

## **The Triggering Effect Handouts**

Hello, I am pleased that you are using my newest DVD, *The Triggering Effect*. It is a helpful tool when working with individuals, groups and families. While I realize you have your own arsenal of skills to draw upon to make the most of using a DVD, here are some handouts that you may find useful as well.

The first handout offers sample discussion questions to lead a conversation about what your clients heard in this presentation. This is followed by several handouts that pertain to each trigger that is introduced. They are meant to assist you in exploring further the struggle everyone has with triggers. I strongly encourage you to be creative and embellish them so that they meet the needs of your clients more specifically than I can anticipate. They are meant for you to use as a tool that will facilitate a focused and meaningful discussion. Enjoy!



## **The Triggering Effect**

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are your major triggers?
2. In what ways did you identify with any of the actors' stories?
3. The last actor described the coming together of several triggers to create what Claudia called the Perfect Storm, what combinations come together for you?
4. What points made in the video were the most meaningful for you?
5. At the close of the video, Claudia makes reference to a Higher Power. Why do you think she thought it was important to do so?

## The Triggering Effect

### Romanticizing the Behavior

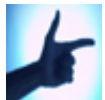
Euphoric recall is glamorizing the behaviors related to the addiction and in the moment totally forgetting about the negative consequences. It involves a tunnel focus only on the positive feelings you associate with the addiction.



Identify 3 situations in which you romanticize your using and/or acting out behavior. Describe what you find yourself thinking and/or doing.



With each situation you identified above list what you think that trigger offers you. Be specific. For example does it offer escape from stress as it did for one of the actors in the video? If so, stress from what? If it is escape from responsibility, responsibility related to what? If escape from a specific feeling, related to what?



With each situation, what would the consequences be if you followed your thinking?



Using the 3 situations you identified, should you engage in romanticizing again, what can you do or tell yourself to stop the process?

## The Triggering Effect

### Feelings

Addicted people have used their behaviors and substances for years to separate from their emotions. And there is so much to feel about—guilt for how your behavior has hurt others; sadness for your losses; anger with yourself; fear of what is in front of you; shame, thinking of yourself as inadequate, not worthy. You can react to every feeling imaginable.



Circle the feelings you would go to a great length to avoid:

Fear Loneliness Sadness Love Embarrassment Guilt Shame

Joy Disappointment Other (name)



With each feeling you circled, what is it you believe would happen if you acknowledged it more openly?



With each feeling you circled, what are the negative consequences for not acknowledging that emotion?



Identify how you could benefit if you were more emotionally open.

Remember as scary as feelings are, they are a part of the human condition. You don't have to bear your soul emotionally to everyone. Healthy boundaries will help you decide to what degree and with whom you will share.

***Recovery is the ability to tolerate your feelings  
without the need to medicate or engage in self-destructive or self-defeating behaviors.***

## The Triggering Effect

### Loss

By the time you get to recovery you have had multiple losses in your life. These losses are often related to childhood, many times due to being raised with abuse, addiction, mental illness, the death of a parent or sibling, etc. While you may have experienced trauma within your original family, the pain of loss may be from a specific situation.

The following is a list of events and/or experiences that are often traumatic. Check whether or not you've experienced any of them and then identify 3 that you feel could be a trigger for you.

- Living with addiction  
(alcohol, drugs, work, gambling, food, sex addiction)
- Living with mental illness  
depression      schizophrenia      other
- Physical abuse  
(hitting, slapping, pushing, shoving)
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse  
(being raged at, called names, left alone, covert sexual abuse - no touching but inappropriate nonetheless)
- Witnessing abuse of others in the family  
(physical, sexual, emotional)
- Accidents  
(auto, falls, fire, tornados, floods, etc.)
- Death of a pet  
Your relationship to pet
- Death of a loved one  
Your relationship to this person
- Divorce
- Loss of health
- Other (name)

## The Triggering Effect

### Resentments

Resentments are like burrs under a saddle blanket, if you do not get rid of them, they will cause an infection.

