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Summary

When someone is triggered it means that they are having a strong / intense reaction to a current situation that reminds them, often unconsciously, of a painful experience from their past.

Many people are unaware where their reactions come from or why they were triggered!

Many people don’t CHOOSE a response, they REACT to whatever life situation unfolds in front of them.

When we overreact to a person or event it is common for us to blame the situation or person.

Our mental response masks the truth behind the trigger, that our reaction is entirely caused by our own beliefs, thoughts, or judgements of the person or situation.

Our beliefs, thoughts and judgements are formed based on our direct experience or our subconscious conditioning.

Sometimes emotional triggers can lead to positive behaviours, but more commonly emotional triggers lie behind some of our worst behaviour and unconscious reactions.

If we are unaware of our emotional triggers, our negative reactions and behaviours can seem automatic and out of our control, it may seem as if they are happening to us. In truth however we can choose our response to most situations in our lives. This is ***response – ability.***

# TRIGGERS

When someone is triggered it means that they are having a strong / intense reaction to a current situation that reminds them, often unconsciously, of a painful experience from their past. The reaction invoked by a trigger is always ‘over the top’ whether it is expressed outwardly or not.

Many people are unaware where their reactions come from. Many of us are stuck in reactive patterns not realising that we have the power to choose our reactions to the external situations or internal emotions and feelings, we experience in our lives. Many people don’t CHOOSE a response, they REACT to whatever life situation unfolds in front of them.

When we are triggered and overreact to a person or event it is common for us to blame the situation or person and our minds will spruik an array of stories as to why what we feel is justifiable, even acceptable. We will have conversations with ourselves and even argue with the voice inside our head adding to the story or situation or distorting the facts. We defend ourselves; we may defend the other also. We may berate and shame our own behaviour and go silent. Some outwardly express their trigger by raising their voice, or expressing themselves physically (throwing an object, slamming a door). Some of the examples below may sound familiar.

‘That is unreasonable. I can’t work back late again! Ask someone else you lazy prick. Why is it always me? Am I the only person in this office?’

‘That behaviour is so disrespectful. I cannot put up with that! That is ridiculous, what am I, a doormat?’

‘Nooooo. Please don’t say that to her. She is just a child for goodness sake. That is going to end up with me and then I’m going to have to fix this issue. I can’t believe you would say that. What is wrong with you? Fuck!’

Our mental response, whether expressed internally and/or externally, masks the truth behind the trigger, that our reaction is entirely caused by our own beliefs, thoughts, or judgements of the person or situation.

# What causes the intense emotional reactions to a trigger?

When we are triggered our reactions are almost always based on our direct experience or our subconscious conditioning. If we have had a similar experience in the past, we may react to the trigger by drawing on our past experience and will avoid any potential pain in the present situation. In most instances however it is our beliefs, thoughts or judgements that have been formed through our conditioning that influence or even govern our reactions, responses, and behaviour. Our conditioning is made up of what we were told or how we felt as a child, what we learned in school, what society and community dictates, what social media has influenced, what the news tells us about a situation and many other collective, familial, and cultural influences and archetypes.

When a situation occurs in our life, our mind immediately makes a judgement and a thought according to our subconscious conditioning. This thought will in turn trigger an emotional response. Our reactions arise from the emotions we are feeling. The situation itself is, neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. We are the ones that give a situation meaning and we do this from our conditioned mind.

Sometimes emotional triggers can lead to positive behaviours, but more commonly emotional triggers lie behind some of our worst behaviour and unconscious reactions.

If we are unaware of our emotional triggers, our negative reactions and behaviours can seem automatic and out of our control, it may seem as if they are happening to us. Additionally, if we are unaware that we have an ability to choose our response (response + ability = responsibility) we generally live our lives in accordance with our collective, cultural conditioning, and as such we are not actually living our true life and we never experience our true power.

# How can I become aware of my triggers and what can I do to change them?

Fortunately, as we become aware of our triggers and start to observe them, you become to realise that you have the opportunity and power to choose your response as opposed to operating on autopilot and reacting. It is in the understanding that our minds are conditioned and then consciously challenging these automatic judgements and mental stories, that we can begin to see and accept life as it is. We can create space in the moment, put the brakes on our reactions and start to consciously choose our response. In ‘doing the work on your triggers’ you can consciously question and assess your beliefs and challenge and update them which is often necessary to align them with your true self. With practice you can rewire your subconscious mental and emotional responses to triggers based on an accurate and empowered set of your personal beliefs.

