salzberg shares a wonderful forgiveness meditation:

“Meditating on forgiveness is not terribly different from lovingkindness or sympathetic joy practices, as all of them invite us to be with our emotional states without judging them and to use the meditation as the anchor of our attention. These practices require courage, as we are not denying our suffering or the harmful actions we’ve taken.

Forgiveness is not passive, but an active gesture of releasing feelings like anger, guilt, and resentment, all of which deplete us if we become lost in them. Forgiveness demands presence, reminding us that we are not the same as the feelings we possess in a given situation, nor is the person who we’ve harmed or who has harmed us.

Traditionally, the meditation is done in three parts: first, you ask forgiveness from those you have harmed; next, you extend forgiveness to those who have harmed you; and the final practice is that of self-forgiveness, for all of those times we harm ourselves with judgmental habits of mind.

1. Sit comfortably and allow the breath to be natural. Begin by silently (or audibly) reciting phrases of forgiveness for those you have harmed. You may try, “If I have hurt or harmed anyone knowingly or unknowingly, I ask their forgiveness.”

2. Notice what comes up. You may find that offering forgiveness to one person may catalyze memories of another tough situation or person. Don't push these feelings or thoughts away—but maintain your focus on the practice, and don't get lost in guilt or self-blame about your distraction. As other thoughts arise, send your forgiveness in these new directions.
3. Next (after however long you want to spend on the first part of the reflection), you can begin to offer forgiveness to those who have harmed you: "If anyone has hurt or harmed me, knowingly or unknowingly, I forgive them."
4. Once again, thinking about past painful experiences may trigger emotion. As these feelings, images, and memories bubble to the surface, you may simply recite, "I forgive you."
5. Finally, we turn our attention to forgiveness of ourselves (ill-will toward self). Most of us have experienced self-blame—at work, in relationships, or simply because we have habitually kept ourselves in cycles of perfectionism. "For all of the ways I have hurt or harmed myself, knowingly or unknowingly, I offer forgiveness."<sup>65</sup>

## **Talk XIII Your Relationships: Seeing the Goodness**

**Laura Good**

As I've been watching the news and video footage of people protesting many things: racism, historically inaccurate monuments, a pandemic run wild, it's easy to see there are many opportunities to feel compassion for those that are suffering and have deeply suffered for hundreds of years. Whether or not we can identify or connect with the part we might have played generationally or even emotionally we can clearly see the suffering. We all have different tipping points about what engages us to the point of action or acknowledgement.

For me, this week was learning of yet another story of a black man being killed when stopped by the police for no apparent reason. Twenty-three-year-old Elijah McClain was stopped by police in Aurora, Co because someone saw the young black man and reported a suspicious person. He was simply going to a convenience store to buy some iced tea. He pleaded for his life, saying :“I don't kill anything. I'm a vegetarian. Please, I can't breathe.” and still he was killed. It's heartbreaking.

In Buddhism, karma tells us we may never know all the myriad of reasons why these lives came together at that moment and why when it was over, there was one less life. The pain we feel is visceral and deep and compassion easily flows to his family and to our society. Yet it may be harder to feel compassion for the person who called the police to report what they thought was a suspicious person; they may have been filled with fear however unwarranted. Harder still to feel compassion for the policemen who ended up killing him or superiors that ok'd the training that led them to view that man in a biased way. Do they deserve compassion? Is compassion something that has to be deserved or earned? How “radical” is “radical compassion” supposed to be?

Compassion is not something you can fake. We can offer loving kindness proactively but compassion is different in that it is a direct response to another's suffering.

How can compassion help us understand the world? Do we even need it to? Why is it so easy to offer compassion to someone when they are suffering but so hard to offer it to those that caused it or even to ourselves?

We'll explore these issues using the RAIN technique in Tara's book and also see how seeing the goodness in others can help us develop our compassion skills.

First let's remind ourselves on the difference between empathy, sympathy and compassion.

Empathy is viscerally feeling what another feels. It's the mirroring of neurons, actually feeling another's pain.

Sympathy means you are able to understand what the person is feeling without actually feeling their pain.

Compassion is one step further. When you are compassionate, you feel the pain of another (i.e. empathy) or you recognize that the person is in pain (i.e. sympathy), and then you do your best to alleviate the person's suffering from that situation.

At its Latin roots, compassion means “to suffer with.”<sup>66</sup> When you're compassionate, you're not running away from suffering, you're not feeling overwhelmed by suffering, and you're not pretending the suffering doesn't exist. When you are practicing compassion, you can stay present with suffering. Showing compassion can help gain perspective or a new point of view because it puts you in someone else's shoes and makes you put time and thought into alleviating someone's suffering.”

