Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace
How to control your reactions and respond effectively

Program Workbook
By Kathy Obear, Ed.D.
You don't have to be miserable at work. You don't have to fight every battle or suffer fools any longer. You don't have to live in fear that your colleagues and supervisor will think you are incompetent when you are about to explode in anger or burst into tears.

This program will help you respond effectively in difficult situations and leave with your integrity intact.

I know you can control your emotional reactions because I have helped thousands of leaders navigate challenging, emotional workplace dilemmas.

My wish for you is to find the respect and joy you deserve at work. You can speak your truth and stand in your power. I hope you join me on this journey.
Dr. Kathy Obear has over 30 years of experience as an organizational development consultant and trainer specializing in creating inclusion, team and organizational effectiveness, conflict resolution, and change management. She has given speeches, facilitated training sessions, and consulted to top leaders at hundreds of universities, corporations, human service agencies, and K-12 organizations across the United States and internationally designed to increase the passion, competence, and commitment to create inclusive environments for all members of the organization. Kathy is regarded as an expert at training leaders and facilitators to navigate difficult dialogues and triggering events. She is a certified Life Coach and an Executive Coach and delights in supporting people to reach their potential and live their best life.

Kathy Obear, Ed.D.
# The Six Part Process

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Part 1

What Pushes Your Buttons?

Video Session 1

The first step to having more control over your emotions at work is to recognize the types of situations and comments that set you off or make you want to shut down and leave. Knowing your “hot buttons” and “triggers” will not only help you anticipate and prepare how to better respond, but also give you insights into how to avoid these incidents in the first place.

In this initial session you will identify the common difficult workplace situations in which you feel unexpected, intense emotional reactions and respond in unproductive ways. You no longer have to automatically react like this ever again. There is a way out.
Further Consequences of Mismanaged Difficult Situations

**Directions:** As you review the following, check (✓) which of these seem familiar to you in your current work environment.

- There is much more tension, stress, discomfort and conflict in the workplace
- Our work relationships are damaged, possibly beyond repair
- We end up over-working to complete projects when others refuse to work with us or passive-aggressively “forget” to complete assignments on time
- Peers and supervisors don’t trust us or depend on us as much
- We are left out of the loop and not included in important discussions and meetings
- Others hold grudges towards us and gossip in ways that may damage our reputation
- We are often misunderstood and misinterpreted
- We keep obsessing about the difficult dynamics and miss what’s going on around us in the present moment
- Team dynamics feel more competitive than collegial
- There is far more debating as people try to win arguments rather than find creative solutions to workplace dilemmas
- We often feel guilty or ashamed for how we reacted
- We waste a lot of time and energy in follow-up meetings and workplace gossip
- We feel depleted, exhausted, alone, and isolated
How Do You React in Less Than Productive Ways

Directions: Below, write about a recent difficult workplace situation in which you felt a wave of unexpected, intense emotions and you reacted “on automatic pilot” in a way you later regretted.

What happened?

How did you feel?

What did you do?
What was unproductive about your reaction? How did it negatively impact others?

As you look back, how would you have wanted to react in more productive ways?
A Time You Responded Effectively

Directions: Below, write about a recent difficult workplace situation in which you felt a wave of unexpected, intense emotions and you reacted in effective, productive ways that aligned with your core values and furthered organizational goals.

What happened?

How did you feel?

What did you do?
What was productive about your reaction? How did it positively impact others? And advance organizational goals?

As you look back, what do you believe helped you to respond effectively in this situation?
Step 1: Identify Your Common Hot Buttons

**Directions:** Below is a list of some of the difficult workplace situations people have shared with me over the years. As you read each one, consider how much of an emotional reaction you would most likely have in that situation. Use the following -10 to +10 scale to rate each item.

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<th>(+) Positive Triggered Emotions</th>
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### A When someone (colleague, direct report, supervisor, client, etc.):

- Doesn’t do what you ask or follow your instructions
- Doesn’t acknowledge or respect your leadership
- Takes over as you are leading a meeting or making a presentation
- Doesn’t follow through on what they said they would do
- Produces low-quality work
- Keeps making the same mistakes
- Is not very competent at their job
- Takes advantage of you
- Takes your idea and presents it as their own
- Takes credit for your work
- Keeps you out of the loop or excludes you from important conversations
### Step 1: Identify Your Common Hot Buttons, page 2 of 6

- Lies to you
- Engages in side conversations during meetings
- Is on their computer or cell phone during meetings when you are talking to them
- Gets distracted when they are talking to you
- Goes behind your back to undermine you
- Gossips about you
- Gets angry about what you said or did
- Is moving too slowly, slowing down your agenda
- Tries to derail the planned approach or agenda
- Is late and keeps you waiting
- Interrupts you or others
- Ignores your ideas
- Cuts off the conversation before you have a chance to express your thoughts
- Loves an idea only after someone else suggests something very similar to what you had recently said
- Dismisses your ideas
- Rephrases or rewords your comments
- "Corrects" you in public
- Is belittling or demeaning
- Is controlling
- Dominates the air time
- Continually brings the conversation back to their ideas and opinions
- Will not consider your input and thoughts
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Hot Button</th>
<th>Box</th>
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<tr>
<td>Keeps pushing their point</td>
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<td>Is unwilling to listen to others</td>
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<td>Has a very blunt or impersonal style</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has an aggressive or forceful style</td>
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<td>Disrupts the conversation with “jokes,” inappropriate laughter</td>
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<td>Makes snide, sarcastic, or passive aggressive comments</td>
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<td>Is arrogant or self-righteous</td>
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<td>Is patronizing or condescending</td>
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<td>Makes an insensitive or offensive comment</td>
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<td>Raises their voice to try to silence you or others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrates bullying or threatening behavior</td>
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<td>Wants others to calm down, just “get over it,” and move on</td>
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<td>Accuses others of complaining when they raise concerns about exclusion or what is not working well</td>
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<td>Only focuses on how much progress has been made, rather than on how much more needs to change</td>
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<td>Shuts down and withdraws if you try to confront them</td>
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<td>Is “set in their ways” and unwilling to shift their perspective</td>
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<td>Pressures you or others to assimilate, fit in, and “not rock the boat”</td>
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<td>Mistakenly assumes someone else is the leader when you are</td>
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<td>Gives excuses or PLEs (Perfectly Logical Explanations) for disrespectful comments and behaviors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rationalizes away disrespectful and inappropriate treatment of others as individual incidents or the result of something the target of the behavior did or failed to do</td>
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<tr>
<td>Defends others whose behavior is disrespectful and offensive</td>
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Step 1: Identify Your Common Hot Buttons, page 4 of 6

- Colludes and “goes along to get along”
- Will only focus on their “good intent,” and not the impact of their behavior
- Is only focused on themselves as a “good person” and refuses to acknowledge the cumulative impact of their repeated negative behaviors
- Refuses to consider feedback from you or others
- Debates and disagrees with everything you say
- Believes they are always right
- Pouts if they don’t get their way
- Challenges the validity of the information or statistics being presented
- Criticizes your style or approach
- Never gives any positive or appreciative feedback
- Questions your competency or that of others
- Gives unsolicited coaching or advice on how you should act, think, or feel
- Only appreciates and acknowledges other people’s work, not yours
- Is given a prime opportunity to advance but you are not, even though you have far more experience and competence
- Doesn’t volunteer for difficult team assignments and you end up doing all the work
- Does something unethical or dishonest
- Is talking loudly in an impromptu meeting outside your office or cubicle
- Introduces your peers with their titles or degrees, and introduces you by your first name
- Sends you a blasting, critical email and copies your supervisor
- Is more concerned with protecting their “turf” than achieving the overall goals
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When your supervisor or manager:

- Insists on you doing something a certain way, then changes their mind after you have invested significant time and energy in the project
- Micromanages and second-guesses you
- Is controlling rather than inspiring and empowering
- Expects that you stop what you are doing and focus on what they want you to do
- Doesn’t ask for your input in decisions that affect your work
- Doesn’t give you as much guidance and direction as you ask for, and then is highly critical of the outcome you produced
- Expresses their disappointment in you, your work
- Gives you very vague, critical feedback
- Is more ego-driven than mission-driven
- Wastes your time in mismanaged meetings
- Doesn’t pass along critical information from senior leaders
- Avoids holding all employees accountable for high-quality work
- Has favorites and “go to” members of the team
- Avoids making the hard decisions and makes you play the “bad cop”
- Does not hold people accountable for low quality work, poor performance
- Accuses you of something you did not do
- Gets defensive and argumentative
- Confronts you about your behavior but not others who do the same thing
- Expects you to work late and come in early for no additional compensation
Is angry with you

Is only concerned with “moving up the ladder” and “looking good” to the leader

Gives you a challenging “stretch” assignment (something “positive” can still be triggering)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make a mistake or an error</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do or say something inappropriate or offensive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do not know the answer to a question</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t know what to say or do next</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don’t have a solution to a problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can’t figure out how to effectively respond in a difficult situation</td>
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<td>Believe the conversation is about to “get out of control”</td>
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<td>Are the only person to bring up controversial issues</td>
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<td>Have a strong opinion and no one else agrees with you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Get promoted to an exciting new position (something “positive” can still be triggering)</td>
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Identify Why You React

Video Session 2

I used to think that everyone else caused my emotions. I gave all my power away when I said, “You made me angry!” or “You embarrassed me!” The truth is that other people’s comments and behaviors may “push your buttons,” but you have been carrying those buttons around, often for a long time.

