

Why parenting feels so hard after trauma

Understand why parenting can feel so overwhelming after trauma and what is happening in your nervous system, then discover the first step toward lasting change where you will move towards calmer and more connected parenting.

If you have ever worried or found yourself wondering, saying to yourself: “I think my trauma is affecting my parenting” and if you ever thought:

- Why do I lose control over tiny things?
- Why do I shut down around my children?
- Why do I feel guilty all the time?
- Why does parenting feel harder for me than everyone else?

Then this ‘Trauma-Informed Parent Guide’ is for you. Welcome. I am really pleased that you are here ❤️

Before carrying on, sounding like a professional who knows it all based on hours of training and numerous textbooks and podcasts, I would just like to start by saying that is not the case! In fact, like you, I have lived experience of trauma too, and I have also experienced the challenges of living with trauma while navigating parenthood. I also have a diagnosis of both PTSD and CPTSD. So, I truly have the lived experiences of what you have gone through too, although no two experiences are the same. On top of that, I also have not only the personal experiences but also the professional experience, having worked in the mental health field for over 20

years, including specialising in trauma and attachment, and working with parents who are living with the aftermath of their trauma.

From both my personal and professional experience, I gathered that there are not enough specialist resources or support out there for parents living with trauma, so I created this myself. Basically, something I needed when my son was only little, and he is an adult now.

I have created this wanting you to know that you are not broken and that there is nothing wrong with you, but that parenting while navigating trauma is genuinely challenging, but unfortunately just not often really spoken enough about.

Emotional Safety

Please make sure that you go through this guide at your own pace. Although this guide is not meant to be triggering, often reflecting on our trauma, attachment history or our own behaviours can be triggering.

Simply becoming aware of how trauma affects you is the first step towards change, and that is what I am hoping to offer you through this guide. If anything feels overwhelming, please do take breaks from the guide and return to it when you feel ready, and where appropriate, please reach out for additional support.

Becoming a parent can bring trauma to the surface

Sometimes we can live with the effects of childhood trauma for many years without fully realising how much it is affecting us. We may be working, studying, maintaining relationships and generally getting on with life. From the outside, it can look like we are coping well and we may even think of ourselves as someone who has managed despite what happened to us. For some people, becoming a parent changes this.

Parenthood can bring up feelings, fears and reactions that we didn't know were even there, as having a child can make us much more aware of our own childhood experiences and how they continue to affect us.

For example, a parent with a history of complex trauma may become very anxious about leaving their child with someone else, feel they need to be constantly available or become highly alert to anything that could potentially harm their child. They may worry excessively about their child's wellbeing or feel a strong need to make sure their child always knows that they are loved, safe and won't be abandoned.

Sometimes, a child's normal development can also trigger old wounds. As children become more independent, spend more time away from us, or develop relationships outside the family, this can unexpectedly bring up feelings connected to our own experiences of abandonment, rejection or insecurity.

This doesn't mean that we don't love our children or that we are bad parents, but it means that our nervous system is responding to the present through the lens of what happened in the past. I can relate to this in my own experience, as I had always been aware that I had experienced significant and prolonged trauma, but for many years I thought I was coping reasonably well. I was working, studying and functioning "well enough" in everyday life, so I assumed that meant I was doing OK.

It wasn't actually until I became a parent that I realised there were areas where I was struggling much more than I had recognised. Parenthood brought some significant triggers to the surface and made me much more aware of reactions and patterns that were not particularly healthy or helpful.

For me, this was an important realisation that functioning isn't necessarily the same as being OK. Sometimes, we become very good at getting through life while carrying difficulties that we may not have fully recognised or been aware of, meaning we may never have had the opportunity to process what we have experienced. I didn't even have therapy until I became a mum and my son was around 4-5 years old! It didn't even cross my mind until then.

Becoming a parent can expose some of those difficulties, not because parenthood has caused them, but because it can bring us into situations that activate old wounds in ways we haven't experienced before. As painful and emotional as that can be, that awareness can also be the beginning of change. Once we understand where our reactions are coming from, we have a better opportunity to respond differently and give ourselves the support and compassion we may not have had when we were younger.

Why parenting activates trauma

I like to start by acknowledging that although at times it may feel like your reactions don't make sense, they actually do when we look at them through an attachment and nervous system lens. They absolutely do, so please don't think you are broken or that your reactions are strange.

