



Navigating Difficult Situations, Part 1

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BINGO!

- * Find someone to talk about a topic in one of the squares.
- * Both share your responses.
- * Sign each other's sheet.
- * Each find a new person to discuss a new topic.
- * When you have filled in ALL the blocks, yell BINGO! And help others win!

<p>Identify some of the comments or behaviors that are "triggers" for you or others in meetings, discussions, trainings, etc.</p>	<p>Talk about a triggering situation in a session or discussion that you navigated particularly well.</p>
<p>Talk about a time you reacted in a triggering situation in a way that undermined the goals of the conversation, meeting or training session.</p>	<p>What could happen if triggering events aren't navigated effectively?</p>



Learning Guidelines

1. Engage in open and honest dialogue
2. Participate fully (@ comfort level +1)
3. Speak from personal experience
4. Listen respectfully; Seek to understand; Listen harder when you initially disagree
5. Move in, Move out; encourage others to participate
6. Be fully present
7. Be open to new and different perspectives
8. Explore the impact of comments and behaviors; Acknowledge intent
9. Take risks: lean into discomfort; Be Brave
10. Respect and maintain confidentiality
11. Notice and share what's happening in the group, in you
12. Recognize your triggers; Share if you feel triggered
13. Trust that through dialogue we will reach deeper levels of understanding
14. Engage this opportunity!

Classroom & Meeting Guidelines ~ Your Intentions

*To create a classroom environment where all students feel heard, involved, supported, and respected

*To create a productive and engaging classroom environment for the open and respectful exchange of ideas, perspectives, and opinions

*To promote respectful dialogue, fair discussion of issues, and mutually respectful conversations

- Engage in respectful discourse
- Create a positive, collegial atmosphere
- Demonstrate mutual respect for the comments and views of all
- Speak and act in ways that do not disrupt or interfere with the learning or work of others.
- Explore controversial issues through open dialogue and respectful deliberation.
- Consider and explore new ideas and perspectives
- Express opposing ideas in a respectful manner
- Consider the potential impact of your comments and actions
- Accept responsibility for the overall welfare of the entire group
- Engage in respectful disagreement: Disagree with a person's ideas without attacking their humanity
- Respectfully address unproductive and exclusionary behaviors from other students

Common Unproductive Reactions During Difficult and 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 argues and debates
- Raises their voice, yells
- Tries to silence others
- Tries to compete, win at any cost
- Interrupts
- Self-righteous, arrogant, or condescending behaviors
- Controlling, manipulative behaviors
- Intimidating, threatening behaviors
- Forces change
- Aggressively attacks and berates
- Dismisses or minimizes the comments of others
- Explodes and directs their feelings onto others
- Sarcastic or off-handed remarks
- Belittling comments
- Intentionally tries to embarrass others
- Criticizes or accuses with the intent to humiliate and shame
- Bullies others into submission
- Turns their words against the

Flight responses

- Gets defensive
- Becomes overly guarded
- Withdraws
- Ignores or avoids issues
- Tries to smooth over conflict
- Placating to keep things under control
- Minimizes, downplays the issues or conflict
- Shuts down
- Disengages
- Uses humor and jokes to distract and smooth things over
- Quickly changes the subject
- Pretends to agree to avoid conflict
- Uses crying to distract and not engage

Freeze responses

- Blanks out, forget what wanted to say or do
- Zones out
- Immobilized
- Doesn't respond or interrupt exclusionary comments and actions
- Overly anxious and scared

