

Step 1:

Think of something that triggered you in the last week and write it down in your journal.

Don't go too far back in memory, let's try and keep your examples recent.

A trigger is something that provokes a reaction within us. It might be something someone says to us, or an event or experience we go through, or a thought that pops into our head. The result is that we have all sorts of negative emotional reactions come up in us, ranging from subtle to overwhelming, like irritation, anger, frozenness, resentment, fear, shame, outrage, etc.

The emotional reaction then prompts a certain behavior depending on how we typically react when triggered: shutting down, defensiveness, aggression, dissociation, passive aggression, etc. This is similar to what we did last time where I asked you to come up with a starting point that I described as an issue, or something that annoyed you.

This time I'm introducing slightly different language and I'm calling it a trigger. The trigger that begins a cascade of reactions in you.

And we will also do the following, just as we did last time: I want you to describe the event and try to do so with the following instructions:

- Journal from the point of view of an objective bystander. Describe what happened as if you are writing a newspaper article about it.
- Scrupulously avoid any expressions of sentiment such as anger, or feelings of any kind.
- Also, avoid drawing any conclusions, assertions about another's motives, or judgments about the reasons why things happened the way they did. You are merely stating the facts today.
- Allow yourself no further analysis.
- Describe in as much detail as you can. What do you objectively OBSERVE?

Step 2:

Now we're going to explore what you **needed** during that trigger. But what are needs?

This is my definition: a need is wholesome, archetypal, and universal in you. Needs for love, recognition, to be heard, to be seen, safety, autonomy, independence, sovereignty, closeness, warmth, nourishment, shelter — these are wholesome, are they not? These are some examples of needs that are most essential to our physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well being. They are motivating and fueling toward human fulfillment. They are universal by nature; fundamental to everyone.

Make some guesses about what you needed when you got triggered - the trigger you described in step one. You can find a list of needs words in the list and link below. Pick the ones that resonate with you. Write down as many as you can. The more the better. You don't have to know why or justify your choices, just write down the ones that make sense to you, or that resonate with you.

Here is a protocol you can use:

"When I was triggered I needed _____"

List of Needs Words:

CONNECTION

acceptance	love
affection	mutuality
appreciation	nurturing
belonging	respect/self-respect
cooperation	safety
communication	security
closeness	stability
community	support
companionship	to know and be known
compassion	to see and be seen
consideration	to understand and be
consistency	understood
empathy	trust
inclusion	warmth
intimacy	

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

air
food/water
movement/exercise
rest/sleep
sexual expression
safety
shelter
touch

HONESTY

authenticity
integrity
presence
PLAY
joy
humor

MEANING

awareness
celebration of life
challenge
clarity
competence
consciousness
contribution
creativity
discovery
efficacy
effectiveness
freedom
growth
hope
learning

PEACE

beauty
communion
ease
equality
harmony
inspiration
order

[Access the List of needs Words Here](#)

Step 3:

Strategies are the things we DO to try and get our needs met. Everything we do is to meet a need we have. Strategies are the behaviors we enact. Everything we do, everything we say, is a strategy to meet a need in us.

It can be a useful exercise to explore what kinds of strategies we tend to use. Do we tend to get aggressive with our communication, or do we tend to go along to get along. Do we get bossy, or controlling, or "wag our tail" to calm either ourselves or the other?

Very often we will use strategies that might be problematic for us — we just hadn't noticed it before. A little self-reflection on the strategies we use to try and get our needs met might help us see alternatives the next time we get triggered.

Here is a journaling prompt you can use:

Because I needed _____ this was my strategy to meet that need at the time: _____.