# Doing the work on Triggers.

At Present WAY Coaching we recommend several strategies for self-inquiry specifically for emotional triggers. Steps 1 – 5 below outline our strategy and tools to face, own and solve each of your triggers.

## Step 1. Shift Your Perspective and Own Your Triggers.

We are all human and all of us have triggers, this does not make you a bad person. Triggers are painful and our reactions are like a habit that has formed over time to attempt to shut the situation down and control it to prevent pain. Instead of labelling the trigger as good or bad begin to ask yourself whether they are useful or not. Challenge yourself to shift your perspective to seeing that each and every trigger is an OPPORTUNITY and an INVITATION to go inwards, to face the trigger, to take ownership of it, to heal the wound or update the inaccurate belief and to finally solve the trigger so that you are no longer beholden to it. Understand that this trigger will continue to ‘replay’ in your life in various forms and in a range of situations if you choose to ignore or disown it (i.e., cast judgement, blame the other, react negatively, push it down inside yourself, cry and get over it but do nothing about healing it). It’s important to realise that you don’t have to like the reality of your situation, but you do need to accept that this is your reality in this moment. Resisting it through your automatic reactions will only keep you stuck in a pattern you’ve played out many times before and you’ll only get the results you’ve always got.

Own your trigger. Each time you are triggered, challenge yourself to see that this is your trigger. Nothing anyone else did or said, didn’t do or say can cause you to feel or react in any particular way. It is entirely what you think and feel about the situation and the meaning you have given it, that caused the trigger within you. No-one can affect your internal state, only you have the power to do this.

## Step 2. Inside the Trigger Drop Your Resistance.

When you are triggered, you will feel discomfort and an unpleasant energy that can oftentimes feel extreme. This is the feeling and pain we are subconsciously trying to avoid through our reactions. In this moment see that you have been triggered and intentionally drop your resistance, take a breath, know that there are a set of beliefs that lie within you that you need to understand and resolve in order for you to move forward. Take another breath and do your best to let go of the picture in your mind of how things are supposed to be. Take another conscious breath and if you are able to try and reframe the situation in your mind.

Using the triggers described on page 1 a reframe might sound like: “I can see why my boss always appears to ask me to stay back late since I’ve been available many times before. However, it is up to me to choose whether or not I change my plans and agree to it.”

“There is a reason that person behaves the way they do. I wonder what has happened to them in their life to create the behaviours I am observing.”

“What has been said is what has been said and there is nothing I can do about it. However, I can choose to be the leader here and offered a well thought out different point of view. I can choose thins now or perhaps later when I have some one-on-one time with my child.”

If necessary, a further step to take in order to create space is to remove yourself from the situation and continue to breathe and relax as best you can.

Whatever your initial response is, watch your thoughts and know they are just a subconscious program / set of thoughts and are not necessarily the truth. Use mantras such as “I am ok”, “I can handle this”, “I am taking my time to choose my response”, “This too shall pass”, and a personal favouraite, “I am more than what bothers me”.

Finally, start a ‘Trigger List’ in a journal or diary. Write the trigger down so that when you are able to you can begin the self-inquiry process. Now is often not the best time to try and resolve the trigger since the emotions and energy that has been enacted inside the body is highly aroused and often in the lower levels on the Emotional Guidance Scale[[1]](#footnote-1). Know that any action you take to address the trigger while you are in a triggered state may trigger the other and will result in an undesirable outcome.

## Step 3. Outside the Trigger Seek The Wisdom Within.

After some time has passed and you are at rest, calm and peaceful and your emotional and energetic state is at least at a neutral level, now is the time to address your trigger. If you do nothing to solve your trigger, it will reappear in your life, until you take ownership and move to resolve it.

“In order to move on, you must understand why you felt what you did and why you no longer need to feel it.” ~Mitch Albom

Present WAY Coaching practice three tools to address triggers, use the one which resonates with you the most. If you are struggling to solve a trigger with one method move on to the second and third. You will get different insights from using all three. The tools are called The Golden Thread Method, Light up Your Shadow and Challenge the Fear. They are described on Page 5.

1. Accurately identify the trigger.
2. Accurately identify what is false about both the trigger and the underlying beliefs and meaning you have assigned to the trigger.
3. Find the truth about the situation. You will know the truth when you can see where you went wrong and whilst you may feel bad you also feel a sense of release.
4. Replace the false belief/s with the truth in your blueprint so you can live from this place.

