



When Your Trigger Takes the Wheel

Five practices to help you respond with intention.



There's always a way forward.

01

NOTICE

Notice when your trigger has the keys.

Ever walked away from a conversation thinking, “Why did I react like that?”

Maybe you overexplained, shut down, took over, or said yes when you wanted to say no. Something hit a nerve, and your usual response showed up before you had time to think.

The goal isn't to never get triggered. It's to recognize what happens when you do and give yourself another way to respond.

Start with one recent moment. Keep it in mind as you work through these five practices.

THE IDEA

You have to recognize the reaction before you can change your response.

EXAMPLES

A tight jaw, faster talking, an urge to defend yourself, going quiet, taking over, or needing to fix everything immediately.

TRY THIS

Think about a recent interaction that stayed with you. What did you notice in your body? What did you feel pulled to do?

REFLECTION

When I feel _____, I tend to _____.

TAKEAWAY



This is my cue to pay attention.

02

UNDERSTAND

Get curious about what hit a nerve.

What happened and what you made it mean may be different.

Someone questions your recommendation. You hear, “They don’t trust me,” and begin proving your competence. That interpretation may be accurate or there may be something else happening.

Experience → Belief → Behavior → Results

REFLECT ON THIS

What actually happened?

What did I tell myself it meant?

How did that belief shape my behavior?

What result did my response create?

TAKEAWAY



What did I assume and how much of it do I know to be accurate?

03

PAUSE

Create enough space to choose.

You don't have to solve the entire situation in the moment. Start by creating a little room.

TRY THIS

Notice your feet on the floor, release your jaw, and take a slow breath before answering. If you need more time, say so—and name when you will return to the conversation.

SOME USEFUL WORDS

“ *I want to give this some thought before I respond.* ”

“ *Can you tell me more about what you mean?* ”

“ *Let's come back to this at two.* ”

REFLECT

What could help me pause?

TAKEAWAY



I can feel the urgency without acting on it immediately.

04

CHOOSE

Choose a response that serves your purpose.

Your familiar reaction may bring short-term relief while making the situation harder.

What am I trying to accomplish here?

If your usual move is...	Try...
Proving yourself	Ask what specifically needs clarification.
Taking over	Ask what they think the next steps are, agree on the outcome, and let them own the next step.
Shutting down	Voice your need for a pause and return as promised.
Saying yes automatically	Check your capacity before committing.
Fixing everyone's feelings	Ask what support they want before stepping in.

REFLECTION

Instead of _____, I will try _____.

TAKEAWAY



What response would move this toward the outcome I want?

05

PRACTICE

Practice and repair when you miss it.

Recognizing a pattern doesn't automatically change it. Give yourself one small practice you can repeat.

TRY THIS

Choose one situation you expect this week. Decide what you will watch for and what you will do differently.

IF YOU NEED TO REPAIR

“ I got defensive earlier. Let me try that again.

“ I stepped in too quickly. What's your plan?

“ I agreed before checking my capacity. I need to revisit that commitment.

TAKEAWAY



I can take responsibility and choose my next move.

My next move

My trigger

My usual response

The response I'll practice

Where I'll try it this week

You don't have to change everything at once. Start with one moment where you usually react and practice giving yourself another option.

There's always a way forward.

Schedule a complimentary 30-minute conversation with Makenzie to explore a current challenge, identify one pattern, and consider a practical next step.