Thupten Jinpa, Ph.D., is the Dalai Lama's principal English translator and author of the course Compassion Cultivation Training CCT<sup>67</sup>. Jinpa says that compassion is a four-step process:

1. Awareness of suffering.
2. Sympathetic concern related to being emotionally moved by suffering.
3. Wish to see the relief of that suffering.
4. Responsiveness or readiness to help relieve that suffering.

Mindfulness is used because it's hard to be aware of another's suffering if you're not in the present moment.

What if the person you want feel compassion toward is difficult or is behaving in a less than skillful way? An extreme example: when people are protesting removing monuments to the civil war, they are feeling attacked and invalidated. Do they deserve compassion? Yes, AND they deserve the truth because the truth will never hurt you. The truth will never hurt you.

Or, what if you child or someone you love is behaving in destructive ways. How do we offer compassion when we are angry? A good place to start is by trying to see their goodness. We all have basic goodness. At least that is what the Buddha believed.

What is basic goodness?

The Dalai Lama: “Every sentient being—even insects—have Buddha nature. The seed of Buddha means consciousness, the cognitive power—the seed of enlightenment. That's from Buddha's viewpoint. All these destructive things can be removed from the mind, so therefore there's no reason to believe some sentient being cannot become Buddha. So every sentient being has that seed. Buddha also stated “you are your own master.” Future, everything depends on your own shoulder. Buddha's responsibility is just to show the path, that's all.

The symbol of the Lotus — while it means many things — is the most striking symbol of Buddha Nature: the Lotus flower (our Buddha Nature) emerging from the muck in the bottom of the pond (our defilements and attachments) — yet untouched by the mud.”

Bhante G reminds us that our natural state is loving kindness because we all wish for peace, joy and happiness for ourselves and we know other beings want that too.

So why the conflict if we all want to be happy? Because some of us are qualifying the conditions for our own happiness. Their identity is wrapped up in a story that happens to be untrue. That alone can trigger some compassion. Even with our president, you can clearly see his actions are the result of some very unskillful upbringing and now those actions are bearing fruit that causes suffering for himself and millions of people. That doesn't mean of course we let it be. In fact, a very compassionate thing to do is all we can to stop his access to the tools of his suffering (i.e. his position).

But let's start closer to home. How can we see the goodness in others.

In the book Tara suggests trying the following exercise: finish the sentence "I see the goodness..."

Example: How my husband treats a cashier or server with respect and kindness.

My daughter talks to her cat.

My mother always makes sure everyone has something to eat. etc

Tara then talks about how important mirroring is when you are growing up and that most of us received a mix of "clear and distorted mirroring".

### **How to stay open by Seeing Our Own Goodness.**

As we've studied before in Tara's book Radical Acceptance, we can get caught in a trance of unworthiness. And it's very easy to do. Mixed messages of our upbringing and then our society are not conducive for basic goodness to thrive. And as to why is another dharma talk!

If you are having trouble seeing your own goodness think of someone you trust who loves you and look through their eyes-what do they see? Let it sink in, touch your heart and connect with your own basic goodness.

Tara also mentions benefactor practice: bringing to mind someone who has had a positive influence on you. It can be a teacher or even someone you don't know. Ask yourself when did they mirror something about me that reflected my own goodness?

Can we experience who are we without accepting, rejecting, or judging anything that comes up? This is not about self-improvement. As they say it is simple but not easy. We can see that no matter we THINK of ourselves, it is temporary. In this exercise we are aiming to help the mind and heart open to this basic goodness. Sometimes you just have to take the leap.

### **Reflection: Recalling your goodness at difficult times.**

Tara "Becoming a mirror of goodness is a deliberate training in radical compassion. When we are in a trance - preoccupied, anxious, reactive, on auto pilot - we're often blind to the goodness in others" She suggests we need to be intentional by asking three questions:

1. What does this person care about?
2. Am I looking with fresh eyes?
3. What is the best way to let them know their goodness?<sup>68</sup>

After reflecting on this, could you actually tell them in person?

How do think it would change you and your relationship?

They say it's the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance that form the basic ingredients of our suffering and hide our true nature. In Sanskrit, the word for these poisons is *klesha*, which has the connotation of something that obscures or covers like clouds that cover the sun, which is always shining but is sometimes hidden from view. So it's like how our goodness gets obscured but is still inside there somewhere.

Cultivating conditions to recognize your goodness is as simple as sitting, being present and being aware with a calm non-judgment whatever is there. You observe whatever arises, with a loving friendliness and see it come and go.

Our essence is goodness and no matter how many mistakes we make we can hold it gently in our hands. There is no original flaw or sin, but enlightenment in progress as a reflection of the unconditioned wisdom and freedom within all beings. Beyond good self/bad self there is a true self and this is where our home is. Can you try looking with fresh eyes as Tara suggests, to see the inherent goodness in all people? It will help us transcend any bias we have even about those we disagree with and give us the clarity to use our compassion for ourselves and in compassionate action.

