

Identifying Triggers; Accessing Self-Empathy

A trigger is a stimulus that, without awareness, gives rise to a habitual reaction. The reactive state we find ourselves in after being triggered is often angry, agitated, on edge, defensive – at its core, this state is characterized by a loss of self connection. Regardless of how much we deepen our practice of NVC or surround ourselves with pleasant people, there are always going to be triggers. However, it is possible to intervene in such a way that we develop an alternative to the habitual and no longer fall victim to the stimulus.

The goal of this practice is to connect deeply with your needs. From this place of self connection, you may experience a “physiological shift that often takes place when you connect deeply with a need; this might be a release, a feeling of opening or lightening, or perhaps simple a deepening of your emotional response.”

Your emotional reaction to any stimulus is a result of your own internal process. It is important to remind yourself that it is not possible for someone to “make you feel” anything – your feelings emerge from and are the result of your interpretations. “However, I am hopeful when I think that my sadness results from my interpretation, because I can affect my interpretation process over time. Self-empathy has helped me do that.”

Excerpts from Ike Lasater, *Words That Work in Business* (Encinitas: Puddle Dancer Press, 2012), 16 - 17.

SELF-CONNECTION PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO TRIGGERS

1. Develop awareness through Observation

Name your trigger. Describe the stimulus through Observation – what was actually said or done, as distinguished from your judgements or evaluations of this stimulus.

When I {see, hear, remember, imagine} _____ ...

2. Describe your perception of sensations arising in the body as you register this trigger. Where do you notice this in your body?

... my reactive state is characterized by sensations of _____ in my _____.

3. Identify feelings

Describe how you feel as a result of your observations. If you find yourself using “victim verbs,” refer to the victim verbs translation tool for support with identifying the needs behind these “evaluations masquerading as feelings.”

I feel _____ ...

4. Identify my need/preference:

... because I {am needing, hoping, wanting; would have liked} _____.

5. Imagine what it would feel like to have that need met.

What does that feel like in your body?

If that need were met, what would then be fulfilled?

Do any compassionate strategies come to mind for meeting this need?

“Your connection with another person is an extension of your connection with yourself.”

John Kinyon and Ike Lasater, *From Conflict to Connection* (El Sobrante: Global Reach Books, 2015), 51.