



# Trauma Trigger Plan

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## Why use a Trauma Trigger Plan?

I developed this tool with my therapist to help me manage the intense shame spirals that I sometimes experience after being triggered. Especially after a therapy session, I might feel fine leaving the session and then later on, the shame would come at me strong. At the beginning of my trauma therapy, I was learning for the first time how to handle those intense emotions. I hadn't yet developed many tools and those I had weren't automatic. I would go to bed for hours or cancel plans - anything to not feel the pain of the shame.

When I was in the middle of one of those shame spirals, I didn't remember the things I had learned to manage the shame. I only felt that strong desire to make it stop in any way possible. Having this "Fire Drill" printed out and available helped me to remember all the tools I had to choose from that were healthy choices. After a lot of practice (and I do honestly mean **A LOT**), it began to be automatic to check the list of tools on my plan. Today, I rarely need to use it because my muscle memory has become so much stronger.

Part of this plan was to notice what my warning signs were that I was in the middle of a trauma response versus what was actually "real" at the time. For example, I might feel like I was unlovable or completely broken and that would lead me to the suicidal thoughts. Being able to clearly and easily identify that this was a response to my trauma and not reality helped me immensely. There are many warning signs that are universal to all of us like when we are hungry, tired, not feeling well, etc. and our defenses are down. There are other warning signs that are unique to each of us.

I hope sharing this "Fire Drill" is helpful to you. Though I have given a few examples, please customize it for your own situation. Keep it handy! I laminated mine. You are stronger than you think, and you are not alone.



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## Triggers / Shame Spiral Warning Signs

(Examples: wanting to run away, isolate, medicate, dissociation, etc.)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

## Fire Drill

(Examples: remember it will pass, call a friend, mindful walk, watch a funny movie, listen to music)

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.