Prajñāpāramitā means "the Perfection of (Transcendent) Wisdom. " In Mahāyāna Buddhism, **Prajñāpāramitā** refers to this perfected way of seeing the nature of reality, as well as to a particular body of sutras and to the personification of the concept in the Bodhisattva known as the "Great Mother"

## **Talk XIV Your Relationships: The RAIN of Compassion**

**Laura Good**

“Your path is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself you have built against it.” --Rumi

In the previous talk, I discussed compassion and how seeing the goodness in others and ourselves can help us be more compassionate. I also mentioned the difference between compassion, sympathy and empathy and now we will delve into some of the obstacles to offering compassion into today's divided world.

I was so struck this week by an article by Christian Cooper. He is the African-American bird watcher in Central Park who calmly asked a woman to put her dog on leash as to not scare nesting birds and also as the law dictated. The woman, a white woman of means, as evidenced by the video, quickly escalated the situation by not only refusing to leash her dog but by immediately calling 911 saying “there is an African-American man threatening my life”. As she hysterically spoke to 911, she was the one who was lunging at the man. The racism in this exchange is obvious for all to see and had Mr. Cooper not recorded it on his phone, the outcome could have been entirely different for him.

The story went viral, the woman was called out around the globe and she lost her job at a financial institution which by the way would have given its employee hours of sensitivity training.

The NY DA is investigating whether to prosecute her for filing a false police report but here is what stunned me. Mr. Cooper said in an article in the Washington Post that he will not be cooperating with them. It's not up to him whether or not there is case, that is the DA's job. Instead, with the knowledge of how the woman's life had been turned upside down for a moment of bad judgment and with her apology he is “erring on the side of compassion.”

### **Erring on the side of Compassion: Christian Cooper**

He writes, “Would I consider it fair and just if Cooper were found guilty and sentenced to anti-bias training and some form of community service? Yes. But black people know all too well that the criminal justice system often doesn't work that way — that an ambitious DA with an election next year, in the current social climate, might seek and achieve a sentence of a year behind bars. All for an offense from which I suffered no harm, physical or mental. That wouldn't be a commensurate punishment.

Raising the specter of what harm might have come to me as a result of Cooper's false report carries no weight with me; I don't find speculation useful in this situation, because it's equally possible that, had the police arrived on the scene while I was still there, they would have done their jobs professionally. And if the fear is that the police would have done me harm as a result of Cooper's call, then the solution is to fix policing.

So while acknowledging the principle at stake, I must err on the side of compassion and choose not to be involved in this prosecution.”

He continues, “I know that some people may disagree with my reasoning, and that this decision comes as a disappointment to many who share in the struggle for social justice, and I’m sorry for that. But under the circumstances, it’s the only course I can pursue in good conscience.”<sup>69</sup>

### **To “err on the side of compassion,” what does that mean?**

To many of us who’ve been following this story, this was not the reaction we expected, but I’m sure to those that know Mr. Cooper personally are not surprised. The emotional intelligence he is showing is inspiring as you can tell he more than anyone has had to process what happened, the same day George Floyd was killed. You can tell that he is being true to himself and being very honest about his process. He is building a bridge because in the end that is what will benefit all of us.

I noticed my own reactions at first. When I saw the video, I was outraged, embarrassed for being a white woman and also noticed my glee that arose as the story of her comeuppance unfolded. I had no compassion for her and I have to be honest I was glad. This was not an enlightened response, but some of it was frustration of a system I’m sure I’ve benefited from but had no role in making and also gladness that maybe things are finally changing. Recognizing of how and why we “other” people can help build a bridge.

Tara talks about the evolutionary roots of the “unreal other.”

Millions of years ago our earliest ancestors knew that staying in your own isolated group helped you survive. So anyone outside your group was a scary unknown that could not only kill you but mean that your DNA would not pass on it the next generation. But she states that just as our survival brain “perpetuates the trance of the Unreal Other, our evolved prefrontal cortex gives us the tools to undo it...we have the capacity to recognize the biases that have kept us below the line and once they are conscious, we become more able to respond from an awake and inclusive heart.”<sup>70</sup>

John Schorling states, “The most obvious manifestation of this is conscious or explicit bias, being aware that we do not like members of a different group, perhaps expressing and acting on this bias openly. Even when we don’t explicitly believe we are biased, testing for implicit bias (bias that we are not consciously aware of), often demonstrates that we still view those who are different from us negatively, especially if we have been exposed to stereotypes that reinforce these differences.

