

WHAT IS A TRIGGERING EVENT: *...and how does it impact us?*

Video by Kathy Obear, Ed.D.
www.drkathyobear.com

COMPANION DISCUSSION GUIDE:

Host A “LUNCH & LEARN” for employees in your organization

My hope is this Companion Discussion Guide provides a framework to aid you in leading 45+ minute Lunch & Learn sessions in your organization. These prompts and discussion questions are intended to help participants deepen their understanding of what happens during difficult, triggering situations and to increase their capacity to effectively both talk about triggering events and, hopefully, minimize them in the future.

1. WELCOME

- Introduce yourself
- Talk a brief moment about why you wanted to hold this session. Possible talking points:
 - Mention that you sometimes feel triggered
 - Can feel caught off-guard by your reactions
 - Want employees to be able to talk more about these dynamics when they occur
 - And find ways to respond effectively
 - But we first need to understand more about triggering events

2. INTRODUCE THE 10-MINUTE VIDEO. SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS:

- Have you ever felt an unexpected wave of emotions at work?
- When someone said or did something that “pushed your buttons?”
- Kathy Obear calls these moment, “triggering events”
- In this video she highlights:
 - What is a triggering event
 - How we can be impacted by them
 - And possibly then impact others

3. GIVE A QUICK OVERVIEW OF THE FLOW FOR THE LUNCH & LEARN

- We'll watch the 10-minute video
- Discuss it in large and/or small groups to apply our insights to the work environment
- We will end by ____.

4. ASK PARTICIPANTS A FEW RHETORICAL QUESTIONS RIGHT BEFORE YOU START THE VIDEO.

- As we watch this short video, think about:
 - Have you ever felt triggered at work?
 - What are some of the common behaviors or comments that trigger you?

5. SHOW THE VIDEO, THEN LEAD A DISCUSSION. POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Depending on the time, you can ask these questions in the full group or have people talk about some of them in pairs of small groups before you discuss them in the large group. You may have time to explore 6-8+ of these questions.
- Who can relate to feeling triggered at work? At home? Out in the world?
 - Can you say more?
 - (You can also ask people to give a show of hands; then have 1-2 people share)
- Who has felt deeply triggered and reacted productively? In ways that aligned with organizational goals and expectations?
 - Can you say more?
 - (You can also ask people to give a show of hands; then have 1-2 people share)
- How many of you are like me, and have sometimes reacted in ways that were counter-productive? Or you regretted later?
- Who can relate to reacting in a “snap,” automatically and unconsciously?
 - Can you say more?
 - (You can also ask people to give a show of hands; then have 1-2 people share)



- To the whole group: Do you tend to go into the: (ask for a show of hands)
 - Fight mode?
 - Flight mode?
 - Freeze mode?
 - All of the above?
- What are some of the comments or behaviors that can be triggering for you? No names, just share some generic situations.
 - (Collect up 5+)
- What are some of the feelings you have had in those moments?
 - (Collect up 5-8+)
- Using a scale of 0-10, with 10 being very intense, how strong were your emotional reactions when you felt triggered?
 - Invite 3-5 people to answer
 - (You can ask: “Who relates?”)
- What aspect of the video did you particularly relate to or appreciate?
- How, if at all, did you relate to the stories in the video?
- The examples were mostly about gender and class/position dynamics. When have you seen or experienced similar situations as well as those related to other areas of inclusion and exclusion?
- Can anyone else relate to being distracted and replaying the situation over and over in your mind? Can you say more?
- What has been the negative impact on you and others in difficult, triggering situations?
 - How is the work environment impacted?
- What do you think of her comment, “I can’t control what happens around me, but I can choose how I will respond in that moment.”
- What are some ideas to minimize triggering comments and actions in the workplace?
- What can we do if we feel triggered at work?

- How can we support each other when we feel triggered?
 - To help us de-escalate our emotions to a level from which we can choose an effective response?
- What topics would you like to discuss in future Lunch & Learn sessions?

6. THANK PEOPLE FOR COMING AND FOR THE CONVERSATION.

LOGISTICS TO CONSIDER:

1. Schedule the Lunch & Learn in a room that is easily accessible and has internet and audio.
2. Do a test run to make sure you can access the video off of my website in that room.
3. Consider which version you want to show:
 - With captions
 - Without captions
4. Consider if you want to have some beverages and dessert for the participants.
5. Consider if you want to let your supervisor and Human Resource staff know you plan to host this session.

SUGGESTED MARKETING:

1. You may want to invite people personally, using word-of-mouth.
2. You may want to create a more formal announcement, to include:
 - Title, such as: Recognizing What Happens in Difficult, Triggering Situations at Work” or “What is a triggering event...how does it impact us?”
 - Location and time
 - Remind folks to bring their lunch; let them know if beverages and dessert will be provided

I hope you have powerful discussions full of insights and increasing self-awareness! If you have any questions or want to share how the session went, please contact me <https://drkathyobear.com/contact/>

I wish you all the best as you help others to take this first step to deepen their capacity to effectively navigate difficult, triggering situations in the workplace.