In this session you will explore the seven types of “intrapersonal roots” that fuel your automatic reactions. You no longer have to feel out of control and overwhelmed. You can take back your power and choose how you want to respond.
The Triggering Event Cycle

1. A stimulus occurs.
2. The stimulus triggers our intrapersonal roots.
3. Our cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions are shaped by our interpretation of what we experience.
4. The intentions that fuel our reaction are influenced by how we make meaning of the situation.
5. We react to the stimulus.
6. Our reaction may be an additional trigger for others and/or for us.
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Triggering Event Traffic Circle

Adapted from graphic developed by Sam Killermann in Unlocking the Magic of Facilitation. Used with permission.
Intrapersonal Roots
Identifying Your Intrapersonal “Roots”

Directions: Think about a recent triggering situation in the workplace. As you review each of the 7 types of intrapersonal roots, make some notes about what you believe were possibly the various factors or “roots” that contributed to your feeling triggered.

Root 1: Current Life Issues and Dynamics

When things are going well in our lives, we are generally less likely to feel triggered and we let comments “roll off our backs.” But when daily stressors build up and deplete our protective shield, we are far more likely to feel triggered. Examples of current life issues and dynamics include: financial concerns, fatigue and burnout, relationship dynamics, illness, problems at work or among family members, deadlines, and angst over national or world crises.

Question: A helpful question to ask ourselves when we feel triggered is, “How might the current dynamics and issues in my life be impacting my ability to feel centered and respond effectively in this moment?”

Directions: What are some of the current life issues and dynamics that may have contributed to your susceptibility to being triggered?

- Financial concerns
- Fatigue and burnout
- Relationship dynamics
- Illness
- Problems at work or among family members
- Deadlines
- Angst over national or world crises
Root 2: Cumulative Impact of Recent Experiences

This intrapersonal root involves the cumulative impact from similar situations that occur within a short period of time, like the “final straw.” If we hold in or stuff our emotional reactions to earlier incidents, our feelings build up over time. The intensity of our triggered reaction in the moment may be disproportionate to the current circumstance because we are reacting out of the cumulative impact of several previous situations. These similar situations may be related to the same person or different people. They may have happened to us or to people we know and care about.

**Question:** To identify if we are experiencing cumulative impact, it may be helpful to ask ourselves, “How does this situation feel familiar?” or “How might this be connected to other recent events?”

**Directions:** What are some of the recent triggering situations that may have contributed to the cumulative impact you experienced in this moment?
Recognizing Cumulative Impact

Directions: Think about a time you felt triggered that may have been related to cumulative impact. Make some notes below:

(-) Negative Triggered Emotions

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

(+) Positive Triggered Emotions

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

High Moderate Mild

Mild Moderate High

- How triggered did you feel the first time it happened?

- The second?

- The third?

- The fourth?

How effectively did you respond each time?

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Recognizing the Impact of Social Identity Groups

The social identity groups of the person whose behavior is the source of our trigger is usually a significant factor in how emotional we feel. We may be more or less reactive given their combination of group memberships, including their age, hierarchical position, years of experience, race, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, disability status, religion/spiritual practice, etc. Given the same behavior, we give some people a pass and the benefit of the doubt while, for others, we may have a more intense reaction.

Directions: Use the -10 to +10 scale to note how triggered you might feel given the different social identity groups of the various people involved. In addition, note 1-2 reasons for your varying reactions.

- Someone challenges and criticizes you as you are making a presentation.

Would you feel any differently if the comments came from someone who was a male colleague? Or one of the youngest members of the group? Or a close female friend of yours?

© Dr. Kathy Obear
Someone is having a side conversation during a meeting while you are talking.

Would you feel any differently if the behaviors were from your supervisor? Or from someone who is a different sex or race than you? Or an older, more experienced colleague you do not particularly like?

During a casual lunch, a colleague is making demeaning and belittling comments about another co-worker.

Would you feel any differently if the colleague is female, male or transgender? A brand new employee? Or the executive secretary to the leader?
Social Identity Groups Matter

Directions: Think about a difficult workplace situation in which you had an intense emotional reaction and make some notes below:

Briefly describe the situation.

How intense was your emotional reaction on the scale -10 to +10?

What were the key social identity groups of the key people involved?

Imagine what different social identity groups of those involved might have resulted in your:

> Feeling less emotional?


Feeling more emotional?

Why do you think you might have had these varying reactions, given the different social identity groups of those involved?

As you continue to reflect on your common triggers, it is useful to think about the following questions:

- Do you have the same level of emotional reactions to everyone who exhibits this behavior?

- Are there patterns related to the social identity groups of the people involved in these difficult situations that may cause you to feel more or less emotional?
Root 3: Unresolved
Unfinished Business and Old Wounds

I may have pushed my buttons, but I didn’t install them.
– Marshall Rosenberg

Current situations may reactivate memories and emotions from our past. If we do not feel resolved around past situations it is like we wear them on our bodies like “buttons” that can be pushed by others. When we have “hooked our history” we may unconsciously relive the past event in the moment. As a result, our triggered reactions are more directly connected to these unresolved issues, not necessarily to what is occurring in the present moment.

Question: During times I wonder if I may have restimulated old issues and wounds, it is useful to ask myself, “How, if at all, does this situation remind me of any old, unresolved issues or past traumas?” “Who comes to mind as I think about the possible connection between the current situation and old issues or wounds?” and “How is this person a mirror of me?”

Directions: Below, think about a difficult situation. Note the possible unresolved old issues and unfinished business that may have been retriggered in this situation.

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Root 3: Identify Unresolved Issues and Old Wounds

Directions: Recognizing how our current reactions may be powered by unresolved old wounds and unfinished business can help us to differentiate between the retriggersed roots and what is actually occurring in the present moment. Take some time to create a quiet comfortable, supportive, and safe space for yourself. When you feel centered and present, think about a time you felt deeply triggered and reflect on the following questions:

Does this situation remind me of one or more past experiences?

Do any specific people from my past come to mind as I think about this current incident?
Step 2: Identify Unresolved Issues and Old Wounds, page 2 of 4

The following prompts may be helpful when you identify an old issue or situation that feels connected to a current trigger:

Write out the details of the old situation. (Choose a format that you are confident will be secure and confidential.)

Who was involved?

- Who was involved?

What happened?

- What happened?

How did you feel?

- How did you feel?

How did you react?

- How did you react?

Did anyone speak up or try to help/support you?

- Did anyone speak up or try to help/support you?

How were you impacted by this situation?

- How were you impacted by this situation?
As specifically as you can be, write out what you now wish you had said or done in that situation.

[Blank line]

Write about what you wish someone else had done to interrupt the situation and/or support you in the process.

[Blank line]

Then write out what you would like to say to this person(s) now if you had the opportunity (I am not recommending you confront them, just that you reclaim your voice and personal power.)
What feelings are coming up for you as you reflect and write about this situation? (Give yourself the gift of release and express these feelings fully ~ to a trusted friend or counselor; through art; as you go running; or by yourself in a safe, comfortable space.)

After you have identified and expressed your feelings, you may gain some deeper insights into the situation and yourself. It may be helpful to collect these in a journal or below.
Root 4: Identify Your Fears

When we are carrying any fear or anxiety into a situation we are more likely to feel triggered than during times we are centered, grounded, and confident. Deepening our capacity to identify the types of fears that may be driving our triggered reactions can help us more quickly recognize them in the moment and increase our ability to choose courage over fear.

Question: It is important that we identify the fears and anxieties that could be the root of our triggered reactions. Helpful questions to ask include, “What am I afraid could happen?” and “What am I afraid of losing?” After recognizing each fear, it can be useful to use the tool called the “Ladder of Fear” to search for any deeper issues or anxieties by asking over and over, “So if this fear were to come true, then what else am I afraid could happen?”

Directions: Review each fear below and check off (✓) all that feel familiar to you:

- My personal issues will become the focus of the conversation: all eyes will be on me.
- I will lose credibility
- If I cry and show emotion, people will think less of me....
- I won’t be able to manage the situation.
- The conversation will “get out of control.”
- I won’t know enough
- If I challenge, I will be alone without any support.
- I won’t be able to express myself clearly; I’ll be misunderstood.
- If I am too confrontational or angry, then people will judge me, be mad at me, reject me, ostracize me, etc.
I will be seen as incompetent and “not good enough.”
I'll let people down.
People won’t like me or approve of me. Things won’t change.
I will make a mistake and be wrong.
People will be disappointed in me.
If I don't handle this well, people could be hurt.
Things will be worse off than before.