Implicit bias can also lead to discriminatory behavior. The amygdala may be activated, signaling a threat, when we see others who are classified as belonging to a different group. This impression, which contains the implicit bias of another as threat, then is transmitted to the prefrontal cortex, where thinking occurs. If we are not paying attention, we will just react based on the automatic subconscious processing which includes this implicit bias. However, once this impression arrives in the prefrontal cortex where we can become aware of it, we then have the potential to decide whether we believe it or will act on it.”<sup>71</sup>

### **Reflection: Bringing Implicit Bias Above the Line**

“Implicit bias” is the scientific term for the unconscious or semiconscious ways we stereotype individuals or groups, depending on our social conditioning. Please consider the following reflection as an opportunity for self-understanding, not as fuel for guilt and self-judgment.

- Bring to mind the following groups of people:
- Those of a different race from you
- Different ethnic group or nationality
- Different religion
- Different sexual orientation
- Different gender identity
- Different ability (disability)
- Different social class
- Different political view

If possible, consider a few individuals you know from each. As you do, honestly notice any subtle judgments that emerge. Are they less—or more! —intelligent, ethical, attractive, loving, spiritual, or capable than yourself? Imagine that your child or someone else close to you has started dating someone from these groups.

Notice your reactions in your body, because they may be more discernible than a mental expression of bias. As you review, also note the following: Are you inclined to blame the group for in some way being bad or wrong or causing harm?<sup>72</sup>

Were you surprised by anything that came up? Can you allow it with compassion for yourself, safely investigating with mindfulness of your intention for deeper awareness?

“Whenever we pay close attention to another life, whether it’s a person, our dog our favorite plant, or a bird, this being begins to feel a part of us.”<sup>73</sup>

When we are caught in a trance of disconnection, we can hear and see others suffering on the news etc. and the reality doesn’t sink in. We say we feel bad for them but then go on with our daily lives. But think if just one of those people, shot by police or caught in a flood were a close family member our whole lives would immediately change and our daily routines would suddenly change.

“You can only really know your own experience,” adds Anu Taranath, a racial equity professor at the University of Washington Seattle and a second-generation immigrant. “I think we can develop empathetic feelings and sort of crack open our sense of self to include other people’s experiences in it. We can only deepen our own understanding of who we are in an unequal world and how that makes us feel and how that motivates us to shift our life in some way or another.”<sup>74</sup>

### **Reflection: “Is This Person Real to Me?”**

We’ve been looking at how we create Unreal Others. It’s important to realize that, especially when we’re stressed, our habits of Unreal Othering apply even to those closest to us—our brother, child, mother, friend, and work colleague. We are trying to “get through the day,” and they are making things worse or better or playing bit parts, irrelevant to our concerns. We’re just not there; our hearts are closed. If we want to relate more reliably with presence and compassion, we need to bring the habitual

trance of Unreal Other above the line. Our starting place is to pay closer attention to our everyday encounters.

Take a few long, deep breaths, relax any obvious tension in your body, and arrive in presence. Now review your day, or the last couple of days. Remind yourself of someone you spent time with. Be curious about how attuned you were. How “real” did this person seem to you? Did you notice

- what kind of mood they were in?
- how they were feeling physically?
- what was important to them at the time you connected?
- what they might have been worried or anxious about?
- if they were relaxed, comfortable, and open with you?
- if they were tense and defensive with you?
- whether anything in the interaction was difficult for them?

Investigate without judgment, and as you deepen your attention, notice if the person you’re reflecting on becomes more multifaceted, interesting, and real. And notice your heart’s response to this person. Before ending, you might think of someone you’re going to be spending time with soon. Imagine entering this next encounter with the inquiry “What’s it like being you?” Or, if they’ve been having difficulty, “Where does it hurt?”<sup>75</sup>

Learning how to Transform Empathy Into Compassion can allow us to identify less with painful empathetic feelings and give us space to witness rather than react. We can use RAIN so we don’t get burned out on these feelings and stay balanced as we open our hearts.

Reflection: RAIN Transforms Empathy into Compassion

**Recognize:** Brings mindfulness to painful empathic feelings and reactions like fear, grief, guilt, shame, aversion, anger, numbness, or tightness.

**Allow:** Loosens our identification with the feelings and gives us more space to witness rather than react.

**Investigate:** As we then inquire gently and more directly contact the empathic feelings in our body, our tenderness and caring naturally arise.

**Nurture:** The fullness of compassion manifests as we feel and express care for ourselves and for all who experience suffering.

**After the RAIN:** As we rest in this compassionate presence, we become familiar with the natural openness, radiance, and tenderness of our heart.<sup>76</sup>

Jack Kornfield suggests dedicating your practice, making a vow for one day or every day to do one thing that deepens awareness of any bias or simply who needs some compassion.

## Talk XV Four Remembrances: Living with an Awake Heart

### Robert Hodge

In this chapter, Tara notes: “As we complete our journey together, I want to share the four remembrances that guide me in daily life. You’ll find that each can bring alive your natural care and intelligence at times when you are likely to be caught in reactivity. These informal practices are drawn from RAIN and can be woven into stressful moments at work, difficult conversations, and any other situation where you want support in living true to yourself. They are the nourishment for our continued unfolding.

