

EMOTIONAL RESOURCE

1.1 TRIGGER LOGS

Trigger logs are a kind of diary focused on emotional reactions. They are an important part of building awareness of the emotional reactions that cause us problems. You are encouraged to complete these regularly, especially at the start of the program, as they will help you understand your emotions and reactions better. Trigger logs contain three columns, which capture the important stages of an emotional reaction: The trigger, the emotion, and the autopilot reaction.

TRIGGER	EMOTION	AUTOPILOT REACTION
<i>My mum made a comment about my parenting.</i>	<i>Sad Angry</i>	<i>Became very short with her and made some nasty comments before leaving.</i>
<i>Someone knocked on my door when I wasn't expecting anyone.</i>	<i>Fear</i>	<i>Hid and pretended there was nobody home until they left.</i>

Trigger logs can seem difficult at first because we are often not used to thinking about our emotional reactions in this way. In fact, most of us try to cope by not thinking about them as much as possible. Therefore, just writing them down can be a challenge. However, trigger logs definitely get easier with time and practice. Try not to judge yourself for your reactions. Remember that they have developed for a reason and understanding them in more detail is the first step in changing them.

At the bottom of each trigger log there is also a small space to reflect on any patterns you notice in your emotional reactions. This helps you to think about the wider themes or 'bigger picture' of your emotional reactions. This is important because this pattern is what we want to focus on changing. Some more detailed instructions are on the next page.

Trigger Log - Instructions




When completing a trigger log, the following tips can help:

- Triggers:
 - Remember there always is one, even if you can't identify it.
 - It can be just about anything (people, places, situations, events, thoughts, other emotions, memories etc...)
 - Try to be as specific and factual as you can.
- Emotions:
 - Remember there always is one, even if you can't identify it.
 - Use clues from the three areas (body, mind and urges) to identify the emotion.
 - If there is more than one emotion, just pick the one that seems most important in this situation.
 - Try to pick the simplest word for the emotion to begin with.
- Autopilot Reactions:
 - Remember there always is one, even if you can't identify it.
 - It can be just about anything (aggression, avoidance, suppression, numbing-out or dissociation, sexual behaviour, self-criticism, self-harm, over-thinking (rumination)).
 - Remember that reactions always serve a purpose; they happen for a reason, even if that's not clear.
 - Try to be as specific and factual as you can.
- Patterns box:
 - What are the bigger themes in this trigger (e.g. feeling criticised or mistreated, being put on the spot, unexpected events, etc.).
 - What are the bigger themes here in this autopilot reaction (e.g. acting aggressively, avoiding situations or people, self-criticism or rumination/worry, etc.).
 - Try to summarise what's going on in a general way (e.g. "every time I think someone is criticising me I get angry and lash out").

The key idea for Trigger Logs is to keep it simple. Don't worry about too much detail or getting over-complicated. Just try to record what happens.

TRIGGER LOG

Use this trigger log to record any emotional reactions between group sessions. The **trigger** column can include *anything* that triggered the episode (try to be as specific as you can). The **emotion** column could include any difficult emotions (e.g. fear, anger, sadness, excitement) and any corresponding part of the emotion triangle (e.g. bodily sensations, thoughts, or urges to act). The **autopilot reaction** is the automatic way of reacting to the emotion (e.g. shouting, hiding, self-harm). See handout **1.1: Trigger Logs** for more information.

TRIGGER 	EMOTION 	AUTOPILOT REACTION 

What patterns are you recognizing in your emotional reactions?