Flounder Responses

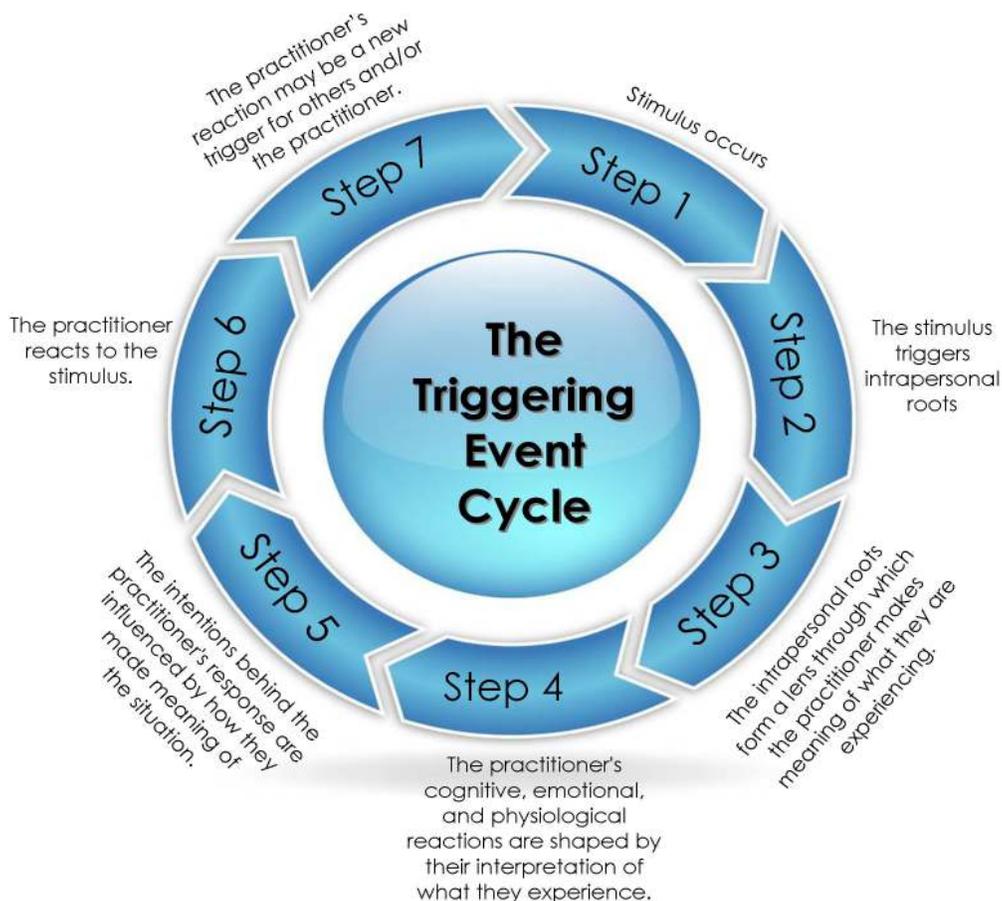
- Giving contradictory comment/examples
- Stream of consciousness, blabbering
- Can't decide: maybe this or maybe that
- Out of your body, still talking
- Tangents; way off topic

Navigating “Hot Buttons” and Triggering Situations

Characteristics of a Triggering Event

Any stimulus, either external or internal to the person, through which they experience an emotional reaction that may have some or all of the following characteristics:

- unexpectedness, the person is surprised by the arousal of their feelings
- strong intensity of feelings, the person experiences their emotions as overwhelming and disproportionate to the original stimulus
- disorienting, the person is disoriented and distracted from the flow of the workshop and the planned agenda: “stopped in their tracks”
- feeling out of control and overwhelmed by the situation
- feeling “de-skilled” and reacting less effectively
- requiring extra effort to manage the situation effectively



Common Examples of Triggering Events

Directions ~ Use a 0-10 scale to rate how much of a “trigger” each of the following is for you:

- 0 = no emotional reaction
- 1-2 = mild level of emotional reaction
- 3-4 = low-moderate degree of emotional reaction
- 5-6 = moderate degree of emotional reaction
- 7-8 = high degree of emotional reaction
- 9-10 = extremely high level of emotional reaction

A. When someone:

- 1. makes an insensitive, stereotypic, or offensive comment
- 2. acts in ways that are classist, racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.
- 3. interrupts or speaks over me or others
- 4. dismisses my point or that of others
- 5. demonstrates disruptive behavior including joking, side conversations, or laughing at me or others
- 6. makes snide or sarcastic comments
- 7. is belittling or demeaning
- 8. demonstrates domineering or controlling behavior
- 9. demonstrates bullying or threatening behavior
- 10. is arrogant or self-righteous
- 11. is patronizing or condescending
- 12. has a very blunt or impersonal style
- 13. has an aggressive or forceful style
- 14. tries to derail the planned format and agenda
- 15. refuses to participate in the discussion or the activity
- 16. is silent, shut down or withdrawn
- 17. is “set in their ways” and unwilling to shift their perspective
- 18. will only focus on their “good intent”, not the impact of their behavior
- 19. refuses to consider feedback from me or others
- 20. is crying and expressing deep emotions of pain or grief
- 21. is expressing deep anger or rage
- 22. keeps pushing their points; refusws to consider input of others
- 23. challenges the validity of the information or statistics being presented
- 24. strongly disagrees with what I am saying
- 25. questions the usefulness of an activity or a discussion
- 26. criticizes my style, design, or approach
- 27. questions my competency or that of others
- 28. calls me classist, racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.