If you practice the four remembrances regularly, you’ll find that the qualities of heart/mind you most value, like openheartedness and equanimity, become available, strong, and steady. As you transform these uplifting states of mind into enduring traits, the potential of your future self will blossom in daily life.”<sup>77</sup>

Why does Tara call these practices remembrances? The term mindfulness comes from the Pali term, *sati*. Thanissaro Bhikkhu notes: “The Buddha adopted the term *sati* from the languages of his culture. It’s related to the Sanskrit term *smriti*, which means remembrance or the act of calling to mind. However, there is no record of his having defined the term *per se*.”<sup>78</sup> Joseph Goldstein notes: “On another level, and one which we don’t often associate with mindfulness, *sati* means “remembering,” and it refers to the practice of wholesome recollection that supports and energizes us on this path of awakening. In the texts, these recollections include the virtues of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, as well as one’s own generosity and ethical conduct.”<sup>79</sup>

The Buddha refers to remembering in his teachings of the four foundations of mindfulness: “And what is the faculty of mindfulness? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, is mindful, is endowed with excellent proficiency in mindfulness, **remembering & able to call to mind even things that were done & said long ago**. He remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves... the mind in & of itself... mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is called the faculty of mindfulness.”<sup>80</sup>

In talk III of this series, *The Steps of Rain*, it was noted that the first three steps of RAIN represent the first three steps of the Buddha’s teaching, the Seven Factors of Awakening. The first step is mindfulness. The remembrances that Tara cites are all practices of mindfulness: remembering a certain reflection and practicing it anew.

The four remembrances are:

1. Pause for Presence
2. Say Yes to What’s Here
3. Turn Toward Love
4. Rest in Awareness

The first three remembrances encompass the four elements of RAIN. Pause for presence (**R**ecognize, **A**llow), say yes to what's here (**A**llow, **I**nvestigate), and turn toward love (**N**urture).

### **Remembrance 1: Pause for Presence**

*“Between stimulus and response, there is a space.*

*In that space lies our freedom and our power to choose our response.*

*In our response lies our growth and our happiness.”<sup>81</sup>*

Viktor Frankl, a noted psychologist, wrote, “This is the idea I am fascinated by—that we need not wait until our response has begun and then somehow catch ourselves because we are responding in a way that is overly forceful, or angry, or violent. If we learn to see that space, to expand it, to live in it, then we can respond in ways of our choosing, rather than simply reacting. The question is then, what can we do to enlarge and inhabit that space more often?”<sup>82</sup>

That space is the pause. With the pause, comes mindfulness, the **R**ecognition of RAIN. In order to remember to pause, it takes practice. Tara’s remembrance is a way to embed the act of pausing in your daily being.

### **The practice**

For now, set your intention to pause in just one or two situations of moderate stress and reactivity. It might be when you see a flurry of new emails needing a response; when you’re worrying about an upcoming deadline; about to enter a demanding meeting; or feeling irritated with a friend, colleague, or family member.

The pause itself is simple. Stop whatever you’re doing, become still, and take a moment to **R**ecognize and **A**llow whatever emotions and thoughts are present. Then take three to five long, deep breaths. With each, match the length of the inhale and exhale: Breathe in fully, filling your chest and lungs, and then release with a long, slow out breath. When you’ve finished, notice if anything has changed, and then continue with your day.

Gradually expand the number of situations in which you practice an intentional pause, including those that involve more emotional triggering. In time, you’ll be able to pause in a wide range of situations, and you’ll have more access to your inner clarity, resilience, and heart.<sup>83</sup>

### **Remembrance 2: Say Yes to What’s Here**

This practice helps to strengthen the **A**llow of RAIN. Just saying yes to be with what is uncomfortable or resisting. Once you can say yes, you can move to the **I**nvestigate of RAIN.

### **The Practice**

While we need to open to our deep fears and losses, we can develop our resilience and confidence if we first practice saying yes to moderate discomfort and unpleasantness. You might try saying yes when you have indigestion or a headache; when you are anxious about being late, annoyed that the car was left close to “empty,” or disappointed at missing a dear one’s wedding. Keep in mind that your “yes” is

directed toward your own inner experience, not toward what someone else is doing. You are meeting your edge—any sense of emotional reactivity or inner conflict—and softening.

Here are some ways to begin:

- Whisper “yes” inwardly or say it softly out loud. Or alternate “yes” with “it’s okay,” “I consent,” “this belongs,” belongs,” or any other word or phrase that conveys acceptance.
- Imagine sending the message of “yes” directly to the inner place of vulnerability, upset, discomfort, or pain.
- Make a gesture of bowing respectfully to the inner experience or visualize yourself bowing.
- Meet the inner experience with a slight smile; let this form at your lips, and then try to feel the smile in your eyes and in your heart.

