



Pay close attention to your triggers – they reveal your REAL and PERCEIVED threats. It's the PERCEIVED threats we need to catch and see - the little gremlins that run havoc on our lives as we REACT to them irrationally. They SEEM so real and valid, until you mindfully bring them to light.

IDENTIFYING TRIGGERS

Triggers ignite emotional surges through your system, such as heightened emotions, anxiety, panic, anger, jealousy, self-berating, envy, resentment, etc. Triggers are personal. Different things trigger different people. Triggers are windows into your subconscious programming. Your reactions, choices, and many aspects of your life are feeding off of this programming, and taking direction from it. Identifying triggers is work. The work is worth it, as freeing yourself from the shackles of triggers, allows for clear, ideal RESPONSES rather than automatic, irrational REACTIONS.

WHERE DO TRIGGERS COME FROM?

Your subconscious programming is part nature (genetics) and part nurture (early childhood experiences, family dynamic, mini-traumas, big traumas, experiences in school, relationships, etc). Your collections of experiences, both good and bad are stored in your memory. Some of these memories are not very accessible, as they become stored deep in your subconscious. Yet they certainly impact your beliefs, thoughts, emotions, reactions, and more!

Most of this **programming is beneficial** and wonderful. For example, what is safe or not, social norms, language, a sense of belonging, etc. While **other programming is not so good**. For example, labels like "average," "perfect," "skinny," "fat," "ugly," "powerless," "too emotional," "weak," "weird," "reject," "not enough," "hyper," "slow," "defiant," "not normal," "misfit," etc., end up **deeply "repressed" under maladaptive protective strategies**.

Strong emotional experiences trigger the release of neurotransmitters and hormones, which strengthen memory. The stronger the emotions during life experiences, the stronger the memories are ingrained. When we are stressed or triggered, neurotransmitters kick into high gear, recalling previous stressful events. Your REACTION to the current situation is compounded as your mind and body can become flooded with emotions, hormones, and nerve impulses that may be over-charged for your current experience. When this occurs, your higher cortex and rationality shut-down, making it even more difficult, if not impossible, to think clearly and react rationally without calming first.

**EMOTIONAL
TRIGGERS ARE
HAPPENING FOR US,
NOT TO US.
TRIGGERS ARE GIFTS.**

As you go through life, your **programming continues** to develop and 'upload' more and more data from your experiences. **The less aware (mindful) you are, the more you unconsciously absorb fears, labels, beliefs, and form maladaptive protective strategies. All of which result in 'triggers,' due to emotional wounds.** Thus, triggers offer rich insight and opportunities to transform old programming.

IDENTIFY THE FIRST STEP IS AWARENESS & IDENTIFYING

Working with triggers requires awareness of how you are feeling in the moment.

THESE ARE COMMON TRIGGERS. IDENTIFY WHAT MAY BE TRUE FOR YOU AND ADD TO THIS LIST AS YOU IDENTIFY MORE.

Someone acting guarded, quiet, or closed-off towards me (as if they don't trust me)

Painful emotions: anxious, disheartened, deep sadness, disappointment, _____, _____

Someone leaving sooner than expected (or not parting in expected way)

Feeling trapped or not in control (in a situation, such as a work meeting, or place, such as in an airplane)

Being alone

Feeling discounted or ignored (whether real or perceived)

Someone not understanding me, or not listening to me enough to understand my point or how I feel

Someone being unavailable to me (such as not texting or calling me back right way)

Someone giving me a disapproving look

Seeing someone 'better' than me: better looking, smarter, more successful, _____, _____

Someone disappointing me or detecting disrespect (being late, forgetting something important to me, etc.)

Someone not appearing to be happy to see me

Being relied on too much, or feeling trapped in a situation or obligation

Someone (or a group of people) judging me (whether perceived or factual)

Feeling overwhelmed with way too much work, or expectations going on

Feeling pressured to say "yes" to an event, plans, helping someone, etc. when I really want to say "no"

Feeling left-out or like I don't belong (whether perceived or factual)

Messes, clutter, or feeling disorganized

Feeling cornered (as if I need to make a huge decision way too fast)

Someone trying to control me, change me or "smother" me with their needs

Making a mistake, failing, or not living up to my expectations of myself

Seems specific people or personality types trigger me more than anything

Feeling like my significant other is looking at or talking to someone else

Helping others but not receiving a thank you or appreciation in return

Feeling forced to small talk or interact with people I hardly know

IDENTIFY YOUR COMMON REACTIONS TO TRIGGERS

IDENTIFY WHAT REACTION PATTERNS MAY BE TRUE FOR YOU AND ADD TO THIS LIST AS YOU IDENTIFY MORE. BE HONEST.