- 29. criticizes or minimizes efforts related to equity, inclusion, and social justice
- 30. doesn't do what I ask or follow my instructions
- 31. produces low quality work
- 32. takes credit for my ideas and work
- 33. continually points out what others do that is unproductive without acknowledging their own participation in negative group dynamics
- 34. keeps me out of the loop or excludes me from important conversations
- 35. tries to undermine me or others
- 36. tries to "coach" me or correct me
- 37. is colluding with their own oppression, "going along to get along"
- 38. raises their voice to try to silence me or others
- 39. shuts down, withdraws or pouts if confronted or doesn't get their way
- 40. changes the planned agenda without checking in with me
- 41. steps in as I am leading and takes over
- 42. debates or disagrees with everything I say
- 43. believes they are always right
- 44. never gives any positive or appreciative feedback
- 45. doesn't do their job and I have to pick up the slack
- 46. does something unethical or dishonest
- 47. sends me a blasting, critical email and copies my supervisor without talking to me 1st
- 48. is more concerned with protecting their turf or career than achieving organizational goals
- 49. micromanages and second guesses me
- 50. doesn't ask for or use my input in decisions that affect me, my area
- 51. accuses me of doing something I didn't do

B. For me, when:

- 52. I make a mistake or error
- 53. I do or say something biased, offensive or oppressive
- 54. I do not know the answer to a question
- 55. I fear I do not know how to effectively respond in a situation
- 56. I start to cry or lash out in anger
- 57. I believe the conversation is about to "get out of control"

Additional common triggers for you:

Journaling: The Triggering Event Cycle

Directions: Choose one situation when **you were not satisfied** with how you reacted when you felt triggered during a difficult situation.

1. What was the **specific situation** in which you felt triggered (Step 1)?
2. What were some of your **intrapersonal roots** fueling your triggered reactions? (Step 2) (see next page)
3. How did you **make meaning** of the situation? **What “story” did you make up** about what you thought was happening (Step 3)?

4. **How did you know** you were triggered (Step 4)?

*physiological reactions:

*self-talk/thoughts:

*feelings:

*unconscious behaviors or responses:

5. What were your **intentions** and motives? Hoped for outcome? What were you trying to accomplish (Step 5)?

*unproductive motives:

* more productive motives:

6. How did you **react** when you were triggered? Please note both your actions as well as your intrapersonal processes, such as your feelings and fears, thoughts and “self-talk” (Step 6)?

* less effective reactions/responses:

* more effective reactions/responses:

7. How was **your effectiveness impacted** by feeling triggered? How did your reactions impact you? Others (Step 7)?

STEP 2: Intrapersonal “Roots” of Triggering Events

Directions: Think about your triggering event. What do you believe were the various factors or “roots” that contributed to your feeling triggered?

1. **Current life issues and dynamics** (fatigue, illness, crises, stressors, etc.)

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

3. **Unfinished business, unresolved or unhealed past issues, traumas, and “wounds:”** Does this person remind you of anyone? Does this situation remind you of past traumas?

4. **Fears (check-off all that are related and add any others)**
 - My personal issues will become the focus of the conversation: all eyes will be on me.
 - I will lose credibility and be seen as less competent.
 - 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.”
 - People will get too emotional and I won't have the skills to manage the situation.
 - I won't know enough about the issue to engage in conversation.
 - If I challenge this issue I will be all 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.”
 - They will see how prejudiced I really am.
 - I'll let people down and disappoint them.
 - 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 feel uncomfortable...be hurt.
 - Things will be worse off than before.

5. Unmet Universal Needs/What I value* (check-off all that are related and add any others)

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

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

- To assert, regain my power and authority
- To have control
- To win the argument; prove them wrong
- To get my way
- To make people change; “fix” them
- To make people learn
- To be right
- To shut them down, put them in their place
- To make them feel the pain and hurt I feel
- To be seen as the expert, smart
- To prove I am competent
- To gain prestige and status
- To be admired; avoid disgrace
- To be liked
- To fit in
- To be seen as a “good one,” an ally
- To be perfect
- To gain certainty and predictability
- For everyone to feel happy
- To avoid deep emotions and conflict
- To make others engage as I want them to

7. Biases, assumptions, expectations, shoulds, and judgments

*This section was enhanced by the work of Marshall Rosenberg (2005). [Nonviolent Communication](#).

Feelings and Emotions

Major source: Raj Gill, Lucy Leu, Judi Morin, **NVC Toolkit**, 2009

Sit with your reactions/reflections/experiences...