End by taking some moments to notice if there is any shift in your body, heart, or mind.<sup>84</sup>

### **Remembrance 3: Turn Toward Love**

This practice builds the **Nurture** of RAIN. Not only nurturing yourself but connecting with others through the practice of loving-kindness and compassion.

#### **The Practice:**

Set your intention to turn toward love when you become aware of feeling lonely, depressed, anxious, caught in self-judgment, or blaming others. Give yourself permission to experiment with different ways of reconnecting with love. Here are some possible approaches:

- Send a caring message or prayer to yourself (silently or whisper out loud). Examples: “May I be happy”; “May I feel safe”; “Please be kind”; “It’s okay, sweetheart”; “I’m sorry and I love you”; “May I love myself into healing.”
- Imagine receiving a caring message from a loved one or compassionate spiritual figure.
- Place one or both hands on your heart; hug yourself; place a comforting hand on your cheek; put your palms together in prayer.
- Imagine yourself surrounded by and held in warm light; imagine yourself being embraced by a loved one or by a compassionate spiritual figure; imagine you yourself are embracing your inner child.
- Imagine and feel what it’s like to let in love. Visualize the eyes of a loved one who is feeling and expressing his or her care, and then sense your body allowing the warmth of that care to wash through you, to bathe you.
- Send your care to dear ones, others in your life, and those you don’t know. You might do this through a message and/or image.

The more often you intentionally turn toward love—expressing it and letting it in—the more your natural care and compassion will arise spontaneously throughout the day.<sup>85</sup>

### **Rest in Awareness**

Finally, there is just the practice of being. The first three remembrances are triggered by stressful situations. Resting in awareness just the opposite.

**The practice:**

Set your intention to rest in awareness at times when you are calm and quietly present. It might be when you lie down to sleep and can feel yourself unwinding; when you are listening to the sound of wind or rain; when you are looking at cloud formations or the intricacy of a flower; when you are with someone in comfortable silence. It might also be when you've arrived at your destination, right before getting out of the car. Or when you are standing and looking out a window.

Close your eyes, be still, and notice the foreground of what you are experiencing—the thoughts, sensations, images, sounds. Let everything be just as it is. Then notice your own presence, the formless awareness in the background. What is awareness? Can you sense the silence? The stillness? The openness that everything is happening in? Relax and rest in this awareness; become the awareness. Often after just a few seconds, the mind re-fixates on something in the foreground—or perhaps on a thought about what's next. This is natural. Rather than struggle to sustain awareness of awareness (which is another “doing”), simply be mindful as you continue with your day.

The most helpful way to practice resting in awareness is for brief moments, many times a day. If you approach this remembrance with curiosity and ease, you will find that you become increasingly drawn toward, and then at home in, the inner stillness of being.<sup>86</sup>

As Tara notes the remembrances, if practiced frequently, can have a powerful, beneficial effect on how you connect with life. I hope that you will give them a try.

## **Talk XVI Summary**

### **Laura Good and Robert Hodge**

In this series, Compassion for Ourselves and Others, we have taken a journey starting in April using Tara Brach's wonderful book, Radical Compassion as our main resource. Along the way, we have explored some of the Buddha's teachings and other references. This series recap document includes 16 talks in 58 pages and will be posted on our website for future reference.

We started with how attention heals through the use of RAIN (Recognize, Allow, Investigate, and Nurture). Then we turned to our inner life exploring the release of negative self-beliefs, shame, fear, and discovering our deepest longing, to be who we are, to love and be loved. Relationships were next and we explored forgiveness, loving-kindness, and compassion. Finally, we looked at four remembrances (mindfulness practices) that Tara uses herself for enabling Loving with an Awake Heart: Pause for Presence, Say Yes to What's Here, Turn Toward Love and Rest in Awareness

We have learned the RAIN is a multi-purpose tool. It has many applications for our purifying our inner life and improving our relationships. After we have used RAIN, we can shift from doing to being. Just resting in awareness.

As we continue on the path, we can get a sense of who we really are. We can start to imagine a future self while knowing that we are fine that way we are but what would that be like if we were more mindful? The following meditation is not about longing to change, it is about seeing what is possible with more mindfulness.

### **MEDITATION: CALLING ON YOUR FUTURE SELF**

*As you enter this meditation for future self, please feel free to substitute "wise self," "high self," "awakened heart," "awakened mind," or any other words that express your most evolved being.*

Find a comfortable posture, close your eyes, and come into stillness. Take several long, deep breaths to collect your attention. See if with each out breath you can release any tension that has accumulated in your body.

Scan your current life, and let your attention go to a situation where you feel stuck in emotional reactivity—in fear, hurt, or anger.