Next, reflect on how you reacted in a recent difficult situation that you think may have been fueled by some of your fears. Review the lists of fears as you write about the following:

What fears and anxieties might you have brought into this situation?

☐
What fears and anxieties may have been restimulated by the triggering situation?

How did you react based on these fears and anxieties?
I am grateful to Marshall Rosenberg for his work in NVC, Nonviolent Communication, in which he identified a full range of needs and values that he believed to be universal human needs. If some of our core needs or values are not being met in a situation, we could be triggered.

**Question:** When we feel triggered it is helpful to pause and search for any of our unmet needs or values. Helpful questions include, “What might be my unmet needs in this moment?” and “What do I value that is not being honored right now?”

**Directions:** Think back to a situation at work in which you behaved in ways you wished you hadn’t. Check off (✓) all of the needs and values that were not being met in this triggering situation, and add any additional ones below:

- Respect, dignity
- Trust
- Planning, order
- Fairness
- Clarity, understanding
- Openness, honesty
- Direct communication
- Respectful disagreement
- Recognition, acknowledgment
5. Unmet Needs/What I Value, page 2 of 2

- Appreciation
- Competence, effectiveness
- Success, to make a difference
- To be kept informed and updated
- Harmony, peace of mind
- Safety, security
- Integrity
- Innovation and creativity
- Ease and simplicity
- Connection
- Mutuality, partnering, collaboration
- Approval
- Acceptance, belonging
- Inclusion
- Consideration
- Dependability, follow-through

As many of us were growing up we may have learned some very useful skills and tools to take care of ourselves and navigate our lives. However, it is also common that we also developed some unproductive survival strategies in response to any number of dysfunctional and unsafe situations. Although some of these beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors may have helped keep us safe and out of harm’s way in the past, most likely they are no longer productive approaches for meeting our core human needs of self-worth, safety, belonging, and mattering.

I use the term “ego-driven desires” to describe this intrapersonal root and the constellation of dysfunctional thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes that often fuel ineffective triggered reactions. In contrast to the needs and values that add value to our lives and those of others, these ego-driven desires often result in win-lose, power-over situations that only “benefit” some at the expense of others.

**Question:** In moments when our triggered reactions are fueled by ego-driven desires, we are over-focused on getting what we want and may have little or no concern for the needs of others or how our behaviors negatively impact them. Questions to examine if we are reacting out of ego-driven desires, include: “Am I focused on what would be helpful to others or on what I think should happen, regardless of the impact on them?” “Am I more concerned about how I will be judged and evaluated than on achieving productive goals and outcomes?” and “Am I over-emphasizing my desire for acceptance, approval, and control with little thought to how my actions impact others?”

Which of the following ego-driven desires feel familiar?
**Power and Control**

- To be in control
- To reassert or regain power and authority
- To win the argument at all costs
- To prove others wrong
- To get my way
- To make people change and learn
- To make others do as I think they should
- To gain certainty and predictability

**Status and Approval**

- To be right
- To prove I am competent
- To be perfect
- To be seen as the expert
- To gain prestige and status
- To gain the approval of others
- To look good, competent, or acceptable

**Belonging and Admiration**

- To be liked at all costs
- To be admired and revered by others
- To avoid disgrace by any means necessary
- To create harmony and avoid dissatisfaction at all costs
- To keep people happy all the time
- To fit in and belong at all costs
- To be seen as one of the “in group,” the “chosen one”
Directions: Think about a difficult workplace situation when you reacted less effectively.

Which of these ego-driven desires might have fueled your reaction?

What was the probable impact on others?
Whether we know it or not we all carry baggage with us into every situation—baggage full of our biases, assumptions, expectations, and judgments. Most of these attitudes and beliefs are grounded in our past experiences and cloud our ability to accurately assess what is occurring in the present moment.

**Question:** Questions to explore include, “What assumptions am I making?” “What biases might be affecting my assessment?” “What ‘shoulds’ and expectations am I placing on others, or on myself?” “What is my ‘pay-off’ for judging and criticizing in this moment?” “How am I just like this person?” and “What am I trying to avoid in me by over-focusing on them?”

**Directions:** It is critical that we continually examine our thoughts for any beliefs or assumptions that may be grounded in biases or stereotypes. When we find some bias it is important that we interrupt our thoughts and shift our thinking to more closely align with the facts of the situation.
The following are examples of biases, stereotypes, and assumptions that could influence our triggered reactions in the workplace. Check which (☑), if any, seem familiar to you:

- Older employees are resistant to change.
- Younger employees are brash and do not respect authority.
- New employees are green and “wet behind the ears.”
- Female managers are aggressive and demanding.
- Male managers are domineering and part of the “old boy’s network.”
- Staff of color have a chip on their shoulders.
- White staff only care about getting ahead.
- Very quiet people are not as productive or creative.
- Very talkative staff are usually just out for themselves.
Think back to a triggering event and examine your thoughts for any assumptions, stereotypes, or unconscious bias. Write them in the left-hand column below. Then rewrite any assumption/bias to more accurately reflect the facts of the situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumption, stereotype, or bias</th>
<th>More accurate perspective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: New employees rarely have anything useful to add until they have been here 2 or more years.</td>
<td>While new employees may not be grounded in our organizational culture, they bring with them new, innovative perspectives and ideas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second aspect of the 7th intrapersonal root involves the types of “shoulds” and expectations we place on ourselves and others. When I am strongly attached to what I think others should or should not do or say, or if I have a rigid expectation that I want met, I have most likely set myself up to feel triggered into disappointment and frustration.

Instead of clinging so tightly to shoulds and expectations, it is more helpful to stay fully present in the moment and respond to what is actually occurring: to respond to what is, instead of pushing or trying to force what we think should be. The ability to “go with the flow” and respond to what is actually happening is a critical competency for effectiveness.

**Directions:** It can be insightful to develop a list of our innermost beliefs, convictions, rules, stances, and shoulds and then explore where and when we first heard them. Check (✓) any of the following that resonate with you:

- Don’t make waves
- Don’t rock the boat
- Leaders have to be calm and control their feelings
- It is unacceptable to make a mistake
- Leaders have to know the right answers
Leaders should meet the needs of their employees

Boys don’t cry

Don’t air dirty laundry

People should always be kind and thoughtful

You have to fight for what you want

Never ask for help; just do it yourself

It’s not ladylike to be assertive and state what you want

You should never interrupt someone

Don’t raise your voice

Always dress and act in a professional manner

Smart people are logical and analytical

Everyone should always get along

Everyone should always be included in decisions that impact them
**Root 7: Shift Your “Shoulds”**

**Directions:** Instead of adhering to fixed shoulds and expectations, it is helpful to shift them to be less righteous and absolute. Below, make a list of 3-4 of your common shoulds and expectations of others or yourself. Then next to each of these, rewrite them into more of a preference or desire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Should” or Expectation</th>
<th>Preference or Desire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Everyone should wait their turn and not interrupt others.</td>
<td>While I prefer not to be interrupted, if someone feels so passionately about an issue that they talk over me, I can listen to their point and then tie it into mine as I finish sharing my thoughts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reread each of these shoulds or expectations and notice how you feel. Then reread the corresponding preference or desire and see how, if at all, your feelings change.

What did you notice?
Many of us readily judge people and situations using either-or frameworks: something is either good or bad, right or wrong, perfect or worthless. When we operate out of these rigid polarities we usually end up harshly judging and criticizing ourselves or others. The “pay-off” for this type of thinking is we either get to feel superior to others or we get a painful hit of shame and worthlessness.

Judgments and either/or thinking are closely connected to viewing people as either victims or perpetrators. I believe this mindset is a particularly dangerous trap. When I judge others as perpetrators I no longer see them in their full humanity and I can distance myself from them. Seeing myself or others as victims reinforces the illusion of helplessness and powerlessness to influence our life experiences.

“Whenever you are about to find fault with someone, ask yourself the following question: What fault of mine most nearly resembles the one I am about to criticize?”  
— Marcus Aurelius, Meditations

There is a spiritual principle: We are what we judge. When I have criticized others in the workplace, I often realize that their behaviors reflect back and mirror something that I do not like about myself. The key is to recognize when I am being judgmental and to explore the roots and reasons I may be focusing on others in that moment.

Questions: Useful questions to explore when we notice we are judging and criticizing others include, “How am I just like this person?” and “What am I trying to avoid in me by over-focusing on them?” and “What is my ‘pay-off’ for judging and criticizing them?”

Questions to explore when we are judging ourselves include, “What am I getting out of this self-criticism?” and “Where did I first hear this type of criticism about myself?” and “What are more reasonable, accurate assessments of the situation? Of me?”
Shift Your Judgments

**Directions:** When we notice we are stuck in a right/wrong thinking pattern we can choose a more useful approach by identifying what is more productive or less productive given the intended outcomes of the situation. This shift away from judgments to focusing on the usefulness of actions or comments within a given context opens the possibility of exploring a wider range of solutions and approaches.

