

Identifying Your Triggers

Understanding your triggers is a crucial step in managing addiction and maintaining recovery. Triggers are people, places, emotions, or situations that can prompt cravings or lead to behaviors tied to addiction. While some triggers are obvious—like being around substances—others can be subtle, such as stress, loneliness, or even specific memories.

This worksheet is designed to help you identify your personal triggers and understand how they impact your thoughts, emotions, and actions. By recognizing these patterns, you can begin to take control and develop healthier responses to challenging situations.

PART 1: Mapping Your Triggers and Responses

Use this section to explore specific situations where you've encountered triggers, how you responded, and how it affected your thoughts, emotions, and physical state. The outcome of the situation could be positive or negative.

Situation & Response to Trigger

Attending a party where alcohol is being served, and several people are drinking. I felt the urge to join in but stepped outside. Instead, I texted a supportive friend and reminded myself of the reasons for staying sober.

Before

1 What were you feeling physically?

Heart racing, hands feel clammy, and experiencing dry mouth

2 What were you thinking about?

"I can't handle this. Everyone else is drinking, and I'm missing out. Just one drink won't hurt."

3 How did you feel emotionally?

Overwhelmed, anxious, and isolated.

After

1 What were you feeling physically?

My heart rate slowed, I stopped sweating, and my breathing returned to normal.

2 What thoughts did you have?

"I can leave if I need to. Staying sober is more important than fitting in at this party. I've gotten through moments like this before."

3 How did you feel emotionally?

Relieved and proud for sticking to my commitment to sobriety.



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Instructions: Fill in the following section to explore a specific situation where you've encountered a trigger and responded **NEGATIVELY**. Record how it affected your thoughts, emotions, and physical state.

Situation & Response to Trigger

Before

1 What were you feeling physically?

2 What were you thinking about?

3 How did you feel emotionally?

After

1 What were you feeling physically?

2 What thoughts did you have?

3 How did you feel emotionally?



Identifying Your Triggers

Instructions: Fill in the following section to explore a specific situation where you've encountered a trigger and responded **POSITIVELY**. Record how it affected your thoughts, emotions, and physical state.

Situation & Response to Trigger

Before

1 What were you feeling physically?

2 What were you thinking about?

3 How did you feel emotionally?

After

1 What were you feeling physically?

2 What thoughts did you have?

3 How did you feel emotionally?



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PART 2: Identify Patterns & Exploring the Impact

Look for patterns in the situations or thoughts that trigger you. Recognizing these patterns will help you anticipate when a trigger might arise and prepare yourself to manage it more effectively.

Are there common themes, people or situations that often trigger you?

Are there any early warning signs or cues that help you recognize when you're being triggered?

What does your inner dialogue sound like when you feel triggered?

How do your triggers affect your behavior or decision-making?



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What adjustments could you make in your daily routine to reduce common triggers?

How can you reframe or challenge negative thoughts associated with your triggers?

PART 3: Develop Coping Strategies

Learn coping strategies that can help you manage your triggers in challenging situations. To learn more about coping skills you can use, scan the QR code below.

- If possible, physically leave the situation or environment that is triggering you. Distance can help reduce the intensity of the craving and give you time to regroup.
- Take some deep breaths. Try to inhale through your nose for a count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 7, and then exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of 8. Repeat 5 times.
- Ground yourself with the 5-4-3-2-1 method. Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- Call or text a trusted friend, family member, sponsor, or therapist.

- Engage in something that occupies your mind and body, such as exercising, cleaning, listening to music, or a creative hobby.
- Gradually tense and then relax different muscle groups in your body, from head to toe, to release physical tension and promote relaxation.
- Replace negative thoughts with affirming ones like, "This feeling will pass," or, "I've overcome this before, and I can do it again." Reminding yourself of your strength and goals can empower you.
- Think about why you're committed to recovery. Visualize the positive outcomes of staying sober, such as improved health, relationships, and personal growth.