Now gaze into the future ten or twenty years from now and visualize your future self's home. Where in this home do you see your future self? Are you inside or outside? In a certain room? Are there pictures, furnishings, or plants nearby that hold a special meaning for you? How does your future self look—your clothing, your hair, your facial expression? What is the expression in your future self's eyes? Can you sense kindness? A caring welcome?

Take some moments to connect with the place where you feel most stuck and vulnerable, and then share your current difficulty with your future self.

Now imagine that your future self is offering healing attention and care to your current self. You might feel that you are receiving some touch of kindness, maybe an energetic embrace. You might receive a message of guidance, of reassurance. See how fully you can take in that warmth and care and wisdom. Feel your future self holding you and filling you with loving presence. Sense that whatever is most difficult right now—even the deepest fears and grief—can be included in this open and nurturing presence. Relax into your future self’s embrace until you sense that you are fully merging with—at one with—your future self.

Take some moments to sense how the love and wisdom of your most evolved being lives in you now and always. Trust that with practice you can access this awakened, compassionate heartspace with more and more ease.

### **Trust Your Goodness**

Tara leaves us with this final note:

“It’s natural that we get caught in self-doubt, emotional reactivity, and ways of acting that cause separation and harm. We do this as individuals, and we turn against others—humans and other animals—on a societal level. And yet we are at a juncture in our unfolding as a species where we can purposefully evolve our own hearts and minds. We can cultivate mindfulness and self-compassion; we can learn to see past the mask of Unreal Others; we can Recognize and invite forward the gold in our own being and in others.

It helps to know that whatever you practice gets stronger. The more you practice RAIN and call on the four remembrances in daily life, the more familiar you’ll become with openhearted awareness. In time you’ll find that more than any habitual personality covering, this basic goodness feels like the truth of who you are.

Finally, remember that even when our lives seem most lonely, we’re never on this path alone. We can’t and don’t awaken (or suffer) by ourselves. We are inextricably embedded in this web of living beings—always connected, always influencing each other, needing each other to mirror our goodness and remind us of our inherent potential.

As we close, I invite you to imagine a world where we humans see and trust and revere the gold within all beings. Imagine how we’d help each other live true to ourselves, how we’d comfort and accompany each other, how we’d celebrate and create beauty together, how we’d awaken together and bring our collective care to our earth and to all beings everywhere.

We sow the seeds of radical compassion when we pause and say yes to what’s here, when we turn toward love and rest in awareness. This cultivates the presence that guides us in living from compassion, in living true to our awakened heart.

May we continue to create the world we believe in together and may the blessings of loving awareness extend endlessly in all directions.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tara Brach Radical Acceptance (RA) p. 222

<sup>2</sup> Gunaratana Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness p. 74

