

How to Create a Trigger Record



Trigger Records can help you recognize what situations are triggering you. Recognizing what is triggering you:

- Helps you regain a sense of control.
- Helps you realize when you truly are not in danger.
- Helps you prepare when you know you're going to face a trigger.

For example, let's say you are at a friend's barbecue when a small child starts to cry. Your heart starts racing and you begin feeling afraid and irritable. You make up some excuse and go home.

Back home, you feel safer and less afraid, but isolated, alone, and sad that you left the party. Using the **Trigger Record** guides you to understand that the smell of barbecue and the crying child were triggers—they reminded you of a traumatic experience you had in the war zone. You are now aware of the link between your war zone experiences and your discomfort at the party. With awareness about your triggers comes a sense of control. The next time you encounter these triggers, you will realize more quickly that the current situation is *not* the war zone. It will also help you prepare yourself for the next time you go to a barbecue or a social outing such as a restaurant where you hear a child crying.

Following is a Trigger Record and explanations of how to complete it. Feel free to complete the columns in any order. It's okay if you are unable to pinpoint exactly what is triggering you. Just do the best you can. And remember: "That was then, this is now," (this takes away some of the trigger's power over you).

Trigger Record

A Date; What Was Your Trigger?	B What Were You Feeling?	C How Did Your Body React?	D What Did You Do?	E How Was the Trigger Situation Different from the Original Trauma?	F How Difficult Was The Trigger to Handle?
<i>Write the date and describe the situation</i>	<i>Use the Emotions Glossary if you need help</i>	<i>List any body sensations</i>	<i>Describe your behavior</i>	<i>List any differences you noticed</i>	<i>1 = Not at all 10 = Extremely</i>
1.					
2.					
3.					

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COLUMN A: Date, What was Your Trigger?

Indicate the date and describe the situation where you got triggered. Include as much detail as you can so it is easier to pick out what may have triggered you. Once you've written down everything you can remember, underline thing(s) that you think triggered you. If you know what triggered you, it's fine just to list the trigger itself.

- *Example:* "February 16. I was walking to the bus stop and I had to wait at a crosswalk until the light changed. I smelled diesel fuel from a truck going by."

COLUMN B: What were You Feeling?

List all of the feelings you had when you were triggered, including any positive feelings. Examples of feelings are listed below.

- *Example:* "scared, exposed, freaked out, on edge"

Angry	Irritated	Insecure	Embarrassed	Relieved
Annoyed	Resentful	Lonely	Afraid	Happy
Bitter	Alienated	Rejected	Guilty	Peaceful
Disgusted	Defeated	Sad	Panicked	Amused
Envious	Disappointed	Anxious	Regretful	Lighthearted
Frustrated	Hopeless	Defensive	Ashamed	Joyful

COLUMN C: How did your Body React?

List all sensations in your body, including those that other people would be able to see (like sweating), as well as ones that only you would know about (like heart racing). Get as descriptive as you can.

- *Example:* "heart racing, felt hot, shoulders tensed up"

COLUMN D: What Did You Do?

Describe everything about your actual actions. Get specific! Describe as if you were a movie camera watching your own behavior. Did you move your body in any way (away from/towards the trigger)? Did you say anything out loud? Did you hit the dirt? Did you leave the situation?

- *Example:* "I looked around frantically. I began watching all of the people that were passing me on the street very carefully – I was looking for weapons or signs that they were dangerous. I walked faster."

COLUMN E: How Was the Trigger Situation Different From Original Trauma?

List all of the ways in which the current situation differs from the original traumatic event. Think about where you are, who you're with, etc. to highlight the differences. By doing this, you will recognize that the two situations are different. And, you will begin disconnecting the triggers from your learned reactions. When this happens, you will begin to relearn that you are safe.

COLUMN F: How Difficult Was the Trigger to Handle?

Rate how hard it was for you to handle this trigger on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is not difficult at all and 10 is extremely difficult. After you use the Trigger Record and skills provided on this site for a while, your ratings should go down.

- *Example:* "7"