

# Tracking Triggers

*Create awareness and take control  
of your healing.*

# What are triggers?

"Triggers are like little psychic explosions that crash through avoidance and bring the dissociated, avoided trauma suddenly, unexpectedly, back into consciousness." — Carolyn Spring

## We are constantly being triggered.

All day, every day. We are always responding to environmental cues around us, often without even realizing. But when we talk about being "triggered," we're usually referring to a negative emotional response caused by something in our environment. Triggers will result in bodily sensations, thoughts, and often a change in behavior.

Because there are so many shades of grey, I like to break triggers down into two separate types. They are two poles on a spectrum that help me understand what a person who is "triggered" may be experiencing. I hope they help you too.

**1. "Emotional" Triggers:** Stimuli that cause us to feel a strong emotional response. Emotional triggers are usually due to past experiences that may have been uncomfortable or had a negative impact, but weren't always traumatic. In this case, the experience of feeling triggered is usually limited to a strong or uncomfortable emotional reaction.

**2. "Trauma" Triggers:** A reminder of a past trauma that can cause a person to feel overwhelming emotion. It may also cause someone to have flashbacks or a vivid, often negative memory that may appear without warning. It can cause them to lose track of their surroundings and "relive" a traumatic event. This is a much more extreme and intense version of feeling triggered and the individual may have difficulty coming out of this state. People who have experienced traumatic events in the past or have been diagnosed with PTSD are more prone to this type of reaction.

Because we use this word so casually, it can be hard to understand exactly what someone means when they are triggered. But I think we can agree, having an emotional response to something you don't like is very different from experiencing a true PTSD response. There are many shades of grey between the two.

# Awareness is the foundation of healing.

*Use this worksheet to help track your reactions.*

What happened?

Date:

Time:

What sensations did you experience in your body?

What thoughts did you have?

What did you do?

Has this happened before? If yes, what was different or similar?

What can you do differently or the same next time this happens?