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- <sup>3</sup> Nyanaponika Thera [The Four Sublime States: Contemplations on Love, Compassion, Sympathetic Joy and Equanimity](#)
- <sup>4</sup> Tara Brach Radical Compassion (RC): Learning to Love Yourself and Your World with the Practice of RAIN p. xvii
- <sup>5</sup> Brach Radical Compassion (RC) p. 3
- <sup>6</sup> Brach (RC) pp. 9-10
- <sup>7</sup> Brach (RC) p. 14
- <sup>8</sup> Brach (RC) p. 19-20
- <sup>9</sup> Brach (RC) p. 25
- <sup>10</sup> Brach (RC) p. 29-30
- <sup>11</sup> Bhante Gunaratana Eight Mindful Steps to Happiness p. 216
- <sup>12</sup> Kornfield, Jack [Theravada Vipassana Practice](#): Insight meditation is a path of discovery.
- <sup>13</sup> Satipatthana Sutta (the Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness): Frames of Reference translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu <https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN10.html>
- <sup>14</sup> [Gilāna Sutta](#) (SN 46:14 )
- <sup>15</sup> <https://www.whitehallmeditation.org/the-basics-of-mindfulness/#benefits>
- <sup>16</sup> Goldstein, Joseph. Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Awakening (p. 210)
- <sup>17</sup> Strozer, Teah [RAIN](#) Getting started on a spiritual path takes guts.
- <sup>18</sup> Dalai Lama [Consider Yourself a Tourist: Advice from the Dalai Lama on making our lives meaningful and dealing with our mortality.](#)
- <sup>19</sup> Cabane, Olivia Fox The Charisma Myth: How Anyone Can Master the Art and Science of Personal Magnetism pp. 85-86
- <sup>20</sup> Brach, Radical Acceptance (RA) p. 207
- <sup>21</sup> Bayda, Ezra. Being Zen: Bringing Meditation to Life p. 138
- <sup>22</sup> Neff, Kristin Self-Compassion
- <sup>23</sup> Brach (RC) pp 44-45
- <sup>24</sup> Germer, Christopher [Getting Along: Loving the other without losing yourself](#)
- <sup>25</sup> Brach (RC) p. 55
- <sup>26</sup> <https://jackkornfield.com/>
- <sup>27</sup> Adapted from Brach, Tara (RC) p. 68
- <sup>28</sup> The Relaxation of Thoughts [Vitakkasanthāna Sutta](#) (MN 20)
- <sup>29</sup> <https://jackkornfield.com/>
- <sup>30</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/science-choice/201510/5-factors-make-you-feel-shame>
- <sup>31</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/attention>
- <sup>32</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hide-and-seek/201408/the-psychology-embarrassment-shame-and-guilt>
- <sup>33</sup> The Exhortation to Rāhula at Mango Stone [Ambalatthikā Rāhulovāda Sutta](#) (MN 61)
- <sup>34</sup> Brach (RC) p. 78
- <sup>35</sup> [https://www.tarabrach.com/blog-soul-recovery-healing-the-shame-of-trauma/#\\_ftn1](https://www.tarabrach.com/blog-soul-recovery-healing-the-shame-of-trauma/#_ftn1)  
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- <sup>37</sup> Murray, Susan L., Fear and the Front Line May 7, 2020 N Engl J Med 2020; 382:1784-1785
- <sup>38</sup> Brach (RA) p. 166
- <sup>39</sup> <https://tricycle.org/magazine/the-gift-of-fear/>
- <sup>40</sup> Brach (RA) p. 167
- <sup>41</sup> Brach (RC) p. 91
- <sup>42</sup> [http://www.ajahnchah.org/book/In\\_Dead\\_Night\\_1.php](http://www.ajahnchah.org/book/In_Dead_Night_1.php)
- <sup>43</sup> Brach (RC) pp. 106-107
- <sup>44</sup> <https://www.whitehallmeditation.org/buddharx/skillful-effort/>
- <sup>45</sup> Brach RC p. 101
- <sup>46</sup> Brach (RC) pp. 107-111
- <sup>47</sup> [The Terror Within: Fear and anxiety builds up over a lifetime, but we can release our terrors moment by moment](#)
- <sup>48</sup> <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/buddhism-race/>
- <sup>49</sup> Brach (RC) p. 115

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- <sup>50</sup> <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/ayya-khema-lovingkindness/>
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- <sup>52</sup> [https://www.whitehallmeditation.org/satipatthana\\_sutta/ffm18/](https://www.whitehallmeditation.org/satipatthana_sutta/ffm18/)
- <sup>53</sup> Brach (RC) p. 139
- <sup>54</sup> Brach (RC), Tara. pp. 148-149
- <sup>55</sup> Brach (RC) p. 145
- <sup>56</sup> Eliot, T.S. [The Cocktail Party](#)
- <sup>57</sup> Brach (RA) p. 262
- <sup>58</sup> [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the\\_ancient\\_heart\\_of\\_forgiveness](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_ancient_heart_of_forgiveness)
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- <sup>60</sup> [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the\\_ancient\\_heart\\_of\\_forgiveness](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_ancient_heart_of_forgiveness)
- <sup>61</sup> <https://tricycle.org/trikedaily/ezra-bayda-forgiveness/>
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- <sup>63</sup> Brach (RC) p. 153
- <sup>64</sup> Brach (RC) p. 161-163
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- <sup>67</sup> <https://www.compassioninstitute.com/the-program/compassion-cultivation-training/>
- <sup>68</sup> Brach (RC) p. 181
- <sup>69</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/christian-cooper-why-i-am-declining-to-be-involved-in-any-coopers-prosecution/2020/07/14/1ba3a920-c5d4-11ea-b037-f9711f89ee46\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/christian-cooper-why-i-am-declining-to-be-involved-in-any-coopers-prosecution/2020/07/14/1ba3a920-c5d4-11ea-b037-f9711f89ee46_story.html)
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- <sup>73</sup> Brach (RC) p. 197
- <sup>74</sup> Terry, Ruth [Travel is said to increase cultural understanding. Does it?: While researchers say travel does affect the brain's neural pathways, true empathy remains an elusive destination.](#)
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- <sup>76</sup> Brach (RC) p. 215
- <sup>77</sup> Brach (RC) p. 228
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- <sup>79</sup> Goldstein, Joseph. Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Awakening (p. 7)
- <sup>80</sup> An Analysis of the Faculties [Indriya-Vibhaṅga Sutta](#) (SN 48:10)
- <sup>81</sup> [Unknown attribution](#)
- <sup>82</sup> <https://www.vital-smarts.com/crucialskills/2016/10/how-to-avoid-getting-angry/>
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- <sup>84</sup> Brach (RC) p. 235
- <sup>85</sup> Brach (RC) p. 238
- <sup>86</sup> Brach (RC) p. 241
- <sup>87</sup> Brach (RC) p. 243