- I comply and become a people-pleaser (say or do anything to make things feel ok) ⁴
 - I tend to 'freeze-up' or shut-down (and later I may try to ignore what happened) ³
 - I tend to get mad at myself... and criticize myself in my mind ^{1/4}
 - I have lashed out with anger at least once in the last year (yelled, name-called, fought, etc.) ²
 - I tend to flee or leave right away (even though I'm not being yelled at or in any real danger) ¹
 - I have had extreme anxiety and/or panic attacks ¹
 - I withdraw from the person that triggered me... I can be cold and silent towards them for days ³
 - I prefer to gain a sense of peace back by checking my partner's phone, investigating, interrogating, or demanding ²
 - I turn to food, alcohol or another substance to try to feel better ¹
 - I need reassurance right away that everything is ok (multiple texts, calls, or visits to get relief) ⁴
 - I turn to shopping, gaming, or another behavior or process to distract me ¹
 - Sometimes I ruminate, analyze, and can't stop thinking and/or talking about what happened ¹
 - I say 'yes' to avoid conflict or guilt, but sometimes I end up resenting myself or others ⁴
 - I prefer to retreat from everyone for awhile so I can recall all the times I have been letdown ³
 - Now that I think about, I have no idea how I react when I'm triggered ³
 - I've been known to 'act-out' by lying, cheating, or leaving my partner, only to come back later to make amends ²
 - I tend to make assumptions or 'mind-read' and react based on this, instead of asking questions and getting clarity ⁴
 - I tend to feel like I hit a wall and shut-down; I can end up procrastinating or failing to get things done ³
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IDENTIFY YOUR ABILITIES TO RESPOND (RATHER THAN REACT) TO TRIGGERS

Responding rather than reacting requires a PAUSE – a layer of observation, space, mindfulness, whatever you want to call it – to notice your thoughts, feel your emotions, reflect and allow for calm rationale. This can make all the difference in strengthening or breaking a relationship, and feeling good about yourself or having major regrets.

- I pause to feel and accept my emotions, and allow for calm Wise Mind before taking action (even if it takes days)
- I thoughtfully explore possible outcomes in my mind before saying a word (even if it takes days to do this)
- I weigh the pros and cons and consider what would be best for myself and others in the situation
- I do not force myself to do something I am terrified of, not ready for, or truly do not want to do. I say 'No.'
- I observe my inner dialogue and thoughts, so I may identify real threats versus perceived threats
- I distance myself from the experience to watch how my MIND/BODY is reacting WITHOUT outwardly reacting
- If someone is yelling at me, being rude, or mistreating me in any way, I allow myself to LEAVE right away
- I give myself permission to feel my feelings and understand how I can guide myself to feel better with self-care
- If lonely, I realize it's a clear and natural sign that I need to explore ways to fulfill my purpose or connect with others
- I utilize specific practices to guide myself through triggers, such as 'Containment' practices and **P. L. A. C. E.**

DAILY TRIGGERS AND BUILDING MINDFULNESS

List triggers and how you REACTED or, if you were able to calm and RESPOND (may involve choosing ideal action or not taking any action) based on your highest good. Practice experiencing, honoring emotions, mindful acceptance, and practice respond ideally, instead of reacting. This takes practice.

LIST ONE TRIGGER PER DAY OR IDENTIFY MANY TRIGGERS IN ONE DAY. IT IS UP TO YOU.

I felt triggered when this occurred: _____

These people were involved: _____

I felt the following emotions: _____

I REACTED by _____ I RESPONDED ideally by _____

I felt triggered when this occurred: _____

These people were involved: _____

I felt the following emotions: _____

I REACTED by _____ I RESPONDED ideally by _____

I felt triggered when this occurred: _____

These people were involved: _____

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These people were involved: _____

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I REACTED by _____ I RESPONDED ideally by _____

I felt triggered when this occurred: _____

These people were involved: _____

I felt the following emotions: _____

I REACTED by _____ I RESPONDED ideally by _____