Reflect back on a difficult situation and in the left-hand column, write any judgments or right/wrong thinking that might have fueled your triggered reaction. Then rewrite these beliefs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judgment or right/wrong thinking</th>
<th>More useful thought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Putting It All Together ~ Identify Your Intrapersonal Roots

Directions: Reflect back on a difficult workplace situation where you didn’t react very productively. Use the questions below to explore the possible intrapersonal roots that were restimulated at Step 2 of the Triggering Event Cycle.

1. What current life issues and dynamics may have been depleting your protective shield and leaving you more susceptible to feeling deeply triggered? (fatigue, burnout, illness, crises, stressors, relationship or family dynamics, problems at work, recent life transitions, death of a loved one or pet, etc.)

2. Cumulative impact of recent experiences: Does this situation remind you of recent events?

---

Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace: How to control your reactions and respond effectively
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3. **Unresolved unfinished business and old wounds:** Does this person remind you of anyone from your past? Does this situation remind you of unhealed traumas?

4. **Fears** (check-off [☑] all that are related and add any others).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My personal issues will become the focus of the conversation: all eyes will be on me.</th>
<th>If I am too confrontational or angry, then people will judge me, be mad at me, reject me, ostracize me, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will lose credibility and be seen as less competent.</td>
<td>I will be seen as incompetent and “not good enough.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I cry and show emotion, people will think less of me....I won’t be able to manage the situation.</td>
<td>They will see how prejudiced I really am.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The conversation will “get out of control.”</td>
<td>I’ll let people down and disappoint them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will get too emotional and I won’t have the skills to manage the situation.</td>
<td>People won’t like me or approve of me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I won’t know enough about the issue to engage in conversation.</td>
<td>Things won’t change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I challenge this issue I will be all alone without any support.</td>
<td>I will make a mistake and be wrong.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I won’t be able to express myself clearly; I’ll be misunderstood.</td>
<td>If I don’t handle this well, people could feel uncomfortable...be hurt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People will be disappointed in me.</td>
<td>Things will be worse off than before.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. **Unmet Needs/What I value** *(check-off [ ] all that are related and add any others)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respect, dignity</th>
<th>To be kept informed and updated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Harmony, peace...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning, order</td>
<td>Safety, security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity, understanding</td>
<td>Innovation and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness, honesty</td>
<td>Ease and simplicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct communication</td>
<td>Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful disagreement</td>
<td>Mutuality, partnering, collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition, acknowledgement</td>
<td>For approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>For acceptance, belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence, effectiveness</td>
<td>Consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success, to make a difference</td>
<td>Dependability, follow-through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. **Ego-driven desires** *(check-off [ ] all that are related and add any others)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To assert, regain my power and authority</th>
<th>To be seen as the expert, smarter than others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To have control</td>
<td>To prove I am competent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To win the argument; prove them wrong</td>
<td>To gain prestige and status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To get my way</td>
<td>To be admired; avoid disgrace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make people change; “fix” them</td>
<td>To be liked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make people learn</td>
<td>To fit in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be right</td>
<td>To seen as the “chosen one”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To shut them down, put them in their place</td>
<td>To be perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make them feel the pain and hurt I feel</td>
<td>To gain certainty and predictability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To avoid deep emotions and conflict</td>
<td>To make others engage as I want them to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To make them feel the pain and hurt I feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For everyone to feel happy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. **Biases, assumptions, expectations, shoulds, and judgments:** Which ones may have fueled your reaction?

|                                                                                                                                   |

---

**Anticipate A Future Difficult Situation**

Anticipate a triggering event you might experience in the next couple of weeks. Below, note which of these intrapersonal roots might fuel your triggered reaction in this situation.

|                                                                                                                                   |

---

**References:**

I woke up with a start and immediately felt deeply anxious as I realized my alarm hadn’t gone off and I was an hour late to an important meeting! Then I put on my glasses and realized I had misread the clock and it was actually two hours earlier than I had thought. In the space of a single moment, I went from feeling deeply anxious to feeling relieved and delighted I could go back to sleep! The clock hadn’t changed. It was my interpretation of what I thought I saw that created my different emotional reactions.

In every situation we make up a “story” about what we think is happening. Our story creates our feelings, physiological “warning signs” that we are triggered, and our thoughts about ourselves and others. If we change our story, we change our reactions.

In this module you will practice shifting your initial story and changing your automatic emotions, thoughts, and physical reactions.
Step 3: Change Your Reaction by Shifting Your Story

Shifting your interpretation results in your feeling less triggered and opens up energy and space to choose a productive response.

Directions: Reflect on the following prompts as you write about a recent difficult situation.

Describe “just the facts” of the situation, the circumstances.

What did you make it mean? What “story” did you make up about what you thought was happening?
What retriggered intrapersonal roots may have fueled your interpretation?

When you thought this initial story:

- What were your feelings?
- What were your physiological reactions?

And what thoughts did you have about:

- Yourself?
- Others?
The situation?

How did you react less productively? What other unproductive reactions were you considering?

What was the impact of your reactions (on you, on others, on the situation)?

How does this story “serve you”? What is the “pay-off”?
How do you want to feel?

Shift your story: Create a different interpretation that leaves you feeling less triggered and possibly more open, receptive, understanding, curious...

Re-imagine the same situation, but with your new interpretation, your new story.

- How would you feel?

- What are your physiological reactions?

- What are your thoughts about yourself, others, and the situation?

- What potentially more productive responses might you consider from this new perspective?
Step 4: Identify the Full Breadth of Your Triggered Emotions

Directions: Reflect on a difficult situation where you felt deeply triggered. Review this list of feelings and circle each one that you experienced in that moment. Add any others to the list.

Aggravated     Crushed
Agitated       Defeated
Alarmed        Deflated
Alienated      Dejected
Ambivalent     Depleted
Amused         Depressed
Angry          Despair
Anguish        Determined
Annoyed        Disappointed
Anxious        Discouraged
Appreciative   Disgusted
Apprehensive   Disheartened
Appalled       Disillusioned
Awe            Dissatisfied
Ashamed        Distracted
Bitter         Distressed
Bored          Distrustful
Burned out     Drained
Calm           Dumbfounded
Carefree       Eager
Confident      Edgy
Confused       Embarrassed

Empowered      Empathetic
Enraged        Envious
Exasperated    Excited
Exhausted      Exhausted
Fascinated     Fearful
Forlorn        Grateful
Frightened     Furious
Grief           Guilty
Heartbroken    Hateful
Heartbroken    Hateful
Hesitant       Hopeless
Hurt

Impatient      Incensed
Indifferent    Indignant
Infuriated    Insecure
Inspired       Irritated
Jealous        Jubilant
Lonely         Mean
Lonely         Mean
Longing        Mortified
Nervous        Numb
Outraged       Overwhelmed
Panic           Paralyzed
Peaceful        Weary
Perplexed      Worried
Powerless      Preoccupied
Puzzled        Raging
Regretful      Relieved
Remorseful     Repulsed
Resentful      Sad
Surprised      Sympathetic
Tender         Tense
Terrified      Touched
Unsettled      Useless
Vulnerable      Wary
Weary

What are your thoughts as you look at all your circled emotions?

Conduct a “Systems Check”: Scan or Pan Yourself in the Moment

When you first notice you may feel triggered, use the following prompts to conduct a “systems check” as you scan or pan yourself before deciding how you want to respond:

What am I feeling? (Step 4)

How triggered am I on the -10 to +10 scale? (Step 4)

What are my body sensations and physiological reactions? (Step 4)

What was the stimulus, the trigger for me? (Step 1)

How am I interpreting what I think is happening? (Step 3)

What assumptions and stories am I making up? (Step 3)

What additional data or information might I have overlooked initially? (Step 3)

What are my initial negative thoughts (Step 4)?

What are my initial unproductive intentions (Step 5)?