## Step 4. Seek help.

Reach out to trusted community (Present WAY Coaching Facebook Group), friends and family and ask them for assistance or guidance. Have they been through something like this before? One word of warning here is to be aware of who it is you are asking and understand always that this is their perspective, it may not resonate or be true or useful for you.

Guided meditations may help you uncover or see an issue from another perspective and help you to move through your trigger and heal. There are so many available on YouTube etc.

Work with a Coach to deeply investigate and heal emotional triggers. You are not meant to be able to solve your trigger yourself! For deep triggers we need assistance and this is because the issue is in your blueprint and it is very difficult to find a solution because you are in your blueprint and your mind can only ‘think’ within your blueprint!

Working with a Coach will help you to understand how the mind works, how we have become conditioned and formed our blueprint and how to guide you into your true self to help you uncover who it is you truly are in the present. This is where all your power lies. A great Coach knows you have all the answers within you and will guide you to uncover your truth and power so that you are able to truly rewire your conditioning and blueprint to empower you to live your highest and most authentic life.

## Step 5. Stay the course.

It takes time to solve and heal our triggers and it takes time to rewire our automatic responses and teach our nervous system how to remain calm and create space within the moment. All change and development happen on a spectrum. As you heal one trigger you may find you are bombarded with triggers! This is often the case however stay the course and understand there is a lesson in each and every one of your triggers, they are your best friends as they have so much to teach you and are an insight into our deepest fears, limiting beliefs and blueprint. This is a journey that takes courage and ultimately commitment.

Golden Thread Method

This is a beautifully simple method however it can take patience and practice to master. The Golden Thread Method is a great tool to use either inside the trigger when you are in the thick of your emotional reaction or outside the trigger in reflection.

In your journal start by writing ‘I was triggered when … [describe the situation, what was said, how you felt and how you responded].

Next ask yourself ‘Why did I feel this way?’ and write down your answer.

In response to this answer, again ask yourself ‘Why did I feel this way?’ and write down your answer.

Don’t edit your responses just keep writing from the stream of consciousness as this will best uncover what lies below the trigger. Keep asking yourself why until you reach a point where you feel you have finally come below the ‘noise’ and you feel an a-ha or some peace, sometimes a smile will appear on your face or you’ll feel a sense of relief and release. Here is the false belief below your trigger. Here is the reason why you are reacting the way you are.

Now that you can see it, it is time to challenge it and to solve it by replacing the false belief with an updated accurate and true belief that serves you in the present moment.

Light Up Your Shadow Method

This method you can either think through or again use your journal to write out your responses. Don’t underestimate the power of writing/journaling but if this modality doesn’t resonate then go through a thought process.

When thinking about the situation and what exactly triggered you, think of at least 3 times when you could have been perceived as acting out that same behaviour/trait or an expression of it. If you cannot think of one, then ask yourself what it would take for me to do it and what must I believe to do that.

Think of 20 positive things about that trait or behaviour that serves you or that serves humanity.

Everything that happens in our lives has an equal balance of negative and positive outcomes. Once you see enough positives around the situation/behaviour/trait, it won’t trigger you anymore.

Challenge the Fear Method

This method is designed to help you uncover the fears, thoughts, meanings and ultimately the beliefs you have that have caused the trigger.

In your journal ask the following three questions.

What is it I am afraid will happen if this continues?

What am I afraid of being blocked from or not getting?

What meaning am I giving to the situation? What is the chatter in my head telling me about this that is making me unhappy about it?

An Alternate Reality

With the insights you have gleaned from the methods above now you can update your mental model, rewrite your beliefs and ultimately begin the process of rewiring your brain and reactions.

What are two alternative beliefs you can replace the limited belief, fear, meanings, thoughts or story with that are better, possible and believable. View these alternate realities as an adventure and go ahead and choose your responses to the situation now and what behaviours you want to enact.

[Understanding and managing your emotional triggers: Live your true story](https://www.liveyourtruestory.com/understanding-and-managing-your-emotional-triggers-communication/)

‘Everything happens for a reason and a purpose and it serves you.’ ~Tony Robbins

1. See Abraham Hicks Emotional Guidance Scale in ‘***Ask and It is Given’.*** [↑](#footnote-ref-1)