

FINDING PEACE WITHIN

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# THE INNER COMPASS

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UNIT 4:  
UNDERSTANDING TRIGGERS



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# UNIT 4:

## UNDERSTANDING TRIGGERS

In this unit we will look at the area of triggers.  
Awareness is the first step to dealing with anything in our lives.  
If we are not aware of a problem, we will be unable  
to do anything about it.

In learning to become aware of our triggers, we will look at what they are and how we can identify them, how they operate in our lives (what happens to us physically when we are triggered) and how we can manage them.

### WHAT ARE TRIGGERS?

A lot of research has been done over recent years on this subject by scientists, philosophers, and psychiatrists and, based on this research, we are able to identify two types of triggers.

Firstly, the kind of trigger that shows up as an uncomfortable feeling. The feeling we have when we know something is wrong but we just can't "put our finger on" what it is. It can be described as a lack of peace. Something has happened to move us away from feeling "okay" to feeling uncomfortable. Perhaps we are in a situation where we feel unsafe or it may be a warning to pay attention to what is

going on around us. We have all experienced this kind of trigger. The feeling we get when we start to make plans to do something but they just don't "sit right" and there is a constant feeling of uneasiness. We can also describe this form of trigger as our intuition trying to tell us something or instruct us to go in a different direction. Simply put, we have recognised that "I was okay and now I'm not."

And then there is the kind of trigger that I want to talk about in this unit. It is described by Dr Caroline Leaf, a neuroscientist and author, as "an adrenaline pumping, heart pounding, experience." Something has happened to make us so mad, or afraid that our heart is pounding and we may not even know exactly why. In fact, from the outside, our behaviour may seem like a huge over-reaction to a particular situation. However it is important to be aware that when we are triggered, we are not dealing with one situation. The very reason we are triggered, is because something similar has happened to us

before and we are reacting out of that memory (or memories), and those feelings that are attached to those memories as they come flooding back to us through this current experience.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO US WHEN WE ARE TRIGGERED?

Triggers block our ability to think clearly. Every memory from our past, has an emotion attached to it and when an event happens to us in our present situation, our brain searches to find a memory in our subconscious that is related to that event to bring "context" to the situation. If it finds positive events in the memory bank, it will bring with it positive emotions such as joy and happiness. If it finds negative events in the memory bank, it will cause negative emotions to come rushing into the brain along with those memories.

Let me give you an example from my own life. From a very young age I was terrified of my father and when I moved to another country in my early thirties I didn't see or hear from him for at least ten years. Years later I went back for a holiday to that country and I decided to visit my dad. As I sat in the car waiting to go into his office, I experienced the same fear and terror that I used to feel as a child. Why? I was now almost 40 years old, but the memories had brought up those same emotions of fear I used to have as a child. The reason for this is because they had been stored in my subconscious and a current situation sent brain waves searching for "context" about my dad. The memories of our relationship brought with them the feelings I had about my dad all those years ago.

Of course this all seemed completely irrational to the person I was with. I was older and had no physical reason to be scared of my dad at this age, yet I was feeling the same feelings I had when I was 10 years old.

This is often what is going on when a person experiences road rage. We see their behaviour as a complete over reaction to a situation, however we don't know what that person has been through in the past and what triggered them to behave this way. I'm not making an excuse for their behaviour (there are no excuses for bad behaviour), however it is the reason for their behaviour. A memory could have come flooding back reminding that person about a time in their past when they were ignored, abandoned or abused and being cut off in the traffic brought back those same emotions.

These are two quite extreme examples, but smaller triggers happen to us every day. Someone says something that reminds us of a person, or reminds us of something someone else said to us in our past, and we are taken back to the way we felt at that time. Perhaps we felt unworthy, inadequate, ignored, unloved... those feelings will come flooding back and when this happens, the trigger causes us to behave in a way that is not consistent with our usual character and we are seen to "over react" to a situation.

### WE CAN BE TRIGGERED AT ANY TIME WE ARE REMINDED OF SOMETHING FROM OUR PAST THAT HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON US.

In this course we are concentrating on finding a way to live a life of peace, no matter what happens around us, and we have learnt that the peace we are seeking is within us.

In fact, Colossians 3:15 says, "And let the peace (soul harmony which comes) from Christ (within) rule (act as umpire continually) in your hearts (deciding and settling with finality all questions that arise in your minds.)"

One of the main problems about losing our peace

(reacting to triggers) is that we struggle to think clearly and are unable to make accurate decisions. In other words, triggers block our ability to think clearly and they affect our ability to make healthy decisions.

## HOW CAN WE RECOGNISE THEM?

It is very important that we train ourselves to recognise these triggers whilst they are still at a feeling of discomfort, before they turn into an “adrenaline pumping, heart pounding experience.” If we can become aware of the feeling of “I was okay and now I am not,” and how it presents itself in our bodies, we can manage them at that point and they will be far less likely to move to a full blown trigger.

## HOW CAN WE MANAGE THEM?

The solution to dealing with triggers is now accepted by many authors on this subject; integrate the right and left hand side of the brain. This means to find a way to engage the left hand side of the brain when we are feeling that emotion in our bodies. When we are in a triggered state we are operating out of the right hand side of the brain; the emotional, feeling side. Acknowledging those feelings by engaging the left hand side of the brain is of vital importance. When we acknowledge the feelings we are currently experiencing we are forcing both sides of our brain to function.

