

IDENTIFY YOUR ANGER TRIGGERS!

A SIMPLE 3-STEP GUIDE



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Why Is This Important?

“Ungoverned anger begets madness.” Seneca

Explosive anger is not healthy. Anger creates havoc in our bodies and can ruin reputations and relationships. So, let's take some steps to understand our triggers and avoid randomly exploding in anger or rage.

A trigger is any word, behavior, or facial expression that sets off an emotional response in you.

In this case, it is anger.

Mastering your anger means becoming consciously aware of the triggers that could potentially provoke an emotional reaction in you at any given time. Your response will be conscious only when you are conscious of your trigger.

However, to master your anger, you must roughly prepare your response beforehand because once the trigger hits, it's simply too late.

If you use this process diligently, you will never explode in anger again.

What Are Triggers?

A trigger is any word, behavior, or facial expression that sets off an emotional response in you.

A trigger can be passive or active and universal or personal.

Passive and Active Triggers

Passive triggers are triggers you have dealt with before and overcome, or triggers that you are not yet conscious of. Active triggers are like open wounds, making you most vulnerable to them at this time. By working with your triggers consciously, you can transform them into passive ones, with some practice.

Universal Triggers

Universal triggers are common to all human beings; personal triggers are specific to you.

These are the five common triggers that we all share as human beings; they are always active.

- Someone is rude to you,
- Someone breaks your trust, deceives, or misleads you,
- Someone rejects and rebuffs you,
- Someone demonstrates that they don't appreciate you,
- Someone violates one of your boundaries,

Personal Triggers

To get your complete set of triggers, we also have to find your personal triggers.

You will have at least two to three additional triggers, much like an allergy, which a particular type of pollen can set off.

To find your personal triggers, think back to your last anger episodes. Identify memorable incidents where you felt intense anger or exploded angrily. Slight irritations do not count.

Select one and ask yourself what happened, and more importantly, what set you off? That is your first trigger.

Identify one or two more incidents by asking yourself who or what else makes you similarly angry. What never fails to provoke you? These are your subsequent personal triggers. Maybe you carry the trauma of not being heard by your parents in your childhood, so whenever you feel someone isn't listening to you, it sets you off due to this painful ingrained childhood memory. Therefore, if you feel unheard, you react in anger.

Finally, reflect on the following eight emotions. Which ones are the emotions most familiar to you? When do you feel this emotion most? What triggers you into anger, fear, sadness, guilt, or shame?

1. **Pride:** You identify with your achievements, status, or possessions and see others as lesser than you.
2. **Anger:** You feel others often disappoint you, don't meet your expectations, or violate your rules.
3. **Desire:** You wish things to be different than they are. You tend to ignore reality.
4. **Fear:** You don't like change and conjure worst-case scenarios in your mind.
5. **Sadness:** You feel you are missing out on something important to you.
6. **Apathy:** You procrastinate and have no energy or the will to act.
7. **Guilt:** You think you should be doing something else for someone else.
8. **Shame:** You feel others are criticizing and looking down on you behind your back.

Your weak spot, for example, could be pride, even though pride may feel empowering and uplifting to you. Pride arises when we are not genuinely confident about ourselves and so we define our value based on external factors, such as achievement, status, and possessions. If you are an individual who is overly proud of your accomplishments and someone criticizes you or your work (your trigger), this will invariably make you angry (your response). Pride turns into anger.

Desire is a tricky one. Let's say your desire is to become super-rich. If you are a passionate person with many wishes, you might be the perfect target for marketers or, in the worst case, scammers. If a clever marketer with a get-rich-quick scheme targets you, it may trigger an expensive impulsive purchase you invariably later regret.

However, for this exercise, focus on whatever could make you angry, but note all other emotional triggers for the future. The desensitizing process is the same.

What Are Responses?

The first preparatory step was to make you aware of your triggers. Awareness is a big step in the right direction. We established in this example that you have at least seven active triggers, which is when:

1. someone is rude to you,
2. someone breaks your trust, deceives, or misleads you,
3. someone rejects and rebuffs you,
4. someone demonstrates that they don't appreciate you,
5. someone violates one of your boundaries,
6. someone criticizes your work, and when
7. someone doesn't listen to you.

The second step is to prepare your response both inwardly and outwardly.

Inward response

You will notice the trigger inwardly impacting you, since you are already consciously aware of it. It will not surprise you or jolt you into a reaction. You have the luxury of feeling the trigger and purposely thinking about what to do next at the same time.