### Unrealistic Expectations + Impatience = Resentments



Complete the following statement five times.

I am resentful when \_\_\_\_\_ does \_\_\_\_\_

I am resentful when \_\_\_\_\_ does \_\_\_\_\_

I am resentful when \_\_\_\_\_ does \_\_\_\_\_

I am resentful when \_\_\_\_\_ does \_\_\_\_\_

I am resentful when \_\_\_\_\_ does \_\_\_\_\_



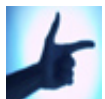
What does it mean for you to hang onto resentments?



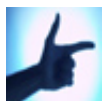
What would it mean to accept that you have been hurt or wronged and that you can no longer change that?



What does it mean to take responsibility for your own feelings?



Ultimately who pays the price for hanging onto resentments?



Are you willing to let go of resentments?

Different ways to move away from a place of resentment are:

- When assuming, check it out
- Put yourself in somebody else's shoes – it may allow expectations to be more realistic
- Identify and own the feelings the resentment is covering
- Be willing to live and let live



From the resentments you listed, explore ways to move away from that place of resentment.

My resentment is:

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Different ways I can move from my place of resentment are:

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If you maintain your resentments, you'll find that you want support in your misery and seek out people who will provide that. Unfortunately they are usually not others in recovery. It is often your previous using friends who are most apt to support you in your chronic negative attitude. Resentments are experienced when you feel discounted, slighted or unheard. Many times the person you are feeling slighted by is totally unaware of the behavior you interpreted as a personal insult. Resentments are often built on assumptions. "When you don't look at me, I assume you think you are better than me." "When you don't include me in a social gathering I assume you think that I am not good enough."

Resentments are built on entitlement, which are a form of unrealistic expectations and impatience. "I have been sober six weeks now. I resent the fact that my wife still doesn't trust me." "Because I am changing I feel that I should be rewarded." "Now that I am sober, my boss should give me that promotion I deserve." "Somebody owes me."

## The Triggering Effect

### High Risk Places, People and Situations

A **slippery place** may be bars you use to frequent, areas in your community where you bought drugs, cruised, etc. Any place that triggers a positive association about the use of your drug of choice is high risk.

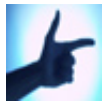
A **slippery person** could be an ex-lover, certain family members, past using/party buddies.

A **slippery situation** could be the use of medication, or an emotionally charged social gathering such as a family event, work situations, or a vacation.



Name 3 high risk places –

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Name 3 high risk people –

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

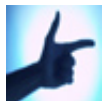


Name 3 high risk situations –

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Of these places, people or situations which are you readily willing to avoid?



If you engage with any of these places, people or situations, in what ways can you lessen contact or time? What can you do to offer yourself protection?

## The Triggering Effect

### Being Back In Control, Being your Own God

Yes But... Are you a Yes But person?

With a little bit of time clean and sober, you often begin to feel better and while initially so grateful that others are there to help you, it then becomes easier to reject what others think or suggest. It is almost human nature. You begin to play the old tapes. "I really know what is best for me" or "I can do it by myself, I have for all these years and I am still alive." In essence you are ready to take back total control of your life.

This behavior demonstrates the power of the addictive process and the grandiose thinking that addicts regularly engage in. To paraphrase an AA saying, "My best thinking kept me drinking, drugging, gambling, etc." Addicts forget what they learned in the first step of any Twelve Step recovery program, "We admitted we were powerless over our addictive behaviors and that our lives had become unmanageable."



On the left side of a sheet of paper, identify 3-5 situations in which you have engaged in Yes But... discounting and/or ignoring the suggestions or directions of another who has more experience in recovery than you. If you cannot identify at least 3 situations, ask people in your support group, a counselor or sponsor if they have heard this from you.



On the right hand side of the same paper, identify the negative consequences to each situation.

For example:

My wife suggests I not attend a bachelor party but I go anyway.

Everyone was using and I found myself craving the drug.

I took on an unnecessary additional project at work when I was already stressed even though my sponsor had discouraged me from doing so.

I found myself making excuses to not attend recovery meetings.