



TRANSFORMING TRIGGERS

A WORKBOOK FOR
INSIGHT & GROWTH

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INTRODUCTION

We all experience moments when our emotions suddenly feel overwhelming, often triggered by something unexpected. These intense reactions can leave us confused or upset, wondering why we feel this way. Understanding these emotional triggers is an essential step in getting free from the constricting structures of our personality and trauma responses from the past.

Engaging in the exercise in this workbook will guide you to discover the deeper reasons behind your reactions, using insights from two powerful approaches: Object Relations Theory and Inner Parts-Based healing.

Object Relations Theory suggests that our early relationships, especially with caregivers, shape how we see ourselves and others. These early experiences leave lasting impressions, influencing how we react to situations as adults.

Inner Parts-Based approaches offer another perspective, viewing our psyche as made up of different “parts” that hold our emotions, memories, and desires. By understanding and interacting with these parts, we can begin to heal old wounds and respond to our triggers with greater compassion and self-awareness.



3 STEP PROCESS

STEP ONE

IDENTIFY & REFLECT

When you feel triggered, pause and take note of the situation. Reflect on what specific emotions you're experiencing and the context that brought them up. This helps you understand the immediate reaction and sets the stage for deeper exploration.

STEP TWO

EXPLORE THE ROOTS

Use the self-inquiry and journal prompts to discover how this trigger might connect to past experiences or relationships and old wounds or unmet needs.

STEP THREE

ENGAGE YOUR INNER PARTS

Use the following exercises to identify the different "parts" of yourself that are involved in the trigger (e.g., protective parts, vulnerable parts). Approach these parts with curiosity and compassion, and work on building a relationship with them to address their needs.

IDENTIFY & REFLECT

Think of a recent time when you felt triggered. Use the following writing prompts to explore the situation in detail.

Triggering event:

What sensations did you feel in your body?



What emotions did you feel?



What thoughts did you have about the other person?



What thoughts did you have about yourself?



How is this familiar or a pattern in your life? What other situations or people does this remind you of?

EXPLORE THE ROOTS

Which past relationship or experience might this trigger be connected to?

Consider the different ways this past relationship may influence your expectations and reactions in the present.

Journal

Reflect on the qualities of the person involved in this past relationship. What emotions or needs were unmet?

Journal

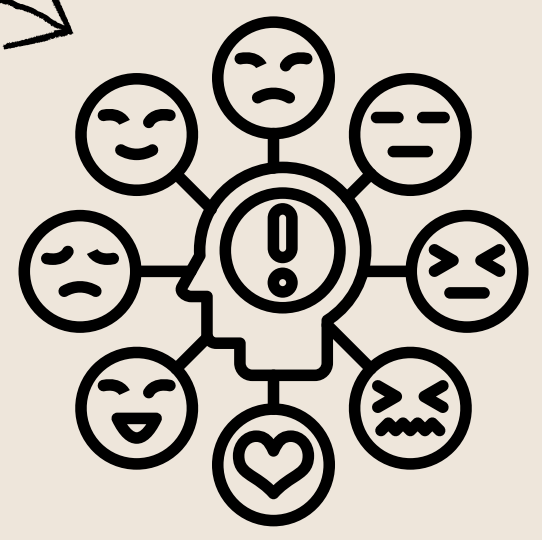
How do these unmet needs show up in your current life?

Journal

How might this past relationship influence your current perceptions and reactions?

Today, I discovered this about myself:

Our Inner PARTS



01

Self

Each of us has a core Self, which is the essence of who we are—compassionate, calm, curious, and wise. It is the natural leader of our internal system

02

Parts

Surrounding this Self are different “parts” of the mind, each with its own thoughts, feelings, and roles.

03

Purpose

These parts often form in response to life experiences, especially challenging ones, and they may take on protective roles or carry pain.

04

All Parts Belong

These parts are aspects of ourselves that need understanding and care, rather than something to get rid of.

05

Identify

Identify the different “parts” of yourself that are involved in the trigger (e.g., protective parts and parts carrying pain). Approach these parts with curiosity and compassion.

06

Solution

By building a relationship with our inner parts and addressing their needs, we can help them heal and return to a more balanced state, allowing our core Self to guide us more fully in life.



IDENTIFYING YOUR

PROTECTIVE PARTS

Protectors are parts of our personality structure that work hard to keep us safe and in control by managing our day-to-day lives. They focus on preventing pain and discomfort. Below are some signs that a protector part may be working hard to keep you away from the vulnerability and hurt of a trigger.