Why might I feel triggered? What intrapersonal roots might be involved? (Step 2)

- Current life issues
- Cumulative Impact
- Unresolved issues and old wounds
- Fears
- Unmet Needs
- Ego-driven desires
- Bias, assumptions, shoulds, expectations, and judgments
### Step 3: Putting It All Together ~ Shift Your Story and Change Your Reaction

**Directions:** Review the example below to understand how the story we create at Step 3 impacts the rest of The Cycle: our emotions, thoughts, and reactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation (Step 1):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When you express your concerns about the impact of a pending decision, your supervisor says, “Don’t worry. That won’t happen.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 3: If you create this story...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My supervisor is out of touch and doesn’t value me or my input...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 4: What emotions and negative thoughts might result?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thoughts:</strong> He doesn’t appreciate me! Why do I invest so much of myself here? Maybe I should look for another position....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings:</strong> Anger, resentment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 6: Given your story and the resulting feelings, what (less productive) reaction do you initially consider/do?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sulking; withdrawing energetically; not participating in further conversations; I will sit back and watch as they fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If at Step 3 you shift your interpretation to.....</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My supervisor may not have all of the same data I have.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What emotions and thoughts might result at Step 4?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings:</strong> Hopeful, willing to stay engaged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thoughts:</strong> Maybe if I share the facts I have, he will understand more of my perspective.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 6: Given your story and the resulting feelings, what (more productive) reaction might you now consider?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offer to share some additional data and context; Ask to continue the conversation in the near future; Continue to research and gather more information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Use the same prompts to explore the impact of shifting your story at Step 3:

**Situation (Step 1):**
Write about a recent difficult work situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 3: What was the story you created?</th>
<th>Step 4: What were your triggered emotions? Negative thoughts?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Negative thoughts:                     |

<p>| Step 6: Given your story and the resulting feelings, what (less productive) reactions did you initially consider? |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you shift your interpretation to...</th>
<th>What emotions and thoughts might result?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thoughts:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 6: Given your revised story and the resulting feelings, what (more productive) reactions might you now consider?
Part 4

Make Different Choices: More Self-Management Tools

Video Session 4
**Step 4:**
**Identify Common Negative Thoughts and Self-Limiting Beliefs**

“It is the mind that makes the body.” Sojourner Truth

**Directions:** Our thoughts are like songs on a playlist that is stuck in repeat play mode. They will keep replaying over and over until we reject them and replace them with a new playlist! But we first need to recognize our old songs that may need updating. Below is a list of some common negative thoughts that people have at Step 4 about themselves, others, and the situation. Check-off (✓) any that seem familiar:

- I can’t handle this!
- The last time this happened I just froze and fell apart
- I am not smart enough, good enough, competent enough, creative enough...
- I will never be able to get this done in time
- I am such a fraud
- I will never be able to do this
- What I do won’t make any difference
- Things won’t change
- What do I have to offer?
- What if I completely ruin this?
- They will be angry when they hear about this I could make it worse
- I have to get this right!
- I will let people down, disappoint them
- People could be hurt if I don’t do this well
- This could hurt my career
- I will make a fool of myself
- What if no one likes me
- I won’t fit in or be accepted
I could be all alone in this situation

What if I lose control?

This is out of control!

They won’t understand

They will attack me just like last time

No one appreciates all I do for them

If I confront them, they will ostracize me

They are so biased and prejudiced

They are such @!*^#! jerks

They don’t know what they are doing

This is such a waste of time just like it always is

I am smarter than any of them

They are so incompetent

They are all hypocrites

They always make things so complicated

This is going to be so hard and difficult

No one else will ever step up to do any meaningful work on this project

Everyone is always so difficult and unreasonable

She is always so rude and obnoxious

No one cares about what I think or feel

They are so self-centered

They’ll just drop the ball again and I’ll have to clean it all up as usual

This will be like that time everything was such a disaster
Step 4: Self-Management Tools ~ Change Your Thoughts

I no longer agree to treat myself with disrespect. Every time a self-critical thought comes to mind, I will forgive the Judge and follow this comment with words of praise, self-acceptance, and love.
- Miguel Ruiz

**Directions:** The unproductive, self-limiting thoughts we have during difficult situations decrease our effectiveness in the moment. When we change these thoughts, we are better positioned to choose effective responses. Below are some examples of how to change negative thoughts at Step 4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you think:</th>
<th>You can shift your thoughts to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They're not getting it! This is a failure!</td>
<td>I will do the best I can. I am not responsible for everyone's learning. People will take away from here what they need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I should know the answer to that!</td>
<td>I am not the expert here. My role is to facilitate the team's creativity. I can say, &quot;I don't know,&quot; and ask others for their input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are such a <em>%^</em>#!!* for interrupting me!</td>
<td>I don't appreciate his timing, but at least he is willing to engage in this dialogue...He seems to have a lot of energy about this topic so maybe he has some good ideas to add...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can't handle this!</td>
<td>If I make a mistake, I can use it to model that we can learn from errors and keep moving...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is such an ignorant bigot!</td>
<td>I wonder why he feels so threatened? When have I felt or said something like this in the past? How can I respond to his inappropriate comment and also let him “save face?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her reaction is so unprofessional!</td>
<td>I wonder what is really going on for her. Did I say or do something that was a trigger for her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are so resistant!</td>
<td>They seem to feel safe enough to be honest about their concerns. Now we can get to the heart of this issue and maybe find a solution that meets all of our needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What a *@?!# jerk!</td>
<td>I wonder what has happened recently that has him reacting this way?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Think about a recent difficult situation and write down several unproductive thoughts you were thinking at that time. Then identify alternative thoughts that could leave you feeling less triggered, if not more open and curious.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When you think:</th>
<th>You can shift your thoughts to:</th>
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Step 4: Self-Management Tools: Calming Statements

**Directions:** Read the following phrases and note which ones may be useful to help you get more grounded and centered during difficult situations.

**Remind yourself about the dynamics of triggers**
- I’m just triggered right now…this too shall pass…
- It’s not about them, there’s something going on in me…
- This could be a powerful learning moment for them, for me…

**Focus on what is positive**
- At least they are willing to engage in this conversation…
- A few people seem to be reflecting and more open…
- What can I learn and take away from this situation to help me in the future?

**Trust the process**
- Everything happens for a reason…trust the process…
- Hmm, this is curious…I wonder why this is happening right now?
- I may have over-estimated what’s possible in this moment…what would be a reasonable next step from here?
- I’ll just wait and see what emerges…

**Adjust your approach**
- She may not be willing to engage right now, but I’ll bet some other folks will…
- So that approach didn’t seem to work…what else can I try?
- I have responded effectively in similar situations, I can do it again.

**Focus on the intent of others**
- They’re doing the best they can with the knowledge and resources they have…
- He’s just trying to meet unmet needs…
- I trust they are not intentionally trying to undermine me…

What other thoughts would help you center yourself in difficult situations?
Step 5: Identify Unproductive, “Negative” Intentions You Sometimes Choose

When I am more aware of my common negative, unproductive intentions I am more likely to notice when I am about to react out of them in the moment. This split second of awareness can be enough for you to shift your thinking and choose to focus on more productive intentions.

**Directions:** Think about a few times you have reacted less effectively during difficult conversations. As you review the following examples, check-off any of these less productive intentions that seem familiar to you, and add any additional ones (I have reacted out of all of them at some point!):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>win the argument</th>
<th>change the other person’s views, feelings, or behaviors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>get even, get them back</td>
<td>to make people learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be right, prove the other person wrong</td>
<td>trick and “outfox” the other person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to prove you are competent, smart</td>
<td>avoid intense emotions, in self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assert your power and authority</td>
<td>make everyone feel happy and harmonious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gain status and prestige, be admired</td>
<td>avoid feeling or being viewed as “incompetent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be in control</td>
<td>control how others feel about you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intimidate the other person</td>
<td>ignore them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“put them in their place”</td>
<td>use the current opportunity to “right the wrongs” you experienced in the past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shut them down</td>
<td>seek approval of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>punish the other person</td>
<td>avoid confrontation and conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>embarrass or put them down</td>
<td>make them feel the pain you feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keep the conversation “under control”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be liked, fit in</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Any others that come to mind?

Next, imagine thinking some of these negative intentions. How might you react unproductively if you think these?
### Step 5: Identify the More Productive, “Positive” Intentions You Sometimes Choose

**Directions:** Below is a list of some of the more productive and “positive” intentions we can choose at Step 5. Check-off any that you commonly think about before you respond in difficult situations. Then star (*) those you would like to add to your “tool kit.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Intentions</th>
<th>Enhanced Intentions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>engage in respectful dialogue</td>
<td>acknowledge they are doing the best they can with the resources and knowledge they have at this moment</td>
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<tr>
<td>create greater inclusion</td>
<td>create safety for the expression of differing viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facilitate open, honest discussion</td>
<td>encourage more people to engage in the discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do no harm</td>
<td>support people to disagree with each other in respectful ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leave people feeling whole</td>
<td>model effective recovery skills when your behavior results in negative impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“go with the flow,” trust the process</td>
<td>re-establish credibility with the person or group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deepen learning and growth</td>
<td>interrupt unproductive, inappropriate behaviors and group dynamics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meet people “where they are” without judgment</td>
<td>model the values you espouse: respect, authenticity, empathy, self-reflection, engagement...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use the triggering moment to deepen understanding</td>
<td>build a “bridge” and a connection with the other person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relate to the person, connect with them</td>
<td>create more effective relationships and coalitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>invite people to learn from the situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take time to “gather yourself”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>create space for the other person to express their feelings, perceptions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>deepen understanding across differences</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Any others that come to mind?

Next, imagine thinking some of these positive intentions. How might you respond out of these intentions?
Step 5: Shift Negative Intentions

When we choose negative intentions we are more likely to react in unproductive ways. Below is an example that shows how we can change how we respond effectively at Step 6 by shifting our intentions.

