

Session 30: When parents feel triggered

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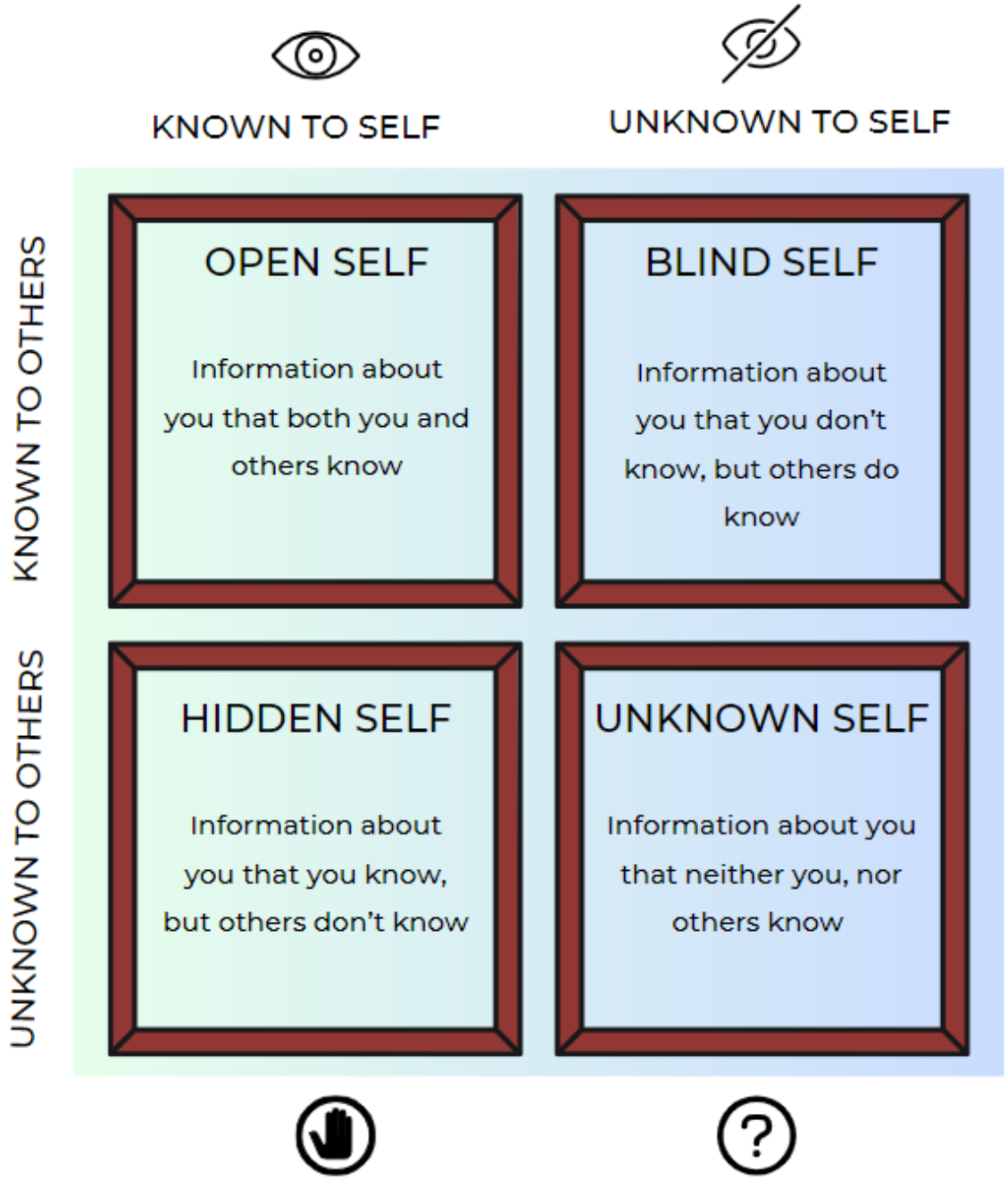
Today we are exploring

- ✓ What is triggered
- ✓ Risk factors in getting triggered
- ✓ What can happen and what to look out for
- ✓ Managing our emotional response: what to do immediately, what to do in the longer term
- ✓ It's never too late to repair: messy and real is ok
- ✓ Links to CLEAN coaching

What does triggered mean to you?

- ✓ Finish these sentences: triggered means… triggered is…
- ✓ How do you feel about the topic of triggers?
- ✓ How does it feel in your body when you think about being triggered?
- ✓ What helps you to identify your own triggers?
- ✓ How do your triggers impact on what you want to do, be or have?
- ✓ What helps you to explore triggers with someone else?
- ✓ How do you know when you are no longer so triggered by something? What does that feel like?
- ✓ What else do you notice?
- ✓ What do you want in place to work with triggers in your coaching practice?
- ✓ Explore the different resources relating to healing in the course materials for ideas

Johari Window



Finding WHAT Matters
COACHING SKILLS FOR PARENTS

What does it mean to be triggered?

