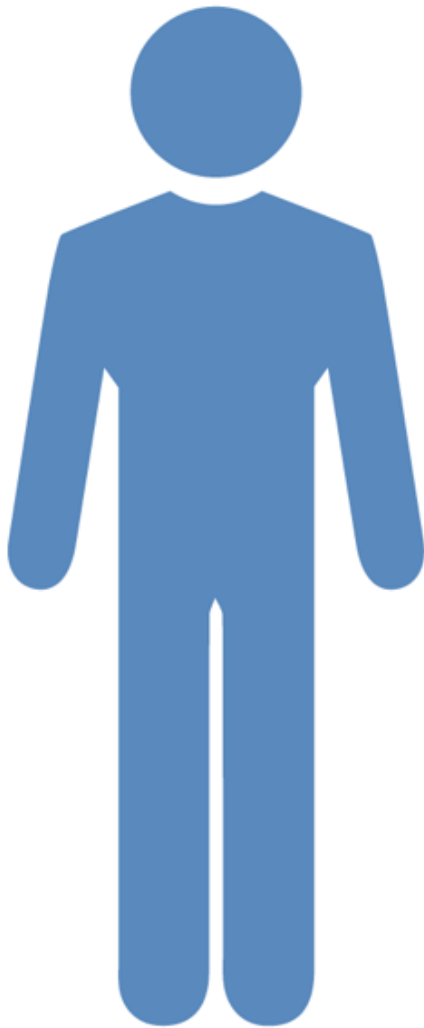


Understanding Triggers

In this activity, you'll learn more about your triggers. First, you'll want to become very familiar with your amygdala hijack and your response pattern.

A. The Amygdala Hijack

First, indicate on this diagram where in your body you feel your reaction. Some common locations include the jaw, chest, and stomach, but some people feel things in their hands, feet, throat, and even ears. Describe the sensation you feel as accurately as you can. Perhaps your heart races or pounds. Maybe you get flushed or you start to sweat.



Fight Response

Reflect on the times when you have gone to fight or a form of aggression. Describe the last two or three times this has happened. What did you do and say? Consider how you have used verbal and nonverbal methods to convey aggression, criticism, contempt, sarcasm, or shame.

Flight/Freeze Response

Reflect on the times when you have gone to flight/freeze or a form of withdrawal. Describe the last two or three times this has happened. What did you do and say? Consider how you have used verbal and nonverbal methods to convey withdrawal, such as stonewalling, defensiveness, excuses, or blaming.

When you consider the two responses, which one is your most common pattern? Under stress, which is your most typical response?

B. Common Triggers

Think over the past three to five years in both your professional and personal life. List the situations where you have felt triggered. This might include times you felt someone was “pushing your buttons” or that you were hijacked by your fight or flight response.

Take notes on what happened—who did what to set it off? What feelings did you have? And what hijack response did you experience?

Review this information and identify your top three to five triggers. Step back from the details of any one particular incident and look for patterns where the situations feel similar or familiar.