The best way to do this by speak out loud and naming the feeling: Use the words, *I feel*. I feel sad, angry etc. And then tell yourself that it is okay to feel those feelings. Take a deep breath and allow yourself to fully feel that feeling. Give yourself permission to feel that feeling for a few seconds, then allow it to pass through your body. Feelings are energy. They are a vibrational force. When we focus on them, and physically allow them to pass through our bodies, that negative force will

disappear. It helps to stand with two feet firmly on the ground and imagine this negative feeling (or force) leaving your body, going out through your feet and into the floor. Within thirty to sixty seconds you will no longer feel that negative feeling in your body. It will have dissipated.

If we don't allow ourselves the time and space to free our bodies of this negative energy, it will remain there and most likely it will increase. If we try to suppress the emotion, most often it will explode somewhere else or at some other time. Suppressing the emotion is never the answer.

Some people find it helpful to visualise a stream and they imagine placing their negative feelings in the stream as they watch them disappear. Whatever you choose to do, it is important to engage the left hand side of the brain by talking aloud through this process.

Speaking the feeling out loud is a way to observe your own thinking. When we observe our thoughts and emotions we can acknowledge them, analyse them, and choose to release them.

What happens when we do this is that we create a new path of action. The brain is plastic and when we bring a thought into our conscious mind we can rewire it. We can choose a different path from the one it used to take when we found ourselves in similar situations in that past. The more often we train our brain to choose this new path, the sooner it will become a habit and form a new behaviour pattern. Our goal in life is to be able to balance both intellect and emotion, for we were given both for a reason. Daniel Goleman states this perfectly:

*“If we can manage our emotions, that is, blend emotion and thought, we increase the chances that our decisions will be more effective and our lives more adaptive. This is the challenge of emotional management – neither to suppress feelings nor vent*

*them but to reflect on them, integrate them with our thinking, and use them as a source of information and inspiration for intelligent decision making."*

When we can managing our emotions (and therefore our triggers) we will be able to make better decisions and live healthier, happier , more peaceful lives.

*Listen to the affirmation (MP3) on dealing with triggers. Listen to it as often as you can and repeat the phrases aloud if possible. Our words are like seeds and they have transformative power. As you speak these words, things will begin to change for you and you will begin to move along your path towards freedom.*

## **Exercise:**

### **What are your most common triggers?**

All of us have experienced situations where we have felt uncomfortable or even experienced full blown triggers over something seemingly small. Can you identify where those negative emotions came from? Can you identify an event that occurred in your past that causes you to continually "react" to a particular event or person in a negative way?

For me, it is when I perceive that someone has treated me unfairly. As a child I was often blamed for things I did not do and now I have to watch my reaction to situations like these. I am learning to integrated the left hand side of my brain when I feel these emotions by reminding myself that I am not dealing with my father or my past any longer. I name the feeling, and allow it to pass through my body.

Practise that now... think of an experience that has upset you in the past. Can you feel the feeling? Can you name the feeling? Recognise where it is sitting in your body and allow it to move through your body and out through your feet, into the floor. Use this technique every time you feel a negative emotion coming up.

## **Journal Ideas:**

Write a list of situations where you have been triggered, or over-reacted, in the past few weeks/ months. Can you identify what happened and why you reacted to that situation? Ask for help to become aware of these situations in your future so that you can deal with them in a more appropriate way

Congratulations!

You have completed Unit 4 on Understanding Triggers.

Units 5 - 7 are waiting for you.

If you have not completed the units prior to this one, or read the introduction to the course, it is advisable to do so before you begin Unit 5. This course is designed as building blocks to help you build a future that is totally different from your past. Having a strong foundation is essential for a building to stand the storms of life. The Introduction and previous units will give you that foundation.

Go to:

[www.rechartyourcourse.com](http://www.rechartyourcourse.com)  
and download them for free!



[Skye@rechartyourcourse.com](mailto:Skye@rechartyourcourse.com)

Please email me if this unit has impacted your life. I would love to hear from you!

*Skye*

## The Inner Compass

There are 7 units in The Inner Compass Programme. All of them are free for you to download immediately. There is also a video with each unit, that will help you gain clarity and understanding of the principles taught, as well as a short meditation that you can listen to as often as you desire.

### Unit 1: Finding Peace Within

Many of us have spent years searching for peace. I travelled the world trying to find a "place" where I would feel good about myself, comfortable with myself. The search for peace stops when we realise we have been looking in all the wrong places... and go within.

### Unit 2: Self-Worth

A strong sense of self-worth is crucial to our well-being. When we base our self-worth on what others think of us or how others view us, we become addicted to pleasing them. Find freedom to become yourself... the real, authentic person you were created to be.

### Unit 3: Identity

When we discover our true north, our true identity, we find peace and tranquillity no matter what our circumstances. Discover your unique identity and be free to live it!

### Unit 4: Understanding Triggers

What are triggers, how do they affect our lives and how can we overcome them? Be free from the emotions of the past... forever!

### Unit 5: Thoughts Create Habits.

Our thoughts are like seeds and every thought-seed we plant in our minds grows to form habits which produce the circumstances in our lives. If we want to change our circumstances, we must start by changing what we think about!

### Unit 6: The Power of Our Words

If we knew the power of our words, we would never speak another negative word again. Identify your negative self-talk and discover how to change it!

### Unit 7: We Change Our Lives Through Our Choices

Do we really have the ability to make our own choices or is our past programming dictating to us how we live our lives? This revelation will change your life!

This course was written by Skye McKenzie and it is available for you to download for FREE!

[www.rechartyourcourse.com](http://www.rechartyourcourse.com)