"Being triggered means that you experience **a strong negative emotional reaction** in response to a current situation that is disturbing to you in some way. For individuals with a history of trauma or abuse, **triggers are often stimuli that bring up involuntary memories of their traumatic past experien**ces."

Amy Mezulis, PhD, the co-founder and chief clinical officer of Joon.

https://www.verywellmind.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-triggered-4175432

- ✓ Can put the person into flight, fight, freeze, fawn response
- ✓ The person can find it difficult to separate out the present moment from a traumatic situation in the past
- ✓ Can be triggered by any of the 5 senses, or a particular combination of experiences
- ✓ Can revert back to behaviour that might have been experienced at the original time of the incident
- ✓ Can be internal such as an emotion: anxiety, anger, tension, pain, sadness
- ✓ Can be external: time of day, specific date, location

Risk factors involved in triggers getting created

- ✓ The period of emotional development when the trauma occurred
- ✓ The duration and intensity of the traumatic experience
- ✓ The characteristics of the event, including how extreme it was
- ✓ Being psychologically, physically, or emotionally harmed
- ✓ Individual characteristics, including personality traits and sociocultural history
- ✓ Emotions experienced during and after the trauma, including fear, hopelessness, and shame
- ✓ How much social support the person has before, during, and after the trauma

"Certain underlying mental health conditions, including substance use disorder, depression, and anxiety, might make someone more prone to experiencing more severe reactions to triggers," John McGeehan from The Dorm says.
https://www.verywellmind.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-triggered-4175432

What can happen

"Triggers typically elicit strong negative emotions such as fear, anger, or shame.

People may feel unsafe or threatened and, as a result, may react by panicking, trying to escape the situation, crying, acting out, or becoming defensive."

— AMY MEZULIS, PHD, LICENSED CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST

What to look out for

- ✓ Becoming suddenly more emotional than they have previously been
- ✓ Closing eyes, withdrawing, disassociating, not being ‘present’ in the room
- ✓ Changes in voice tone, pitch, volume
- ✓ Different body language: flight, flight, freeze, fawn
- ✓ Not being able to express themselves

What to do immediately

- ✓ Reassure them: you are safe, you are here with me
- ✓ Let's stay here in this room:
  - ✓ Name 5 things that are green, 4 blue things etc
  - ✓ Stand up and stretch
  - ✓ Keep eye contact even if neurodivergent
  - ✓ Ask them to hold an object and describe it
  - ✓ Draw, write, colour
  - ✓ Rearrange the buttons
  - ✓ Remind them emotions commonly most intense for about 90 seconds
- ✓ When they are calmer and back in the room, decide how to deal with it:
  - ✓ Refer them to a specialist for support
  - ✓ Make a plan for working with that trigger – probably in the next session unless this happened at the start
  - ✓ Plan for how they can feel safe between now and when they get support

How to work with it in the longer term

- ✓ Refer the person to counselling
- ✓ Emotional first aid kit – Starseed parenting website
- ✓ Inner child healing meditations - Tom Fortes Mayer:
  - ✓ Self-sabotage
  - ✓ Inner child healing mediations
  - ✓ Emotional support for when triggered
  - ✓ Inner child song, journey and dance

https://www.tomfortesmayer.com/resources2

- ✓ Journalling
- ✓ 3 Steps Home book
- ✓ Love Create Heal course – to be released!

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- ✓ Start to develop connections with all the different parts of yourself – all is welcome
- ✓ The person often has quite strong ideas about what they need to develop that connection – support them in doing that
- ✓ If not, what did they enjoy as a child, or what would they like to have enjoyed?
- ✓ Playful is key

Love bears



- ✓ Find an object that there can be multiples of that the coachee relates to:
  - ✓ Bears, leaves, buttons, what else?
- ✓ Number each one for every year of the person's life
- ✓ Put them in a nice box, safe place, take care of them
- ✓ Pick one out and journal on what comes up for you about that year
- ✓ Or pick a phase and explore those years such as teens
- ✓ Or start at the beginning and work through sequentially

LoveCreateHeal

Use intentional creative projects to focus on and heal a particular wounding from the past:

- ✓ Pick the topic, wound or challenge you would like to focus on
- ✓ Begin by sending love to that topic – there may be many emotions associated with the topic. Send love as you would to a baby or child, without pushing away the other emotions – they are all valid
- ✓ Decide on a creative project that you would like to work on to explore the emotions associated with the topic
  - ✓ Painting, drawing, quilting, clay, knitting, sewing – you choose
- ✓ As you create, consider the topic you want to focus on
- ✓ What do you notice that shifts as you create your project?
- ✓ Be open to healing, even if you are not sure how or when healing will happen
- ✓ When you complete your project, reflect on your emotions around the topic
- ✓ How do you feel now? What is different? What do you notice?