A client shared a common difficult situation they often experience on Search Committees. When the Chair asked the members for feedback on the three finalists for the position, one senior leader, Jerry said, “I like Chad. And Kelly would be fine as well. But Tiana wouldn’t be a good fit. Don’t get me wrong, I think diversity is important, but we also don’t want to lower our standards.” She was furious when no one else countered his comments. Once again she was the only one who had the courage to speak up and confront these discriminatory behaviors. Her first thought was to say something like, “This is another example of racist practices that keep our organization so lily white!” But she stopped herself knowing that this would be a CEM, a career-ending move! A couple other people offered their assessment of the candidates while she took a few deep breaths and thought through her options. She then said, “I want to ask us to slow down a moment. Before we make our recommendations, I’d like us to revisit the core competencies we identified for this position and then use these as we offer our feedback about each candidate. I actually liked all three of them on a personal level, but I think we will find some clear distinctions when we assess their demonstrated capacities against our envisioned outcomes.” After a pause that seemed to last forever, the Chair agreed and they started to center the competencies in our conversation.

In the following chart I have summarized key elements of her story.
1. The less productive, “negative” intentions
   - Embarrass the colleague; call him out on his racist comment; show everyone else what they should be doing in similar situations

3. More productive, “positive” intentions
   - Address the inappropriate comment in a way that furthers learning; Refocus the conversation on competencies, away from personal opinions and “likability” of the candidates; model how to engage effectively and maintain working relationships

2. When we react less productively, what is the probable impact of our reaction?
   - If she had done this, she might have damaged her relationship with her colleague and other members of the committee; others wouldn’t have learned how to be more effective in similar situations; she may have lost credibility in this group to influence future decisions

4. The impact when we respond out of these positive intentions
   - When she responded this way, the group members readily focused on competencies including the capacity to create inclusive work environments and effectively serve the increasingly diverse client populations; her colleague was able to “save face” and actually participated in identifying a few competencies; she believe they ended up identifying the most competent candidate for their needs

**Directions:** Think about a recent difficult situation in which you reacted unproductively. Make some notes in the chart that follows using the following prompts:

1. In section #1, write out 1-2 of the less productive, negative intentions you had in that moment.
2. In section #2, write how you reacted less effectively and the probable impact of your reaction.
3. In section #3, rewrite these negative intentions into more productive ones.
4. In section #4, anticipate how you MIGHT have responded more productively out of these more positive, productive intentions; and the probable impact of this response.
Step 5: Shift Negative Intentions, page 2 of 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. The less productive, “negative” intentions</th>
<th>3. Rewrite into more productive, “positive” intentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ ]</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. How did you react less productively? What was the probable impact of your reaction?</th>
<th>4. How might you have responded? What might be the impact from responding out of these positive intentions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
Anticipate Future Difficult Situations: Practice Shifting Negative Intentions to More Positive, Productive Ones

**Directions:** Anticipate a future difficult situation in which you might react unproductively. Make your notes below using the following prompts:

1. **In section #1:** Write out 1–2 of the less productive, negative intentions you had in that moment.

2. **In section #2:** Write how you might react less effectively out of these negative intentions.

3. **In section #3:** Rewrite these negative intentions into more productive ones.

4. **In section #4:** Anticipate how you MIGHT respond more productively out of these more positive, productive intentions.

1. My less productive, “negative” intentions
2. How I might react less productively, less effectively

3. More productive, "positive" intentions

4. How I MIGHT respond more productively out of these intentions
Step 5: Consider the Intentions and Unmet Needs of Others

Directions: In difficult situations, I can de-escalate the intensity of my emotions by considering the possible unmet needs and intentions that could be fueling the behaviors I find disruptive and ineffective. From a more grounded stance I am far more likely to respond in effective ways. I first learned of this approach through the work of Marshall Rosenberg and Nonviolent Communication.

For each of the scenarios below, imagine what might be the unmet needs fueling the person’s unproductive behaviors. Some of the needs and values that seem particularly related to difficult situations I experience include dignity, respect, trust, integrity, safety, belonging, acceptance, honesty, connection, support, mutuality, partnering, community, ease, harmony, fairness, understanding, clarity, recognition, competence, effectiveness, consideration, purpose, equity, and inclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unproductive behavior</th>
<th>Their possible unmet needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gossiping about you to colleagues</td>
<td>To belong, to matter, self-expression, connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Someone stays quiet and colludes with offensive behaviors</td>
<td>Safety, security, to belong, peace, acceptance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Someone is texting on their smartphone during the conversation.</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Someone is trying to control and micro-manage tasks</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Someone looks away from you as you are talking to them and asks someone else a question.</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Take a moment and focus only on the unproductive behavior:

What are your thoughts and feelings about this person?

Then, only focus on their possible unmet needs:

What are your thoughts and feelings now?

When I take the time to explore what needs someone may be trying to meet in a difficult dialogue, I gain more understanding and enough distance from them to feel less triggered and more open to engaging them in productive ways.

For further resources:


Part 5

Tools to Respond Effectively and What You Can Do If You Mess Up

Video Session 5
Step 6: PAIRS: Additional Tools to Respond in Difficult Situations

P: PAN

If you want to share what you are observing and panning about the group dynamics:

- It seems some people were impacted by that statement, am I right?
- I’m noticing that some people get interrupted as they try to share... anyone else notice this?
- I noticed when we started talking about this, a number of people looked down or checked their phones... I’m curious what is going on for folks?
- You shifted in your chair and looked away from me as I was responding to you. I am wondering if you had a reaction to what I was saying.
- I noticed how quiet everyone got. I’m curious why...
- The energy seems to have shifted in the last couple of minutes. I am curious what folks are thinking and feeling.

If you want to share what you are panning about yourself:

- I notice I had a reaction to what you said.
- That’s a trigger word/phrase for me...
- I need to stop for a moment and talk about what just happened. I’m feeling uncomfortable because...
- This may have more to do with me, but I’m feeling uneasy with what you said and I’d like to talk more about it.
FOUR (4) TYPES OF PANNING RESPONSES

1. Redirect: Refocus the group without any reference to the current group dynamics
   - I’d like to move on to the next agenda item.
   - Getting back to what we were talking about...

2. Indirect: A more vague, general comment to refocus the group on the topic and effective group dynamics.
   Pose possibilities:
   - It might be useful...
   - I’d suggest we consider...
   - One way to proceed could be...
   - It may be more productive right now to...

3. Direct: Acknowledge the current situation, and/or the uninclusive or disrespectful dynamic
   State your thought or opinion:
   - I think that... I need...
   - I believe it’s important that...
   Share your observation directly:
   - I noticed that every time we start to talk about our team dynamics, someone shifts the conversation away from the topic.
   - I’m noticing that the only time we talk about our group effectiveness is when I bring it up.
   - I’ve noticed that when we started to discuss our dynamics, a number of folks look down, start writing notes...I’m curious what others have noticed? And what is going on for folks?

4. Connect: Invite others to connect to what you are saying, and share what they notice
   - Anyone connect to what I am saying?
   - I’m curious what others are noticing?
OBSERVING/PANNING GROUP DYNAMICS WITH AN INCLUSION LENS

Use the following prompts as you use an Inclusion Lens to observe and pan group dynamics. Identify “just the facts” and the actual details of the situation without any assumptions, interpretations, judgments, or conclusions.

• What differences are present in the group? Which group memberships? and how many from various groups?
• Who is talking?
• Who is quiet? Doesn’t speak as often as others?
• How are people reacting nonverbally?
• Who initiates the topics?
• What ideas are brought up? By whom?
• Whose ideas get considered? Whose ideas don’t get much discussion?
• Whose ideas are discounted? Or “plop” without comment?
• How do decisions get made?
• Who interrupts others? Who gets interrupted? Who is never interrupted?
• How and when do the tone and energy of the conversation shift and change?
• How much air-time do people take?
• Who has changed their way of engaging recently?
• Who do people look at when they are talking?
• Who has eye contact with whom while others are talking?
• Who engages in side conversations?
• Who brings up issues of respect and inclusion?
• How do people respond when different issues of inclusion are raised?
• What issues of inclusion and respect are not being brought up or discussed?
• As you notice interpersonal dynamics that are not inclusive, who intervenes to shift the dynamics? Who doesn’t?
• As you observe exclusionary comments and actions, wonder: Is this an isolated incident or a possible common pattern of experience?

Adapted from materials developed by Elsie Y. Cross Associates, Inc.
**A: Ask**

If someone is strongly disagreeing with you, you could ask:
- Could you say more about that?
- Can you give an example?
- Can you give me some background on this situation?
- Help me understand how you came to that conclusion?
- Can you help me understand what you disagree with or find frustrating?
- Can you talk about the reasons you feel so strongly?

If you do not agree with someone’s idea or opinion, you could ask:
- What are your intended outcomes for that idea?
- How does that idea advance our strategic goals?
- How does your approach connect with what I was suggesting?
- How might that play out if we go in this direction?

