

TRIGGER RESPONSE TOOL

Recognize the response early and choose the next move.



Steel Armor
Mindset
Your mind is the first
line of defense

WHAT A TRIGGER IS

A trigger is anything that activates a strong stress response because the nervous system connects it with danger, loss, conflict or a past experience. Triggers may be obvious or subtle. A sound, smell, location, conversation, body sensation or memory can activate the response before you fully understand why.

The goal is not to eliminate every trigger.

The goal is to notice the response sooner, reduce escalation and choose a response that fits the present situation.

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- Body: heart rate increases, jaw tightens, hands clench, chest tightens or breathing changes.
- Thoughts: tunnel vision, replaying the event, assuming the worst or feeling certain something bad is about to happen.
- Emotion: anger, fear, shame, disgust, panic, numbness or sudden emotional intensity.
- Behavior: pacing, withdrawing, shutting down, becoming controlling, escalating conflict or wanting to escape.
- Attention: difficulty hearing what someone is saying, scanning the environment or losing track of the present moment.

THE TRIGGER + 3 STRATEGY DRILL

Use this drill before, during or after a known trigger. Keep the strategies simple enough to use under stress.

1. IDENTIFY

What triggered the response?

2. NOTICE

What changed in my body, thoughts, emotions or behavior?

3. CHOOSE 3

Pick three strategies you can actually use in the moment.

4. RECHECK

Has the intensity changed enough to choose the next action?

TRIGGER RESPONSE TOOL

Use the smallest effective strategy first.



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STRATEGY OPTIONS

Ground

Press your feet into the floor, orient to the room or use a familiar grounding drill.

Move

Walk, stretch, change position or use controlled physical movement to reduce activation.

Reduce Input

Step away from noise, screens, conflict or other unnecessary stimulation when possible.

Name It

Use a brief statement such as: 'I am triggered. I am here. I do not have to act on the first impulse.'

Delay the Response

Pause the conversation, decision or action until your nervous system is more usable.

Reconnect

Contact a trusted person, peer, partner or counselor when the response is difficult to manage alone.

BUILD YOUR RESPONSE PLAN

Choose one real-world trigger and three strategies you can use before the response takes over.

My trigger:

My earliest warning sign:

Strategy 1:

Strategy 2:

Strategy 3:

Who or what can support me if I need more help?

WHEN MORE SUPPORT IS NEEDED

If triggers are frequent, intense, worsening or interfering with sleep, work, relationships or daily functioning, additional support may help. You do not have to wait until the response becomes a crisis.

ACCESS SUPPORT

Confidential counseling is available through LifeWise Counseling.

Serving Texas virtually and in person in select locations.

817 602 8520

lifewise@lifewisetx.com

Immediate support: Call or text 988. Veterans: call 988, then press 1. COPLINE: 1 800 267 5463.