

Attachment Triggers Worksheet

The most useful thing to understand about attachment triggers is that the same event does not trigger everyone, and when it does, it does not trigger them in the same direction. A partner saying "I need a bit of space this weekend" is a threat to one nervous system and a relief to another. Most arguments about triggers are really arguments about this asymmetry.

Who this is for: You keep having the same fight, or you react strongly to things that seem small afterwards and want to know what specifically is firing.

The mapping exercises

1. Event, meaning, body

Separate three things that arrive as one.

The event, in camera terms:

I took that to mean...

Where it landed in my body, and what it made me want to do:

How long between the event and the peak?

2. The same event, four ways

See how differently one incident reads from each style.

The recurring event:

What it means to me:

What it plausibly means to my partner, in their terms rather than mine:

What evidence would tell me which reading is right?

3. The trigger ladder

Rank triggers by intensity so you know which to work on.

My triggers, ranked one to ten:

Which sit at four to six? (These are this month's work.)

Which are tens, and what makes them tens rather than sevens?

Which have moved down the ladder since I started logging?

4. Early warning signs

Catch the ramp rather than the peak.

Ten minutes before the last peak, what was I doing?

The thought that reliably shows up early:

My physical tell, before I notice emotionally:

What could I do at that point that would be useless at the peak?

5. The de-escalation card

Write it now, because you will not compose it later.

My two earliest warning signs:

The technique that works fastest:

My time-buying sentence, in my own words:

The thing I will not do (send it, follow them, say the cutting thing):

This worksheet is free to print, photocopy and share, including with clients. It is self-reflection material, not a diagnosis, an assessment or a substitute for professional support. If a relationship involves fear, control or coercion, or if working through this raises more than feels manageable, please speak to a doctor, a therapist or a domestic abuse service.