PERFECTIONISTIC

- DRIVEN TO OVER-ACHIEVE
- DISTRACTING YOURSELF BY WORKING MORE
- FEELING THE NEED TO CONTROL YOUR ENVIRONMENT, EMOTIONS, OR OTHER PEOPLE
- TAKING ON MORE THAN YOUR SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

CRITICAL OR CONTROLLING

- QUICKLY BECOMING DEFENSIVE
- BLAMING OTHERS TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM FEELING VULNERABLE
- COMPELLED TO ARGUE OR FIGHT RATHER THAN TRY TO CALM DOWN
- EASILY FINDING FAULTS AND THINGS TO CRITICIZE ABOUT OTHERS

AVOIDING OR NUMBING

- AVOIDING CERTAIN PEOPLE OR SITUATIONS BY PROCRASTINATING
- SEEKING COMFORT THROUGH FOOD, ALCOHOL OR DRUGS
- INCREASED TIME SPENT SCROLLING SOCIAL MEDIA
- BINGE WATCHING SHOWS TO CALM YOURSELF OR NUMB OUT

SELF-SABOTAGING

- AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITIES
- SABOTAGING RELATIONSHIPS
- ENGAGING IN RISKY BEHAVIOURS
- DISTRACTING FROM PAIN BY CREATING CHAOS OR CRISIS

IDENTIFYING YOUR

VULNERABLE PARTS

When we are triggered, the most vulnerable parts of us that hold deep emotional wounds, often from childhood or past trauma, can respond in intense and overwhelming ways. Here are some common ways these inner parts respond:

UNWORTHINESS OR SHAME

- FEELING INADEQUATE AND 100% AT FAULT OR WRONG
- AUTOMATIC BELIEFS LIKE, "I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH," OR "THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH ME"
- INTENSE FEELINGS OF GUILT
- WANTING TO AVOID PEOPLE AND WITHDRAW FROM LIFE

FEAR OF REJECTION OR ABANDONMENT

- FEELINGS OF PANIC OR LONELINESS
- FEELING DESPERATE FOR REASSURANCE AND CONNECTION
- STRONG SENSE OF HOPELESSNESS OR HELPLESSNESS
- INTENSE FEAR WHEN SITUATIONS TRIGGER MEMORIES OF REJECTION, ABANDONMENT, OR BETRAYAL.

INNER CHILD EMOTIONS

- CHILDLIKE FEELINGS OF VULNERABILITY, FEAR, OR CONFUSION
- A SENSE OF EMOTIONAL REGRESSION, WHERE YOU FEEL SMALL OR SCARED
- FEELING AS IF YOU'RE BACK IN A PAINFUL SITUATION FROM YOUR PAST
- FEELING OVERWHELMED, TRAPPED, OR POWERLESS

PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

- TIGHTNESS IN THE CHEST, RAPID HEARTBEAT, HEADACHES
- STOMACH ACHES OR NAUSEA
- FEELING FLOATY OR SLEEPY
- A SENSE OF HEAVINESS OR TENSION, CAN BE HARD TO BREATHE



ENGAGING YOUR PARTS

Now that you have identified some of your inner parts most active when triggered, take some time to inquire into and journal on the following questions:

Journal

When you felt triggered, what part of you was most active? Was it a protective part or a vulnerable part?

Journal

Describe this part in detail. How does it feel in your body? What thoughts or memories come up when you focus on this part?

Journal

What does this part want for you? What is it trying to protect you from or achieve for you?

Today, I discovered this about myself:

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

Now that you understand what is happening for some of your inner parts when triggered, take some time to inquire into and journal on the following questions:

Journal

How do you feel toward this part of yourself? Can you approach it with curiosity and a willingness to listen?

Journal

If you could speak to this part from your core self, what would you say? How can you reassure it and meet its needs in a healthier way?

Journal

Imagine giving this part what it needs. How does this change your experience of the trigger?

Today, I discovered this about myself:

MOVING FORWARD

Fill in the checklist spaces below with healthy self-care activities. What practices or resources can help you maintain a connection to a more regulated and present sense of self, especially when feeling triggered?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Based on the insights you've gained, what steps can you take to address the root of your triggers? Consider both immediate actions (e.g., grounding techniques) and long-term strategies (e.g., seeking therapy, setting boundaries).

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

CONCLUSION

Understanding and managing your emotional triggers is a journey that requires patience, self-compassion, and ongoing reflection. By exploring the roots of your triggers through the lens of Object Relations Theory and engaging with the different parts of yourself, you can begin to uncover the deeper meanings behind your reactions. This process not only helps you gain insight into your past but also empowers you to respond to life's challenges with greater clarity and emotional balance.

I encourage you to revisit these questions and prompts regularly, as triggers can change over time. As you continue to explore these tools, remember that each step you take is a step toward healing and growth. Be kind to yourself as you work through difficult emotions, and don't hesitate to seek additional support if needed. Your triggers can be powerful guides, pointing you toward areas in need of attention and care. With time and practice, you'll find that understanding these triggers opens the door to deeper self-awareness, healthier relationships, and a more connected inner life.



About Prema



Prema McKeever is a somatic psychotherapist and supports people worldwide to heal from the impacts of trauma. Inspired by the interconnection of mind and body and the resilience of the human heart, she has guided thousands in their healing and personal growth journey over the past 30 years. She believes that our essential purpose in life is to awaken, activate and experience the boundless potential inside each of us.

She holds two Master's Degrees; the first in Chinese Medicine and the second in Psychotherapy and Spirituality. Additionally, Prema is a Somatic Experiencing Practitioner (SEP) and faculty for the BioDynamic Breathwork and Trauma Release Institute (BBTRI). Her passion is facilitating the unique healing that occurs when people come together in group processes, and she is honoured to lead some of the most intensive and life-changing retreats in the world today.

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