Check-off/Circle any emotions that you felt/feel. Add any others to the list.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aggravated | <input type="checkbox"/> Distressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Jealous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agitated | <input type="checkbox"/> Distrustful | <input type="checkbox"/> Jubilant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alarmed | <input type="checkbox"/> Drained | <input type="checkbox"/> Lonely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alienated | <input type="checkbox"/> Dumbfounded | <input type="checkbox"/> Longing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ambivalent | <input type="checkbox"/> Eager | <input type="checkbox"/> Mean |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Amused | <input type="checkbox"/> Edgy | <input type="checkbox"/> Mortified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Angry | <input type="checkbox"/> Embarrassed | <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anguish | <input type="checkbox"/> Empowered | <input type="checkbox"/> Numb |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annoyed | <input type="checkbox"/> Empathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> Outraged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxious | <input type="checkbox"/> Enraged | <input type="checkbox"/> Overwhelmed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciative | <input type="checkbox"/> Envious | <input type="checkbox"/> Panic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apprehensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Exasperated | <input type="checkbox"/> Paralyzed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appalled | <input type="checkbox"/> Excited | <input type="checkbox"/> Peaceful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Awe | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhausted | <input type="checkbox"/> Perplexed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ashamed | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhilarated | <input type="checkbox"/> Powerless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bitter | <input type="checkbox"/> Fascinated | <input type="checkbox"/> Preoccupied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bored | <input type="checkbox"/> Fearful | <input type="checkbox"/> Puzzled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Burned out | <input type="checkbox"/> Forlorn | <input type="checkbox"/> Raging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calm | <input type="checkbox"/> Frightened | <input type="checkbox"/> Regretful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carefree | <input type="checkbox"/> Furious | <input type="checkbox"/> Relieved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confident | <input type="checkbox"/> Grateful | <input type="checkbox"/> Remorseful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confused | <input type="checkbox"/> Gratified | <input type="checkbox"/> Repulsed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crushed | <input type="checkbox"/> Grief | <input type="checkbox"/> Resentful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Defeated | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty | <input type="checkbox"/> Sad |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deflated | <input type="checkbox"/> Hateful | <input type="checkbox"/> Surprised |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dejected | <input type="checkbox"/> Heartbroken | <input type="checkbox"/> Sympathetic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depleted | <input type="checkbox"/> Hesitant | <input type="checkbox"/> Tender |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Hopeless | <input type="checkbox"/> Tense |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Despair | <input type="checkbox"/> Hurt | <input type="checkbox"/> Terrified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Determined | <input type="checkbox"/> Impatient | <input type="checkbox"/> Touched |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disappointed | <input type="checkbox"/> Incensed | <input type="checkbox"/> Unsettled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discouraged | <input type="checkbox"/> Indifferent | <input type="checkbox"/> Useless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disgusted | <input type="checkbox"/> Indignant | <input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerable |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disheartened | <input type="checkbox"/> Infuriated | <input type="checkbox"/> Wary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disillusioned | <input type="checkbox"/> Insecure | <input type="checkbox"/> Weary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Inspired | <input type="checkbox"/> Worried |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distracted | <input type="checkbox"/> Irritated | |

Common Universal Needs/Values

(Adapted from R. Gill, L. Leu, and J. Morin (2009). NVC Toolkit for Facilitators.)

acceptance	effectiveness	openness
adaptability	efficiency	order
appreciation	empathy	participation
authenticity	equality	partnership
autonomy	fairness	peace
awareness	follow-through	play
balance	freedom	presence
beauty	fun	progress
belonging	growth	purpose
caring	harmony	reflection
celebration	healing	relaxation
challenge	health	reliability
choice	honesty	relief
clarity	hope	respect
collaboration	humor	rest
communication	inclusion	safety
community	independence	security
companionship	inspiration	self-expression
compassion	integration	self-reliance
competence	integrity	space
consciousness	intimacy	stimulation
connection	joy	spontaneity
consideration	learning	stability
contribution	love	support
cooperation	matterng	trust
creating	meaning	understanding
creativity	mourning	warmth
dependability	movement	wellbeing
dignity	mutuality	
ease	nurturance	

- control how others feel about you
- to be seen as a “good one,” an ally
- use the current opportunity to “right the wrongs” you experienced in the past
- change the other person to account for times you either didn’t or couldn’t change oppressive people earlier in your life
- ignore them
- seek approval of others
- to be liked, to fit in
- avoid confrontation and conflict

When You Feel Triggered, Shift Your Intentions to Align with Your Inclusion Values:

- create greater inclusion
- leave people feelings whole
- engage in respectful dialogue
- do no harm
- “go with the flow;” trust the process
- deepen learning and growth
- meet the people “where they are” without judgment
- use the triggering moment to deepen understanding
- relate in to the person; connect with them
- create space for honest, authentic dialogue
- invite people to learn from the situation
- model the social justice behaviors you espouse: authenticity, empathy, self-reflection, engagement...
- model skills to navigate triggering moments: scan yourself, identify unmet needs, shift self-talk, stress management, realigning intentions, exploring intrapersonal roots...
- facilitate open, honest discussion
- create space for the other person to express their feelings, perceptions
- deepen understanding across differences
- identify the deeper issues fueling the feelings, perceptions and behaviors of others
- create safety for the expression of differing viewpoints
- treat others with respect and dignity
- encourage more people to engage in the dialogue
- support people to disagree with each other in respectful ways
- model effective recovery skills after making an inappropriate comment or when your behavior results in negative impact
- re-establish credibility with the person/group
- identify inappropriate behaviors and explore the negative impact
- interrupt unproductive, inappropriate behaviors and group dynamics
- take time to “gather oneself,” navigate personal emotions, gain perspective...
- build a “bridge” and a connection with the other person
- encourage identity development and growth
- demonstrate compassion and empathy

STEP 5: Shift Your Intentions

My less productive, "negative" intentions	More productive, effective intentions	How I might respond more productively, effectively

Navigating Difficult Situations: Self-Assessment Checklist

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

5 = Almost always 4 = Most of the time 3 = Much of the time 2 = Sometimes 1 = Rarely

- _____ 1. I acknowledge comments that seem inappropriate or triggering.
- _____ 2. I effectively name and discuss group dynamics in the moment and use them as “teachable moments” to facilitate deeper learning.
- _____ 3. I recognize that “resistance” and challenges are often doorways to deeper understanding and learning for the group.
- _____ 4. I engage people in dialogue when they make inappropriate or triggering comments.
- _____ 5. I encourage other group members to participate and engage in the discussion.
- _____ 6. I effectively navigate conflict and disagreement among group members.
- _____ 7. I can respond effectively to challenges and engage resistance from group members without taking it personally or feeling triggered.
- _____ 8. I effectively navigate behaviors I believe are distracting, including dominating, interrupting, side-tracking, side conversations, etc.
- _____ 9. I effectively navigate situations where group members are feeling and expressing deep emotions, including anger, sadness, fear, frustration, hopelessness, etc.
- _____ 10. I am able to be “in the moment” ~ fully present and focused on what is happening in the group and in myself.
- _____ 11. I use self-disclosure and share feelings, thoughts, opinions, and personal experiences as appropriate.
- _____ 12. I easily “go with the flow” and am flexible with the agenda as I adjust to the needs of the group in the moment.
- _____ 13. I can “meet the people where they are” and not demand or expect them to be farther along in their understanding or skill development.

- _____ 14. I use silence effectively.
- _____ 15. I use “Connecting Language” that bridges one person’s comments to another’s.
- _____ 16. I effectively find some relevant point in each person’s comments, even those that seem way off the topic.
- _____ 17. If I believe someone is on a tangent, I can effectively acknowledge their point, and redirect the conversation back to the group’s topic.
- _____ 18. I minimize how much I use the “telling” style, and maximize how often I pose questions or dilemmas to facilitate dialogue among others.
- _____ 19. I am aware of how I use my body language and nonverbal behavior to facilitate learning and engage others.
- _____ 20. 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.
- _____ 21. I am able to “relate in” and “see myself in others” to find compassion and connection, rather than judging them or distancing from them.
- _____ 22. 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.
- _____ 23. I am aware of my biases, assumptions, and stereotypes for various privileged and marginalized groups.
- _____ 24. I continually interrupt, reframe, and unlearn my biases, stereotypes and assumptions about privileged and marginalized groups.
- _____ 25. I understand how my various privileged and marginalized group identities impact how I am often perceived and experienced by others.
- _____ 26. I understand how my various privileged and marginalized group identities impact how I often make meaning of situations, and then how I react/respond.
- _____ 27. I continuously self-reflect to examine my behaviors, assumptions, feelings, and attitudes and their impact on others across social group memberships.

- _____ 28. 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.
- _____ 29. I am aware of my “early warning signals” that I am beginning to feel triggered.
- _____ 30. 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.”
- _____ 31. I am aware of my triggers and their intrapersonal roots.
- _____ 32. I actively do my work around my triggers: explore their intrapersonal roots; do my healing work; etc.