Outward response

The more gracefully, neutrally, and gently you respond to a trigger outwardly, the more mature you have become. Using humor is, for example, a good way of responding, too, though never at the cost of others. You might alternatively choose to say nothing and move on. You can also prepare a more detailed response.

How To Prepare

The trick is to carefully prepare yourself for above mentioned potential triggers and react appropriately with the intent to de-escalate. If you remain calm, you have the luxury of choosing an appropriate response.

Here is something to think about when preparing for and encountering your set of triggers:

- If you respond in anger, the other person has more power over you than you have over yourself. Ask yourself: Do I want others to have power and control over me?
- If you find yourself at a loss for words, respond lightly with “Oh, wow!”, “Oh, my God!” or “That’s a surprise!”. Or say nothing. Register the incident in your mind for later analysis, as with any incident, to learn from it.
- In all painful incidents, there will be at least one upside. Identifying and focusing on the upside reduces the pain and will make you feel better instantly.
- Suppose someone breaks one of your boundaries. If you can, repeat your “no” calmly, re-establish the boundary and stick with it. If it’s more complicated than that, don’t try to repair it at that moment. It is best to have time to think and design your strategy first before you act.
- If someone is rude to you, know that people have different codes of conduct. What is rude to you may not be rude to them. If it is plain rude, ignore the provocation and move on.
- Someone breaks your trust. This one can be harrowing. Use grace to let go and to protect yourself against the blow. Also be grateful that the person has shown their true nature to you. That’s the upside.
- If someone rejects you, you will want to find out if this is personal to you or not. Some people habitually rebuff and reject others, and you are then one of many. Then brush off the incident as irrelevant. If you are the only target, analyze the incident carefully.

- Someone demonstrates that they don't appreciate you and your work or criticize it. This can be painful. Ask for more details and, ideally, an example so that you can understand their message better. The upside of the gift is that they show you how you appear to them and maybe to others. Take it on, reflect, and use it to refine your reputation.
- In most cases, others try to help us by giving us feedback but are not the best communicators. If you feel they intend to be mean and cruel to you, listen to their words and know that this is in fact how they think about themselves. What they criticize is what they blame themselves for, in their minds. This time though, they project the blame out loud to you.
- Someone doesn't listen to you. Don't take it personally. Mostly, it is not your fault. Many people are not good listeners. You will want to use this opportunity to dig deeper into yourself to discover why it is bothering you. Also, analyze how you are coming across and why a person is allowing themselves to ignore you. Reclaim your power and your boundaries and adjust all future interactions accordingly.

Imagine this:

You are in a call with your boss, and she mentions a document you sent her last week. It was a document you had spent a lot of time on and you were quite happy with the results. Expecting her to praise you for the content and for delivering on time, your boss clarifies that it was not what she had expected. Her voice makes you flinch, and you feel irritation rising in you. Since you had prepped for such scenarios, you tell yourself to wait.

In a soft voice, you hear yourself say: "That surprises me; tell me more." Then you wait patiently. Your boss begins by saying that one aspect of an argument was missing; otherwise, the document made lots of sense, apart from some typos.

She had already used some of its content for an important call with clients.

You understood then that your boss is not yet well-versed in giving constructive feedback, but you can handle that. You also silently congratulate yourself for not losing it. See, you say, it's not all that bad.

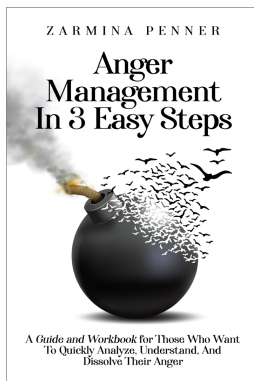
Dear Reader, I want this kind of experience for you, too. :)

Good luck experimenting with the process!

Resources

Book

If there is more to the incident, use my upcoming book to analyze it in-depth. You will understand how to find the cause and be able to design the most appropriate and sustainable solution for the case at hand. I will inform you when the book is published, providing you are on my mailing list. If you are uncertain if you are and are interested, do reach out to me. (Publishing date on amazon set for June 2022).



Community

If you enjoyed this guide, you are the perfect fit to join our "Live Your Best Professional Life" community of like-minded people who take charge of their professional lives and want to support each other on the journey. We would love you to join us! (Kick-off is set for June 2022; but you can sign up any time)

[Click here to join.](#)

