



Try the RAIN Meditation Method for Self-Compassion to Blossom This Spring

Work toward becoming your own best friend and being truer to yourself. Try RAIN meditation when challenging emotions arise. Meet your doubts and fears with a healing presence, offering the comforting embrace of compassion, much like you would for a dear friend. These four steps can ease the pressure we place on ourselves, so we can unlock more joy in our lives.

R **Recognize what is going on:** Is it that critical inner voice making a judgement? Is it a reaction of fear? Striking anxiety? Notice what it is that you are feeling. Try to label it.

A **Allow the experience to be there, just as it is:** Try your best to allow the rawness and unpleasantness of that feeling, rather than redirecting your attention. Try simply saying, "Yes, I notice the fear," to yourself, etc. It doesn't mean we agree with the thought, emotion or feeling in our bodies, it just means we acknowledge the reality of the experience in that very moment.

I **Investigate with kindness:** Use your natural desire to know the truth to learn more about your experience in that moment. Contact your source of suffering and offer care. Try placing a hand on your heart or cheek and saying a message of care to yourself, such as, "It's alright, sweetheart." You might also try envisioning basking in the warmth of sunshine. Even the smallest gesture can serve you well.

N **Natural awareness, which comes from not identifying with the experience:** This step is what many meditation teachers call the treasure. Simply rest in this liberating state of natural awareness. There is no action for this step.

The quiet, lifelong practice of self-compassion can help us feel more connected to ourselves, and, in turn, others; it frees us from former limiting self-beliefs; and it can help us make wiser choices, all of which lead us closer to optimal wellbeing.

"Feeling Overwhelmed? Try the RAIN Meditation," Tara Brach, [mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org), Feb. 17, 2023.



2024 National Nutrition Month®: Beyond the Plate

Eating is multifaceted and involves much more than we may think about on a daily basis. This year, National Nutrition Month is focusing on Beyond the Plate, to help us not only think about the foods we eat, but also how eating affects our health and environment. This includes how the food choices we make can affect the health of our planet, how the food is grown, where the food is produced and the safety of the food processing and storage.

Check out the list below and guess whether the following statements are fact or myth to test your nutrition knowledge on various aspects of food and our environment.

1. Our bodies cannot digest dietary fiber.

FACT: Although fiber is important for our health, such as improving cholesterol levels and lowering the risk of chronic diseases, our bodies do not digest dietary fiber.

2. All breads made with whole-wheat flour are whole grains.

MYTH: For a bread product to be considered whole-grain, “whole-wheat” or another whole grain must be listed first or second after water.

3. Cutting down on food waste helps our environment.

FACT: When food is wasted, we are also wasting the energy, land, water and fertilizer used to produce and transport the food. Leftover food also contributes to additional methane and carbon dioxide (think: our carbon footprint) released into our environment.

4. Foods that provide water can count toward our daily fluid intake.

FACT: Foods with high water content, such as watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberries and oranges, can count toward our daily fluid intake. However, be sure to still drink adequate amounts of water.

5. All milk is tested for antibiotics prior to being sold to consumers.

FACT: Samples from each milk tanker are tested prior to being sold to consumers. If milk is found to contain antibiotics, the entire tank must be discarded.

6. Fresh fruits and vegetables are healthier than frozen or canned.

MYTH: Frozen produce options are just as nutritious as fresh varieties, and some canned veggies, such as tomatoes, are more nutritious than fresh since the processing of canned tomatoes allows the antioxidant, lycopene, to be absorbed more readily.

7. Sugars in fresh fruit and milk are the same as sugars in sweets.

MYTH: The sugars found in fresh fruit (fructose) and milk (lactose) are natural sugars common in nutritious foods, whereas the sugars found in sweets are added sugars. Too much added sugar in our diet may increase our risk for chronic illness.

8. Hormones are allowed to be used in the raising of chickens.

MYTH: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration prohibits the use of any steroid hormones for growth purposes in poultry.

“Beyond the Plate,” eatright.org, accessed Feb. 19, 2024.

“Nutrition: Fact vs. Fiction,” eatright.org, accessed Feb. 20, 2024.

“The Truth About: Milk and Antibiotics,” health.state.mn.us/diseases/antibioticresistance/animal/truthmilk.pdf, accessed Feb. 20, 2024.

“Chicken from Farm to Table,” fsis.usda.gov, accessed Feb. 20, 2024.



Fresh Spring Pasta Primavera

Prep Time: 20 minutes • Cook Time: 20 minutes
Total Time: 40 minutes • Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 2 cups whole-grain penne pasta
- 1/2 cup sliced onion
- 1/2 cup julienned green or sweet red pepper
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup sliced zucchini
- 1/2 cup sliced yellow summer squash
- 2 medium fresh mushrooms, sliced
- 3/4 cup stewed tomatoes
- 1 cup fresh basil leaves
- Shredded Parmesan cheese, for serving (optional)

Instructions

1. Lightly salt water in a large pot and bring to a boil. Add penne and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 11 minutes, until tender yet firm to bite.
2. Meanwhile, heat oil in an extra-large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion and green pepper and sauté until crisp-tender. Add zucchini, yellow squash and mushrooms; sauté for 1 minute. Add tomatoes and basil. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat. Cover and simmer for about 8-10 minutes, or until vegetables are tender.
3. Drain penne. Toss with vegetables, sprinkle with cheese if desired, and serve!

Calories per serving: 296
Total fat: 6 g
Saturated fat: 1 g
Sodium: 170 mg
Total Carbohydrate: 53 g
Dietary fiber: 5 g
Sugar: 10 g
Protein: 9 g

Recipe adapted from: tasteofhome.com

