

Triggers at Work: Spot It, Name It, Settle It

A three-step way to catch a trauma response before it runs the meeting for you — plus a quick-reference table of common workplace triggers and what's actually happening underneath them.

PART 1 — THE THREE-STEP SEQUENCE

- 1. Spot it.** Notice the physical signal before the story — a tight jaw, a dropped stomach, heat in your face, the urge to leave the room. Your body clocks a trigger before your mind finishes the sentence explaining why.
- 2. Name it.** Silently or on paper: “This is a trigger, not an emergency.” Naming what's happening moves it from the reactive part of your brain to the part that can actually think. You don't need the full story yet — just the label.
- 3. Settle it.** One slow exhale, longer than the inhale. Unclench your jaw and hands on purpose. Ask yourself one question: “What does this moment actually require of me right now?” Usually it's less than the alarm in your body is asking for.

PART 2 — COMMON WORKPLACE TRIGGERS

Trigger	What's actually happening
Being called into a meeting with no agenda	Uncertainty reads as threat. Your nervous system fills the blank with worst-case.
A raised voice or terse email	Tone gets flagged as danger before content is even processed.
Being watched while you work	Feeling monitored can echo being surveilled or controlled in a past unsafe situation.
Sudden schedule changes	Loss of predictability removes a sense of control that your body relies on to feel safe.
Being interrupted or talked over	Can register as being dismissed or unsafe to speak up, especially after past experiences of not being heard.

None of this means the trigger wasn't real, or that your reaction was wrong. It means your body learned to protect you somewhere else, and it's still running that program here. Spotting it is what gives you the choice about what happens next.

This isn't a cure and it isn't therapy. It's not a substitute for the deeper work of healing from trauma. If you're in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, please reach out to a crisis line or a professional rather than relying on a tool like this alone.

MINDFULNESS FOR PTSD AND WORKPLACE TRAUMA

This is one small piece of what's in the book. For one practical tool like this in your inbox every week, that's what the Reset List is for — short, practical, no fluff.

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