

## Triggers

What does it mean to be "triggered?" This term has been casually used to refer to the experience of having an emotional reaction to some type of disturbing content (such as violence or the mention of suicide) in the media or in another social setting. However, there is a difference between being triggered and being uncomfortable.

Feeling triggered isn't just about something rubbing you the wrong way. For someone with a history of trauma, being around anything that reminds them of a traumatic experience (also known as a "trigger") can make them feel like they're experiencing the trauma all over again.

Though commonly used to refer to the experiences of people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the term "trigger" can also be used in the context of other mental health illnesses. This includes substance use disorders, eating disorders, and anxiety.

In these cases, a trigger is seen as anything that prompts an increase in or return of symptoms. For example, a person recovering from a substance use disorder may be triggered by seeing someone using their drug of choice. The experience may cause returned cravings and even relapse.

Triggers vary widely from person to person and can be either internal or external. Below are examples of the different kinds of events that might be considered triggers in terms of mental health problems.

- Some examples of common triggers are:
- the anniversary dates of losses or trauma
- frightening news events
- too much to do, feeling overwhelmed
- family friction
- the end of a relationship
- spending too much time alone
- being judged, criticized, teased, or put down
- financial problems, getting a big bill
- physical illness
- sexual harassment
- being yelled at
- aggressive-sounding noises or exposure to anything that makes you feel uncomfortable
- being around someone who has treated you badly
- certain smells, tastes, or noises

Learning to identify and cope with triggers is a popular strategy for the treatment of several problems—especially anger and addictions—because of the effectiveness and intuitiveness of the approach.

The **Triggers** worksheet will introduce you to triggers with a simple definition and tips, while guiding you through the process of identifying your own triggers. After identifying triggers, you will be prompted to develop strategies to either avoid or cope with your triggers. This worksheet was intentionally designed to be used with several different treatment problems, such as anger, substance use, or relationships.

### Resources:

*Triggers – Worksheet*

What does it mean to be 'triggered'?

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-triggered-4175432>

What is really means to be 'Triggered'

<https://www.healthline.com/health/triggered>