



Trigger Processing Procedure

This exercise is designed to develop awareness of your emotions and feelings, and their connection to your thoughts.

If at any time this exercise becomes too emotionally intense, stop! Do not work on that particular trigger alone.

Make a list of events or things that anger or upset you, and start with the least challenging one. Or, begin with a triggering situation that is currently on your mind, such as someone being upset with you.

After you've selected the trigger you want to work on, take several slow, deep breaths to ground, relax and center yourself in the present. Start the process only when you are calm. With your eyes closed, focus on your breath. Scan your body from the top of your head to the tips of your toes. Notice, and then release, any tension or tightness.

Note: If you get a pain signal while doing this exercise, notice what you were thinking and feeling at the time. If the signal becomes too painful, stop. Begin again after some time has passed.

Imagine yourself in a safe and happy place.

Remind yourself that you are not your emotions or thoughts. You are the observer, creator and choice maker of your emotions and thoughts. Tell yourself this is good news because it means you are in charge of your responses. No one can "make you" feel a certain way without your permission.

Make a mental note to yourself that in this exercise any emotions you experience are from the past. They are just old energy, perhaps wounds from childhood. That was a time when you did not have the ability to know and see yourself and life from different perspectives. Now, as an intelligent and capable adult, who is going to be an A student when it comes to processing triggers, you are always in charge of the exercise.



When you feel relaxed and centered in your breathing, bring the selected trigger to mind, perhaps recalling its most recent occurrence. Without judging, pause to become aware of your feelings and sensations. Notice any emotions and feelings you feel inside, as you take slow, deep breaths.

Ask yourself, “What feelings and emotions do I have right now?”

Record your feelings – write them down on a sheet of paper or in a journal.

Pause and feel each emotion. For each of the emotions triggered, note what physical sensations you have. Feel and observe the location in your body of those sensations.

Feeling the sensations, breathe deeply into them, and gently place one or both of your hands on your body where the sensations are.

Let go of any impulse to fix, stop, repress, or judge any of your emotions or sensations.

Accept whatever you feel and be confident that you can handle any of your emotions or sensations. Calmly and confidently affirm (either silently or aloud), “I accept what I am feeling at this moment. I am strong and able to handle this wisely, calmly, and easily.”

Identify what you tell yourself in your mind that is triggering any painful emotions. You are trying to understand what you are thinking when triggered.

Notice what thoughts you are thinking to yourself when you picture the triggering event, in particular, any toxic thinking patterns. Your thoughts automatically trigger emotions and physical sensations in your body.

This is how the brain works. Your neural pathways are firing in an established pattern. But you are going to change those pathways.



Actively watch these thoughts from a safe distance, in which you are the objective observer, noticing but not judging.

Try a train/car/boat visualization. When a disturbing thought surfaces, imagine yourself on a luxurious speeding train, looking out the window. Any upsetting thoughts quickly zip by outside the window, while you sit comfortably in your seat in a safe place.

Record what you tell yourself in your self-talk, next to the emotions and physical sensations you listed.

Connect empathically with yourself to understand and validate your experience.

Remind yourself that, though other people or situations may trigger painful feelings in you, *they are not the cause*.

Your “self-talk” is the cause of all the painful emotions you feel, such as guilt or frustration, resentment or anger. What you tell yourself also causes the accompanying physical sensations in your body. ***This is good news!***

You can choose to change what you tell yourself. You can choose to think thoughts that calm you, and empower your confidence and ability to make informed choices.

Make a mental note that *this is really, really good news!*

This means you are the only person in charge of your emotional responses, thoughts, and actions. You have the ability to protect your happiness and peace of mind regardless of what situation you find yourself in.

No one else can “make you” feel a certain way, unless you allow it.