

Identifying Your Trauma Triggers

Trauma triggers refer to specific people, places, or other stimuli that remind you of past traumatic experiences. Some triggers will be readily apparent to you, but others may be very subtle and difficult to identify. **Getting to know your triggers will help you to avoid them and learn to cope with them in healthy ways.**

You may already know some of your triggers. List them below:

Sounds

Sights

Smells

Emotions

Locations

Situations



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Tracking a specific trigger allows you to become more aware of the patterns surrounding it, giving you insight into what sets off the reaction, why it feels overwhelming, and how it affects you. With this information, you can start to practice coping strategies that directly address the specific elements of the trigger. To get started, think of a recent experience where you felt triggered, and map out the details of that situation to gain more clarity on its impact and meaning.

1

What was the situation?

Describe the setting, including where you were, who was there, and what was happening.

2

What emotions came up when you felt triggered?

Identify specific feelings, such as fear, anger, sadness, or shame.

3

What thoughts ran through your mind when the trigger occurred?

Note any specific thoughts, beliefs, or memories that surfaced in that moment.

4

How did your body respond physically?

Describe any physical reactions, such as a racing heart, muscle tension, sweating, or feeling cold or hot.

5

Were there people, sounds, smells, or sights involved that seemed to make the reaction stronger?

Look for specific sensory details that may have amplified the trigger.



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Looking for patterns in trauma triggers is helpful because it allows you to better understand what situations, people, or feelings tend to bring up past distress. By identifying these patterns, you can feel less overwhelmed by triggers when they arise, as you'll begin to anticipate and prepare for them.

Are there specific people, places, or environments that frequently make you feel distressed?

Do you notice any particular memories that often come up in these moments?

What thoughts go through your mind when you feel triggered?

Are there any early warning signs or cues that help you recognize when you're being triggered?



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To work through a trigger, it's essential to remind our body that we're not in danger, helping it to return to a state of calm. By grounding ourselves in the present and assuring our body of safety, we can start to rewire our response to triggers, gradually reducing their intensity and reclaiming control over how we feel and react.

How can you remind yourself that you are safe when you're experiencing a trigger?

Examples of Coping Strategies

To learn more about coping skills you can use, scan the QR code below.

- Take some deep breaths. Try to inhale through your nose for a count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 7, and then exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of 8. Repeat 5 times.
- Ground yourself with the 5-4-3-2-1 method. Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- Picture a safe place in your mind—a place where you feel calm and at ease. Visualize yourself there and focus on the details of this safe space.
- Carry an item like a small stone, piece of fabric, or bracelet that helps calm you when you touch or look at it, reminding you of comfort and stability.

- Do something that occupies your mind, like counting backward, drawing, playing a game, or listening to music. This can help shift your focus away from the trigger and provide a distraction.
- Gradually tense and then relax different muscle groups in your body, from head to toe, to release physical tension and promote relaxation.
- Remind yourself that you are safe and that the trigger is only a reminder of the past, not a current threat. Repeat positive affirmations like, "I am safe," or, "This will pass."
- If possible, go to a place where you feel comfortable and secure. Sometimes a change in environment can help you regain a sense of control.



Scan or [click here](#) to learn more about managing trauma triggers.



Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



300+
Companies Reviewed



2,350+
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,150+
Data Points Analyzed



[Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

[Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



[Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

[Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.

