



## Facing Partner ‘Triggers’

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**DEFINITION:** Being *Triggered* means that some sort of stimulus – an action, a sound, a situation, a smell, a place, words used, a look, an object, a scene in a movie, an attitude, a gesture, almost ANYTHING – can initiate, set off or release an intense, emotional and usually negative reaction in the heart or mind of your spouse.

- Whatever *triggers* her reminds her or is closely associated with some connection to the horrific pain she has experienced due to your lies, betrayal and unfaithfulness.
- This traumatic response is not crazy – on the contrary – it makes sense connecting it to what she has gone through because of you.
- It’s called **Partner Betrayal Trauma** for a reason and can affect her physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
- It is REAL PAIN – deeply excruciating and pervasive. She could feel overwhelmed, stressed, panicked, angry, broken or crushed as the *trigger* links her directly to some aspect of her deep hurt.
- She could then lash out, pull away, cry, scream, go silent, get critical or judgemental, say really hurtful things and simply want to give up on you and any possible recovery process.

### TAKE RESPONSIBILITY:

It’s all on you. Without your selfish behaviour in the first place, she would not have any *triggers*. You caused this. Admit it. Don’t explain, minimize or justify. Start with admitting it – fully owning it. Don’t blame her. Show great empathy, patience and compassion through her *triggers*. More to follow:

### WHY YOU DON’T TAKE RESPONSIBILITY:

- You are **IMMATURE**. Your childish reactions to her pain only push her away more. Take her pain like a man. It is YOUR fault.
- You are **SELFISH**. You seek to BLAME her. You deflect, dismiss, distort the TRUTH. You make her hurt worse. It’s like you are mean.
- You are **EGO-CENTRIC**. You don’t look at life through her eyes – ONLY YOUR OWN. You make YOUR pain more important than hers.

## LET JESUS HUMBLE YOU...IT’S THE WAY OF RECOVERY

*“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”* Proverbs 28:13

## HANDLING HER TRIGGERS WITH CARE:

1. Responding to her *triggers* has to be about her. Don't try to question them, explain them away, be confused about the apparent connection to your behaviour or show any form of exasperation. When you do, it's full-on selfishness. That response is all about you.
2. Be patient. Impatience is all about you, again. Yes, it hurts when she is *triggered*. It brings up your guilt and shame again and you don't want to go back there. But, be a man! Carry her pain with her. It's pain YOU caused. Working through *triggers* is part of her journey. It's part of your journey too. Patiently help carry the burden YOU gave her.
3. Listen. Don't talk. Focus on her hurt and her broken heart. Let her share how she is feeling, what *triggered* her, letting her finish her story. She will get angry at times – sometimes really lose it on you at others. It won't feel good. Don't interrupt. Don't fix. Simply take it. LISTEN to her pain. Validate her feelings and her response to the *trigger*.
4. Empathy is hard to develop when your life has been all about you. Selfish doesn't do empathy well. You will have to grow up. Empathy is looking at life through her eyes – identifying the connection between your actions and her pain, validating her hurt, and showing ongoing compassion to her.
5. Own the central place you have played in her hurt. Own it as often as necessary. Trying owning it for as long as you were acting out. Actually, speak out your owning – “I am so sorry; my selfishness caused all this. It's all my fault. I'm sorry.” Don't say more. Own it and let her rant if necessary.
6. Apologize genuinely and repeatedly with as soft heart – “I'm so sorry”. Don't ask for her forgiveness right then. She is not there yet. She is not ready. That may come in time. Maybe in months.
7. Don't give her a TONE. Don't roll your eyes. Don't show exasperation. No condescending. No cutting her off. No explaining it away. You will have a really hard time not making this moment about you. That's your addiction trying to avoid pain. Man up.
8. Don't give her the “poor me”. Don't talk about how you are hurting. When she is *triggered* and lashes out, never say anything like, “you know how your talk makes me feel? Or “I'm hurting too you know!” Grow up! Your pain doesn't deserve to be in the same conversation. Show lots of understanding, patience and support – over and over again.
9. No defensiveness. Don't raise your voice at her. And for sure – stop all anger toward her. No “get over it” or “how much longer do I have to put up with this?” No backlash for her being *triggered*.

10. Validate her pain – appreciate her trauma recovery journey. Show Understanding. She didn't bring this on us. Seek to care for her heart.
11. Comfort her only when she is ready. Don't push your care on her like you are "loving her even when she is being difficult to you." No hugs when she is *triggered*. Always ask her if your hug would help.
12. Give Her Space. She may need "alone time". She may leave you. She may ask you to leave. Grant her what she needs. Just seeing you may be a *trigger*. Be okay with her being alone to recover. Also, be okay with her understandable rejection of you. This will hurt. Carry it well.
13. Ask genuinely with a humble heart: "What do you need from me?" Listen. Do what you can to show that you are listening. Do what you can to lighten her load. But first, ask her if it is okay if I do this or that. Always move with her permission.
14. Recommit your life to God. Ask Him to change YOU. Confess your mess to Him. Seek His forgiveness. Then, pray for your wife that God would give her what she needs in her recovery from your addiction. Ask God for another chance with her and then live like you will be your own answer to prayer! Caution on saying – "I will pray for you". Don't come across holy after the pain you have caused. PRAY FOR HER - genuinely and privately.
15. Love her by dealing with your stuff. Focus on your goal of a transformed and pure life. That's your greatest gift to her. Love her by NAILING your RECOVERY. Work hard to deal with your OWN *triggers* in your addiction. Do your work FAITHFULLY for at least 12 months. Love her by making genuine changes – not managing image. Don't be a pretender. "Boys make Excuses – Men make Changes! DO YOUR WORK!"