If you want to state your perspective after someone has disagreed with you, you can start with:
- I want to make sure I understand your point. You are saying that... How close am I in describing what you are concerned about?
- I can understand your perspective. And I’d like to share a few more thoughts....
- As I listen to you, a dilemma for me is....
- My experience has been somewhat different....
- Another way I might approach this is....
- I believe/think ____. How is this similar or different for you?

If you believe someone said something inappropriate or offensive:
- Here is what I heard you say. How well did I understand you?
- Come again? or Can you repeat that?
- What do you mean when you say...?
- Can you help me understand what you meant by that?
- What did you want to communicate with your comment?
- What message do you think that comment could send?
- Can you help me understand your intent when you said...?
- I trust you didn’t intend to ____.
- You probably didn’t notice what the impact of that comment was when you said...
If two or more people are in conflict and don’t appear to be understanding each other’s points, you could enter with:
- So, you’re saying that...
- So, from your perspective...
- I want to make sure I understand your point. Are you saying that...?
- I thought I heard you say... Is that accurate?
- I may have missed some of what led up to what was said just now. Can someone help me understand the context of what is occurring?

If you sense someone hasn’t fully expressed their point, you could start with:
- I’m not fully understanding your point. Can you say more?
- I’m on a learning edge here... What I’m curious about is....
- What is underneath your comment/question?
- Is there a question or a concern behind your statement?

If you sense that someone may have felt triggered by something you said, you could say:
- I’m wondering if what I said had an impact on you...
- My sense is some folks may have been impacted by what I just said...

If a colleague is upset about something but not fully discussing it, you could ask:
- Can you say more about what happened and what the impact was?
- What’s the most ____ (frustrating, embarrassing, anxiety producing, etc.) part about that situation?
- What are your key concerns about this?

If you want to expand the discussion to see if others will engage the difficult dynamics, you could say:
- I am curious what others are thinking....
- What are some perspectives or reactions of others?
- How do others relate to what’s been said?
- I appreciate what you’re saying. Anyone have a different perspective or something else to add?

If you are concerned that you have been misunderstood, you could say:
- I want to make sure I am understood. Can you tell me what you’re hearing me say?
- I’m not sure I was able to get my point across. Would you share the essence of what you heard me say?
• I believe I said something different than you heard... What I said was... Is that what you had thought?
• I’d like to clarify what I said before because it is different than what you are referencing...

**If the group is struggling to move forward, you could ask:**

• What do you see as the next steps?
• Are there any actions we want to avoid as we move forward?
• What would you suggest?
• One thought could be to ____. What do you think?
• Might it be possible to ____?
• I’d like us to seriously consider...

**When you want a group to reflect on its processes and improve team dynamics, you could ask:**

• In what ways are we working together that help us be productive?
• Are there any group dynamics that could be getting in our way?
• What might you suggest we do differently in the future?

**If you want to debrief the impact of a difficult conversation with a colleague, you could ask:**

• I appreciate your discussing this with me, and I’m curious how that conversation was for you?
• Is there anything you would want me to do differently in the future?
• How would you like us to discuss issues in the future?

**I: INTERRUPT**

**If you want to interrupt and shift unproductive dynamics:**

• I’d like to try a different approach to this conversation.
• I’m going to interrupt and shift us to refocus on....
• I don’t feel we are engaging according to our group norms.
• Let’s take a breath and slow down for a moment.
• I hadn’t finished my comment yet...
• I don’t think that comment is appropriate or productive.
• Let’s table this discussion for now. And why don’t you and I talk after this meeting.
• I think we’ll be more productive if we talk directly about the issues and not make assumptions or negative comments about the people involved.
• I notice that there are some side conversations occurring. I’d like to hear people’s reaction to the proposal.
Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace: How to control your reactions and respond effectively

R: relate

If you want to relate to the person or their comments so they may feel acknowledged:
- I relate to what you’re saying.
- I share some of your concerns as well.
- I agree that what you’re saying could happen.

If you want to try to relate to the other person before you respond, you can ask yourself:
- How am I just like this person? Or I used to be?
- When have I said or done something similarly?
- When might I say or do something like this in the future?

If you want to invite others to relate to someone or their comments:
- How do others relate to that comment?
- Who can relate?
- Who has a similar experience? Can you say more…?
- What you’re saying seems to relate to what so-and-so just said...

S: share

If you want to connect by sharing a story or example from your own experience, you can say:
- I can relate. Just last week, I...
- I remember when I...
- I relate. I used to...
- This reminds me of when....

If you want to share the impact of someone’s comments or behavior, you can say:
- When I hear you say that, I think/feel....
- I’d like to share the impact of your comment...
- I’m feeling uncomfortable with what you’re saying...
- Here’s what’s going on for me as I hear you....
- My concern, if we move in this direction, is...
To invite others to share their feelings or the impact they are experiencing, you can say:

- How are others reacting or impacted by this?
- I'm noticing I'm feeling___, anyone else?
- I'm noticing I have some concerns. Anyone else?
- I am deeply moved by your example. How are others impacted?
- When ___ just happened, I felt ____. Does anyone else relate to me? Or did anyone else feel triggered just now?
Shifting Less Effective Reactions To More Productive Responses

**Directions:** Below, make notes about three triggering situations in which you reacted unproductively.

- Column 1: What was the triggering situation?
- Column 2: How did you react less productively?
- Column 3: What would have been a more effective response?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Triggering situation where you reacted unproductively</th>
<th>Your less effective reactions</th>
<th>What might have been more productive responses?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace: How to control your reactions and respond effectively
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Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult, Triggering Situations

Directions:

1. Check-off (☑) any of the following that you have experienced or observed from others during difficult situations.
2. Then, star (*) any that you have done when you felt triggered in difficult situations.

Fight Responses

- Aggressively argue and debate
- Raise their voice, yells
- Try to silence others
- Try to compete, win at any cost
- Interrupt
- Self-righteous, arrogant, or condescending behavior
- Controlling, manipulative behavior
- Intimidating, threatening behavior
- Force change

- Aggressively attack and berate
- Dismiss or minimize the comments of others
- Explode and direct their feelings onto others
- Sarcasm or off-handed remark
- Belittling comment
- Intentionally try to embarrass others
- Criticize or accuse with the intent to humiliate and shame
- Bully others into submission
- Turn their words against them
Flight Responses

- Get defensive
- Become overly guarded
- Withdraw
- Ignore or avoid issues
- Try to smooth over conflict
- Placate to keep things under control
- Minimize, downplay the issues or conflict
- Shut down
- Disengage
- Use humor and jokes to distract and smooth things over
- Quickly change the subject
- Pretend to agree to avoid conflict
- Use crying to distract and not engage

Freeze Responses

- Blank out, forget what wanted to say or do
- Zone out
- Become immobilized
- Don’t respond or interrupt exclusionary comments and actions
- Overly anxious and scared
**Recovery Tools: The 3 Rs**

It is critical to develop the capacity to demonstrate effective recovery skills when our comments and behaviors negatively impact others. We need the ability to acknowledge the other person’s perspective, apologize for any negative impact, and commit to responding differently in the future.

**REFLECT**

As soon as you notice you feel triggered, *Begin Within*, and reflect on the following:

1. How am I feeling? How intense are my emotions? (-10 to +10)
2. What are my physiological reactions?
3. What story did I make up about this situation?
4. What intentions and motives fueled my reaction?
5. What intrapersonal roots are fueling my less effective reactions?
   - Current life issues
   - Cumulative impact
   - Unresolved issues and old wounds
   - Fears
   - Unmet Needs
   - Ego-driven desires
   - Assumptions, bias, shoulds, expectation and judgments
6. What might I have said or done that contributed to these difficult dynamics? Just now? Recently?
7. Relate to the person(s) whose behavior was the source of your trigger: How am I just like them?

**RELEASE**

1. Do some stress releasing activities to de-escalate the intensity of your physiological and emotional reactions
2. Create the time and space to release your retriggered emotions
REALIGN

1. Refocus on positive, productive intentions
2. Shift your initial story and subsequent thoughts

Then, choose how you want to RE-ENGAGE and RESPOND.

If you are unclear why the dynamics are so charged and difficult, but suspect someone(s) may feel triggered:

- Did I say or do something that was offensive or triggering?
- Have I done something recently that is related to what we are talking about?
- Can you tell me more about what is troubling for you?
- It seems my behavior had a negative impact. I’m open to hearing how I’ve impacted you.
- I notice I’m feeling triggered, and I sense you are, too.

If you realize your behavior crossed a line, own your behavior and apologize:

- I notice I just interrupted you. I apologize.
- I realize what I just said/did was unproductive/offensive.
- I regret what I just did.
- I apologize. I was wrong to _____.
- I misspoke just now, and I apologize.
- I was wrong to just raise my voice and cut you off.
- I want to apologize for my tone.