It’s never to late to repair if you feel you have acted from a triggered place: messy and real is ok

- ✓ Calm all the way down – self-regulate, grounded, present
- ✓ Invite your child to speak with you about the situation
- ✓ Ask how your child felt about your behaviour without defending it
- ✓ Talk about what you regret – name it
- ✓ Problem-solve: how are you going to act in future?
- ✓ Talk to your child about their calm down plan if that’s helpful
- ✓ Sincerely apologise in a way that works for your child
- ✓ Make sure you can implement what you have agreed
- ✓ Know when you need more support

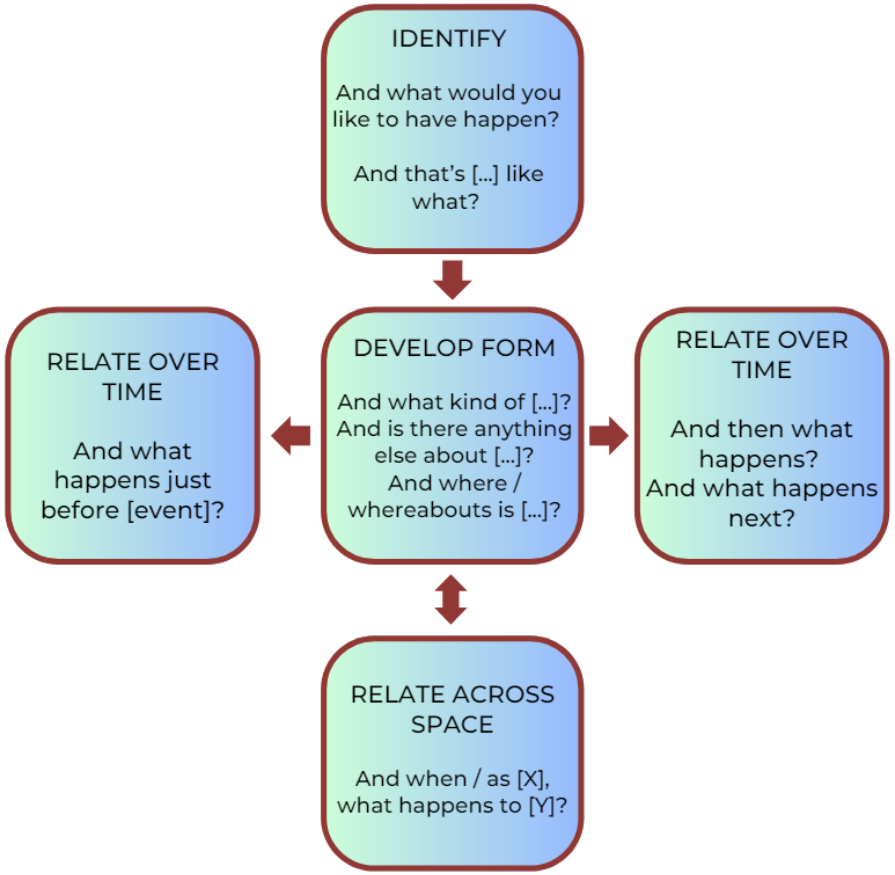
https://www.yummymummyclub.ca/blogs/andrea-nair-connect-four-parenting/20140930/how-to-do-parent-child-relationship-repair

Impact on parenting

Between stimulus and response is freedom to choose – Victor Frankel

- ✓ Bringing awareness to our triggers gives us more capacity to be grounded, to lower our emotional set point and to be intentional in our responses
- ✓ We can be calmer, clearer and more able to respond to what is happening here and now, rather than responding to historic patterns
- ✓ We can role model self-regulation for our children
- ✓ We have more time and space to identify new, creative soltuions

Links to Clean Coaching



- ✓ It can be very difficult to talk directly about past challenges or trauma
- ✓ There is an opportunity to talk about difficult topics as a metaphor
- ✓ This can take the pressure off fully connecting with the past experience, and give the coachee the opportunity to explore it from a different perspective

What this means for you personally

- ✓ Reflect on your awareness of your own triggers – what do you notice?
- ✓ Use the questions at the start of this session to help you reflect
- ✓ Identify 3 ways you want to explore your triggers over the next month – with awareness that you can explore other aspects another time
- ✓ Plan what you will do over the next month to bring awareness to your own triggers
- ✓ Look through the lens of how your awareness of your triggers is helping you with your parenting
- ✓ Consider how awareness of triggers can help other parents

The importance in a parenting context

- ✓ The ability to identify your own triggers will naturally influence your parenting, whether you focus on it or not
- ✓ You can share this ability with coachees, both formally by showing and explaining, and informally by modelling the approaches in your sessions
- ✓ You can pick the knowledge, skill or behaviour that feels relevant in the context:
  - ✓ Introducing the coachee parent to the concept of triggers may help the coachee to explore triggers with their child
  - ✓ How could the coachee explore planning for responding to triggers to help the coachee's child to flourish?
  - ✓ How does the child feel in their body when they have safe space to express their triggers?
  - ✓ How can the coachee check in with their child to develop self and co-regulation further?
  - ✓ What can the coachee do to move the child's connection with their co-regulation from the house to other places?
  - ✓ How can the coachee negotiate with others to ensure the child's regulation is prioritised?