



Identifying Triggers

Identifying Triggers and Themes of Maladaptive Emotions

Identify a feeling you often regret having. Do you sometimes get angry and then wish you hadn't? Do you feel sad, desperate, or humiliated and regret what you say or do? Fill out the following sheet and keep it as a logbook.

1. What emotion do you feel that you would prefer not to?
2. Did you recognize the emotion yourself or did others tell you?
3. What happened before you felt this emotion? Describe it in as much detail as possible.
4. What are the characteristics of the situation that led to this feeling? If you were to tell the story of what happened, what would the theme be? Who were the main players? What were the situation, the plot, and the conclusion? Was the theme one of abandonment, domination, being slighted, being deprived, or being dependent? How would you describe the theme that seems to trigger this feeling for you?
5. What are the origins of this story and its themes in your life? From where are you transporting this? Of what does it remind you?
6. Label this trigger for yourself. "I have an emotional reaction that I regret when X happens." Fill in the X with one of the following feelings:
 - I feel deprived.
 - I am being teased.
 - I am feeling looked over or left out.

- I feel criticized.
- I feel controlled.
- I feel unimportant.
- I feel competitive.
- I am alone.
- Other. _____

Be aware that this situation is a trigger for your anger, sadness, fear, shame, or some other emotion you regret having. Next time you experience this feeling, ask yourself, "Am I reacting to a trigger?"