

Psychological and Emotional Trigger Processing

A **TRIGGER** is a stimulus (a sight, sound, smell, situation, or emotion) that elicits an intense emotional or physiological reaction tied to a past traumatic experience or existing mental health condition.

TRIGGER PROCESSING involves techniques to manage these strong, often involuntary, responses and move from a state of automatic reaction (fight, flight, freeze, or fawn) to a more thoughtful, regulated response.

BEFORE THE EVENT

Learn to **RECOGNISE** your personal triggers and the physical or emotional patterns that indicate that you've been triggered.

IN THE MOMENT

PAUSE - Create a pause to avoid an immediate, reactive response. Remove yourself from the situation if necessary.

NOTICE - Turn your attention inward to your physical sensations, such as a racing heart or tightness in your chest. Observe without judgment.

GROUND YOURSELF - Focus on a neutral or comfortable physical sensation, like the feeling of your feet on the floor, to anchor yourself in the present moment. Use grounding techniques to bring your awareness back to the present. Remind yourself that you are safe.

GAIN PERSPECTIVE - Try to see the bigger picture, recognizing that the intense feelings are likely coming from a past experience, rather than the current one.

PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION AND COGNITIVE REAPPRAISAL - Don't be angry at yourself for having these feelings. Treat yourself with the same compassion you would a close friend. Acknowledge your feelings without judgment and consciously reframe negative self-talk and negative interpretations of the situation.

LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

MINDFULNESS AND MEDITATION - Strategies that help to develop self-awareness and can reduce anxiety.

THERAPY - Working with a professional can provide specific techniques to process trauma responses.

ESTABLISH BOUNDARIES - Clearly communicate your boundaries to others to help prevent future triggering situations.

BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM - Having a strong network of friends, family, or support groups is crucial.