

P. L. A. C. E. YOUR TRIGGER IN AWARENESS: STEP-BY-STEP PRACTICE FOR WORKING WITH TRIGGERS

P: PAUSE

As soon as you notice you're triggered, take a breath. For example, let's say you get cut off on the highway. Before you spin into road rage and get bent out of shape, as soon as you notice your energy shift, take a deep breath.

L: LABEL & LOCATE YOUR EMOTIONS

What are you feeling? Is it frustration, helpless, or something else? In the example of getting cut off on the highway, are you angry? Anxious? Label your emotions and identify the locations of them in your body. Your chest, heart, neck, gut?

This Emotion is: _____ I feel it mostly in my: _____

A: APPRECIATE & ASK YOUR EMOTIONS WHY

Appreciate and honor your anger, fear, anxiety, pain, etc., as it is just trying to protect you. What actually triggered you? The event itself, or is it related to a previous judgment or a common trigger? Allow for AWARENESS. The emotion is likely tied to something below the surface of the actual event. Something from the past, fears, or your feelings of self-worth.

What has been or may be violated? _____ (values, safety, boundaries, sense of self, etc.)

What do I value most in this experience? _____ (safety, respect, fitting in, my values, my worth, etc.)

Accept, honor and allow your emotion to process naturally. Anger, for example, will burn through if you truly honor it and allow it to be. There is no need to react with anger unless you are in REAL danger. Compassionately guide your emotions and reactions, instead of letting your emotions control you. Learn more with Empowering Emotions practices.

C: CHOOSE A WISE AND WELL-TIMED RESPONSE

This is where the magic happens in the process. Take the imperative pause and consider...

Is this too big to work through in the moment? Do I need to place into a "Container" and revisit it later on? _____

What matters most in this situation? _____

How can I RESPOND in alignment with my values and who I truly am (we are not our triggers)? _____

How can I respond in a productive way – a way that will move me closer to my goals in life? _____

When is the best time communicate and resolve this issue (if an issue needs to be resolved)? _____

This may take, **seconds, hours, or even days** depending on the situation at hand. In our example, the most important thing is drive safe, and the best way to respond is likely to remain collected and attentive for the drive.

E: EMPOWER YOURSELF

Empower yourself by providing yourself with a *simple comfort* or *reward* for handling your trigger in balanced way. Feel the accomplishment. Continue to empower yourself to explore and guide your triggers in a healthier, more rewarding outcome for everyone involved. You are building a self-reflective capacity – strengthening a muscle (neuroplasticity) within yourself to respond with purpose, rationality, compassion and in alignment with your values.

This is not easy and it takes practice. It's impossible to be unreactive 100% of the time! The goal is to decrease reactivity (unless you are literally in real danger), and recover your balanced, centeredness more quickly. The faster you can acknowledge when you're triggered, the faster you'll be able to calm your nervous system, and get back on track.

"Neurons that fire together, wire together." - Rick Hanson

In other words, the more you can practice being calm and respond mindfully, the better at it you become. Learning to respond versus react is a continual process that gets easier over time.

REFLECTING ON TRIGGERS AND REACTIONS

Remember, the goal isn't to be calm 24/7 or to get rid of your triggers. That is impossible. Nor would that even be ideal because there are REAL threats in life that we need to react to ASAP. Triggers also show you who and what is important to you and worth protecting, including your safety and values.

The goal is about being aware and accepting of your triggers, emotions, thoughts, patterns, and impulsive reactions — and learning to be so incredibly in tune with your SELF that you can quite literally walk yourself through any given scenario with grace and chose ideal responses that you will feel proud of.

How may identifying your triggers be useful for you?

How do you see being mindful of your programming, false beliefs, thoughts, and maladaptive protective strategies that trigger reactions benefit you?

How do you plan on “catching” your triggers in the moment (mindfulness and awareness) so you learn to feel into your emotions and perhaps find a sense of CALM before RESPONDING RATIONALLY, rather than REACT with old patterns?

For the final step, **E: EMPOWER YOURSELF**, create a list of the simple comforts or rewards you will provide yourself with every time you respond ideally to a trigger. If you want to see positive change in your life, rewarding new behavior is your power. This is an imperative step in the process of learning to respond, rather than react to triggers.

Do you trust yourself to keep your triggers list updated, daily, for at least ONE WEEK to build self-awareness? What might get in your way of this goal? How can you make sure you do this for at least a week?

When we are stressed out and not present, we are caught up in reactivity. It becomes more difficult to choose our response. We get stuck in what's happening externally and lose the boundary of our inner landscape. When you are mindfully present, you have access to *the space and time between the trigger and the response*. You will learn more about emotions, mindfulness, and practices that will allow you to work with your triggers and allow for rational responses, rather than triggered reactivity. What skills and strengths do you feel you have already that will help you as you build upon your emotional health skills?

"Between stimulus and response, there is a space. And in that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom." - Viktor Frankl