If you realize someone is triggered by your comment or behavior, even if you feel you had not crossed a line:

- It seems something I did or said was triggering for you. Can we talk about it?
- Can you say more about the impact of what I said or did?
- I hear the impact of what I said/did. And I apologize.
If someone gives you feedback about your behavior:

- **Acknowledge and paraphrase** what behaviors they are concerned about and the impact
  - So it sounds like you felt demeaned and dismissed by my actions.
  - When I interrupted, you shut down and didn’t want to participate any longer.
  - You felt angry and disappointed when I followed up on Jerry’s idea and not yours.

- If you are still unclear, **ask about the impact**
  - Can you say more about the impact of what I said on you?
  - What was the impact of my comment? Behavior?

- Ask if they have **any further feedback** for you or other issues to discuss
  - Is there anything else about the impact of my behavior you or others want to talk about?
  - Are there other comments or actions that I’ve made that anyone wants to give me feedback on or discuss at this moment?

- **Apologize** for the impact and your behavior
  - I apologize for my actions and regret the impact I had on you.

- **Appreciate** the person and the conversation
  - I appreciate your willingness to give me this feedback
  - I hope you’ll continue to feel free to talk to me about this issue or anything else I do or say that creates a difficulty for you or the team.

- **State what you intend to do differently** in the future
  - It’s my intention to think about all this, and to be far more aware of my tone and actions in the future.
  - As we go forward, my intention is to ___. Does this work for you?
  - Is there anything else you would like me to do differently in the future?
Using Recovery Tools

Directions: Reflect on a recent triggering, difficult situation in which you reacted unproductively. Below, identify 3–5 recovery tools that:

1. Could have been useful during the situation.

2. May help you repair and rebuild the damage of your impact after the fact.
Navigating Difficult Situations: Self-Assessment Checklist

Use the following scale to assess your current skills and abilities during Difficult Situations:

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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>= Almost always</td>
<td>= Most of the time</td>
<td>= Much of the time</td>
<td>= Sometimes</td>
<td>= Rarely</td>
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- I acknowledge comments that seem inappropriate or triggering.
- I effectively name and discuss group dynamics in the moment and use them as “teachable moments” to facilitate deeper learning.
- I recognize that “resistance” and challenges are often doorways to deeper understanding and learning for the group.
- I engage people in dialogue when they make inappropriate or triggering comments.
- I encourage other group members to participate and engage in the discussion.
- I effectively navigate conflict and disagreement among group members.
- I can respond effectively to challenges and engage resistance from group members without taking it personally or feeling triggered.
- I effectively navigate behaviors I believe are distracting, including dominating, interrupting, side-tracking, side conversations, etc.
- I effectively navigate situations where group members are feeling and expressing deep emotions, including anger, sadness, fear, frustration, hopelessness, etc.
- I am able to be “in the moment” ~ fully present and focused on what is happening in the group and in myself.
- I use self-disclosure and share feelings, thoughts, opinions, and personal experiences as appropriate.
I easily “go with the flow” and am flexible with the agenda as I adjust to the needs of the group in the moment.

I can “meet the people where they are” and not demand or expect them to be farther along in their understanding or skill development.

I use silence effectively.

I use “Connecting Language” that bridges one person’s comments to another’s.

I effectively find some relevant point in each person’s comments, even those that seem way off the topic.

If I believe someone is on a tangent, I can effectively acknowledge their point, and redirect the conversation back to the group’s topic.

I minimize how much I use the “telling” style, and maximize how often I pose questions or dilemmas to facilitate dialogue among others.

I am aware of how I use my body language and nonverbal behavior to facilitate learning and engage others.

I am aware of the how people/I may experience and interpret body language and nonverbal behaviors differently based upon their cultural perspective, and their experiences in their multiple privileged and marginalized groups.

I am able to “relate in” and “see myself in others” to find compassion and connection, rather than judging them or distancing from them.

I pay attention to the social group identities of others and notice patterns of participation, including who’s talking, who is quiet, who interrupts, who gets interrupted, who assumes leadership, who’s ideas “plop,” etc.

I am aware of my biases, assumptions, and stereotypes for various privileged and marginalized groups.

I continually interrupt, reframe, and unlearn my biases, stereotypes and assumptions about privileged and marginalized groups.
- I understand how my various privileged and marginalized group identities impact how I am often perceived and experienced by others.

- I continuously self-reflect to examine my behaviors, assumptions, feelings, and attitudes and their impact on others across social group memberships.

- I continually seek and utilize feedback about my behaviors and attitudes from members of privileged and marginalized groups; and utilize their input to improve my practice.

- I am aware of my “early warning signals” that I am beginning to feel triggered.

- I am able to notice and navigate my own triggered feelings of anger, fear, stress, grief, etc., so that I don’t “work my issues on the group.”

- I am aware of my triggers and their intrapersonal roots.

- I actively do my work around my triggers: explore their intrapersonal roots; do my healing work; etc.
Part 6

Self-Care and Healing Work

Video Session 6

You lose so much of your time, energy, and organizational capital when you over-react and mismanage difficult situations. You can take specific steps to decrease the intensity of your triggered reactions and even eliminate your hot buttons.

I wish I had just taken a moment before I answered his question that challenged both my research and the project plan. But I was so tired from finishing up the presentation at 3am and was still getting over the flu that I just didn’t have it in me to pause or ask a question to give myself time to think. I just snapped and, raising my voice, “put him in his place!” It took me months to rebuild that relationship and regain his trust and respect. As I look back I realize that his question retriggered a memory of the times this one professor would publically critique my work and never give me any positive feedback. Once I unhooked these memories from my experiences with my colleague and did some healing work to take the sting out of those past situations, I was not as triggered by him anymore. In fact, we are beginning to create a powerful partnership on a couple of projects.

You can learn tools to deactivate the power of old issues and unresolved situations that fuel your triggered reactions. In this session you will identify strategies to heal your intrapersonal roots and redesign your life so you respond in intentional, deliberate ways that bring you the respect and dignity you deserve.

And first we will explore self-care practices to help minimize your feeling triggered in the first place.
Self-Care: Identify How You Spend Your Time

Directions: Use the following worksheet to begin to identify how you spend your time. Think about typical days for both the week and the weekend.

1. In the column on the left side of the paper make a list of all the common activities you do in a day.

2. Next, use different colors to fill in the bar graph to represent how much time you spend in each activity. Each large line on the graph represents one hour. For instance, if you sleep for eight hours, you would use one color to fill in eight spaces and then label that area “sleep.” If you watch a couple of hours of TV at night, you would use a different color to fill in two space and label it “TV.”

3. After you completely fill in the bar, notice how you spend your time.

4. Then, keep track of how you use your time over the next 1-2 weeks. As you review your notes, identify 2-3 changes that will help you find more time for self-care.

5. You might also want to journal each morning and evening to identify:
   
   • Thoughts and activities that added value and energy to my day

   • Thoughts and activities that left me feeling depleted
### Common weekday activities:

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### Common weekend activities:

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_Navigating Difficult Situations in the Workplace: How to control your reactions and respond effectively_

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### How Satisfied Are You?

Rate each of the following using a -10 to +10 Scale:

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**(-)**

- Work life, career
- Life vision and dreams
- Physical health
- Exercise, fitness
- Emotional and mental health
- Eating
- Sleep
- Time with family and friends
- Love life
- Play, fun, adventure
- Meditation, religious/spiritual/ways of knowing practices
- Activities that add joy and happiness to your life
- Rest, relaxation, rejuvenation
- Emotional care and release
- Stress management
- Activities that enrich your learning, creativity, intellectual growth
- Ways to be of service, pay it forward
- Financial health

**(+)**

-10 = Not At All Satisfied

10 = Completely Satisfied
My Plan for Better Self-Care

How will I take better care of my health? (sleep, exercise, stress management, doctor appointments, religious/spiritual practice, etc.)

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How will I eat (and drink) in ways that are better for me?

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How will I create a better work/life balance?

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My Declarations: Self-Care

Directions: Below, write some declarative statements about your beliefs and intentions as you choose to center self-care in your life:

- I deserve to take care of myself, and I will.
- I can only serve others if I continue to replenish my energy reserves.
- I will put myself on top of my to-do list so I can be helpful to others.
- There is always enough time to take care of me.
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1. How I will get support and help to navigate my current life issues (financial pressures, relationship dynamics, burnout from deadlines and numerous responsibilities, illness, grief and loss, etc.):

2. How I will release the stress and pressure from the cumulative impact of recent events (talking with others, exercise, stress release activities, meditation...):
3. How I will work with others to resolve unfinished business and heal old wounds:

4. How I will identify and release my fears and anxieties:

5. How I will rearrange my life to find healthy ways to meet my needs more frequently and consistently:
6. How I will examine, heal, and shift my ego-centered desires:

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7. How I will identify and shift assumptions, stereotypes, shoulds, expectations and judgments:

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If you are interested in inviting me to speak to the members of your organization or if you would like to explore ways to work with me as an Executive Coach or Life Coach, please contact me:

Dr. Kathy Obear

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kathy@drkathyobear.com