

REFLECTIVE PAUSE

A Reflective Guide by Renata Fularwka

What Really Happens When You're Triggered?

*A gentle companion for
understanding your nervous system*

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What Really Happens When You're Triggered

WHEN THE PAST SHOWS UP INSIDE THE PRESENT

**A tone of voice. A delayed reply.
A certain look.**

Sometimes a small moment can create a reaction that feels much larger than what is happening around you.

This does not mean you are dramatic or weak. Your nervous system may be responding to something familiar—something it learned to recognize as danger before your thinking mind had time to catch up.

This companion offers a quiet opportunity to notice what happens when you are triggered, explore what may be beneath the reaction and practise creating a small pause before deciding what comes next.

INSIDE THIS COMPANION

A quiet colouring pause | Reflective questions | A grounding practice

GET STARTED...

Choose a word or phrase that helps you return to the present, then draw it into the colouring design on the next page as a reminder that you can pause before responding.





Noticing the Moment

You do not need to judge the reaction or decide whether it was reasonable. Begin by noticing what happened with curiosity.

1. What happened immediately before I noticed the emotional shift?

Try to describe only what happened—a word, tone, delay, expression, memory or change in the situation.

2. What did I notice in my body first?

Consider sensations such as tension, heat, pressure, shaking, numbness, a racing heart or the urge to move away.

WHAT MIGHT THE TRIGGER BE PROTECTING?

*A trigger often carries information about an older fear, need or experience.
You do not need to understand everything at once.*

3. What did this moment seem to mean to me?

Did it feel like rejection, abandonment, criticism, danger, loss of control or something else?

4. What did I need in that moment—and what might help me feel supported now?

This might be reassurance, clarity, space, a boundary, connection or time to settle before responding.

Orienting to the present moment

This is an invitation to gently notice where you are. You do not need to force relaxation or convince yourself that everything is fine.



1. NAME *Silently or aloud, say: “I am triggered right now.” Naming the experience can create a little distance between you and the reaction.*



2. ORIENT *Slowly look around and notice three things you can see. Feel your feet against the floor or your body supported by the chair. Remind yourself where you are and that this moment is happening now.*



3. CHECK *Ask yourself: “What is happening in the present—and what about this feels familiar from the past?” You do not need to find a complete answer. Simply notice the possibility that more than the current moment may be influencing the reaction.*



4. CHOOSE *Choose one small next step:*

- *Pause before replying*
- *Ask for clarification*
- *Take a few minutes of space*
- *Use a grounding or self-soothing practice*
- *Return to the conversation when you feel more present*

If this exercise increases your distress, stop and return to something that feels supportive. You can also reach out to someone you trust or seek professional support

You do not have to make your next decision from the most activated part of the moment..

BOOK A COMPLIMENTARY 15-MINUTE CONSULTATION



A GENTLE REFLECTION

A trigger is not proof that you are broken, difficult or incapable of change. It may be your nervous system recognizing something familiar and responding with the tools it once learned to use.

With practice, you can begin to notice the message without allowing it to make every decision for you.

The goal is not to eliminate every trigger or never experience intense emotions. It is to develop a greater capacity to remain connected to yourself, understand what is happening and choose how you want to respond.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO NAVIGATE THIS ALONE

Therapy can provide a supportive space to understand your triggers, explore the experiences beneath them and develop practical ways to respond with greater awareness and choice.



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