

TRIGGERS & TRAUMA REMINDERS

Why something small can suddenly feel really big.

A trigger is a reminder that tells the nervous system, 'this may not be safe.'

People
Heal
in
Connection
♥

1 What is a trigger?

A trigger can be a sound, smell, place, tone of voice, date, body sensation, conflict, or situation that reminds the brain and body of something distressing.

Triggers are not always logical. Even something small can set off a big response because it is linked to a past experience.



It's not
just what
happened...
but what it
reminds you of.

Your
reactions make
sense when you
understand
their roots.

2 What might it feel like?

Triggers can show up in many ways. You might notice:



Body

Heart racing,
tension, nausea,
headaches,
feeling shaky,
blanking out.



Thoughts

Racing thoughts,
worst-case thinking,
feeling confused,
trouble focusing,
self-critical thoughts.



Emotions

Fear, anxiety,
anger, sadness,
shame, guilt,
irritability,
feeling overwhelmed.



Behaviours

Withdrawing,
overreacting,
feeling on edge,
wanting to escape,
people pleasing,
or shutting down.

Being triggered
does not mean you are
failing. It means your
nervous system is
trying to protect you.

3 Why does this happen?

The brain links reminders with danger. The nervous system reacts before the thinking brain fully catches up.

Your body may respond as if the past is happening again, even when you know you are in the present.



Your brain
is trying to
keep you safe
— even if the
danger isn't
here now.

4 Common triggers

Triggers can look different for everyone. Examples include:



Smells

Certain scents
can bring back
strong memories.



Music

Songs or
sounds linked
to the past.



Sounds

Loud noises,
yelling, or
sudden sounds.



Crowded spaces

Feeling crowded
or a loss of
personal space.



Medical settings

Hospitals, clinics,
or medical
procedures.



Touch

Unexpected or
unwanted touch,
or certain types
of touch.



Arguments

Conflict,
raised voices,
or tension.



Criticism

Feeling judged,
blamed, or
rejected.



Anniversaries

Dates, holidays,
or reminders
of past events.



Tiredness

Exhaustion can
lower your
threshold.



Feeling trapped

Situations where
you feel unable
to leave.



Certain body sensations

Pain, tension,
or physical feelings
that remind you
of the past.

5 What can help in the moment?

These strategies can help you feel safer and more grounded:



Notice it

Pause and notice
what you're
experiencing.



Name it

You might say,
"This is a trigger."



Orient to the room

Look around and
name things you see
in the present.



Remind yourself of the present

Notice the date,
where you are,
and that you are safe now.



Use your senses

Name 5 things you see,
4 you can touch, 3 you hear,
2 you smell, 1 you taste.



Slow the exhale

Breathe in slowly,
and breathe out
longer than the in-breath
(e.g., 4 in, 6 out).



Step away when possible

Give yourself space
if you can.



Reach out for support

Contact a trusted
person or professional.



Reduce self-judgment

Be kind to yourself.
It's a protective response,
not a personal failure.

Gentle next step:

- 1 Learn your patterns
- 2 Create a support plan
- 3 Practice regulation with compassion

Kind
Brave
Capable
You Got This
♥