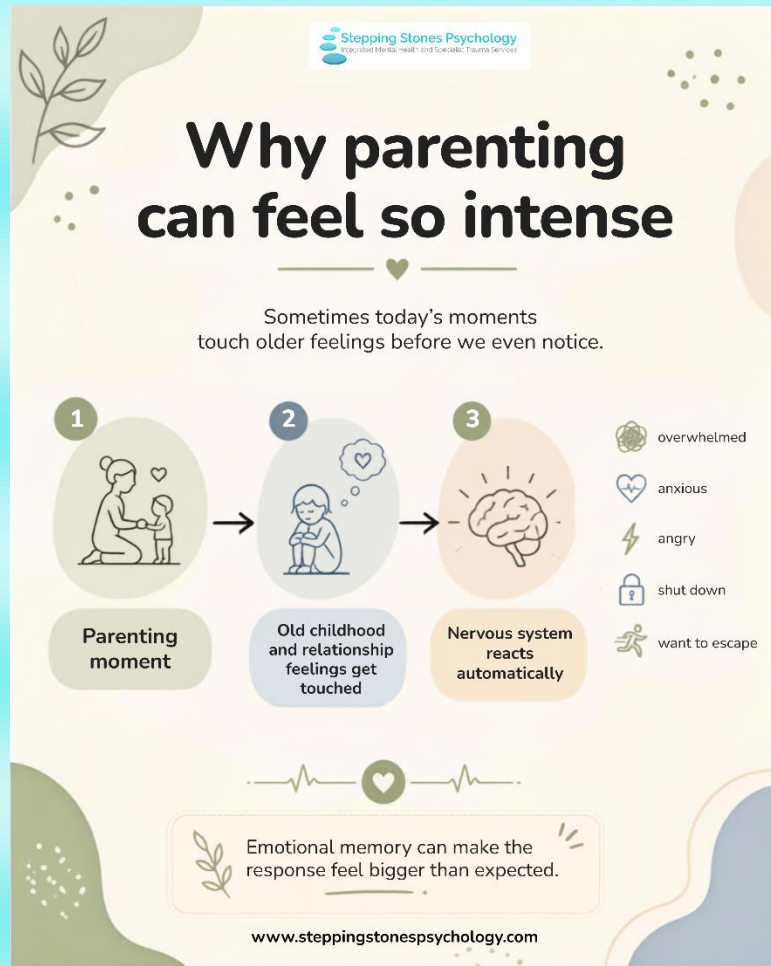
Sometimes, your reactions as a parent may feel bigger than the situation, or you may wonder, "Why am I reacting like this?" I usually tell my clients that one easy way to identify that we have been triggered is when we can see, during the moment or at least afterwards once we feel calmer, that our reaction was much bigger than the situation and simply didn't feel proportional to what just happened. We might think we overreacted, but the thing is that, from an attachment, nervous system and

emotional memory perspective, your reactions actually make sense. According to your nervous system and body memories, you didn't overreact but reacted in exactly the right way. Now, this is not to justify your behaviour or reaction, but to show a valid reason for it, so you can hopefully have more empathy and compassion for yourself. I have given a brief outline below about how our attachment, nervous system and emotional memory play a part when it comes to parenting:

Attachment: Parenting can bring up deep feelings connected to closeness, safety, rejection or being needed. Your child's needs can sometimes touch on experiences from your own childhood and relationships, including both what you had and didn't have. Also, experiences that caused you shame, grief, emotional pain and so on. Unfortunately, it is often unconscious, so you might not even realise that your parenting experience is triggering old stuff.

Nervous system: When something feels emotionally threatening, your nervous system can respond automatically. You might feel overwhelmed, anxious, angry, shut down or like you need to escape, even when you know you are safe in the present. What is important to remember about this is that it is not a thinking process. It happens automatically and so quickly, within a split second, that it does not give you a moment to think.

Emotional memory: Our bodies and emotions can remember experiences, even when we are not consciously thinking about them. Certain situations in parenting can remind your nervous system of how you felt in the past, which can make your response feel stronger than you expected. As it is often unconscious, it can also be really confusing and sometimes scary, leaving people feeling ashamed and wondering what's wrong with them, whether they are not good enough to be a parent, and so on.



I hope this helps you understand something very important: It means you are not broken, failing or that there is something wrong with you. Your reactions have a reason, and when you understand where they come from, you can begin to respond to yourself and your child with greater understanding, choice and compassion.

Five signs your childhood trauma is affecting your parenting

No two parents respond in exactly the same way, including two who, on paper, may appear to have had similar experiences, and we all have different experiences that

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can shape how we respond to our children. However, through my work with people who have experienced childhood trauma, I have noticed some common patterns, which we will look into next.

You may recognise yourself in some of the examples below or perhaps none at all, and that is absolutely OK as there is no right or wrong answer. The goal of this is not to label or diagnose you, but to help you become more aware of what may be happening for you. For each example, we will look at what you notice, why it might happen and how it may have developed:

1. I become overwhelmed when my child cries.

You may notice that your child's crying quickly feels too much. You might become anxious, irritated, panicked or desperate for the crying to stop.

Why it might happen:

Crying can activate your nervous system, particularly if you experienced a lot of distress, unpredictability or emotional overwhelm growing up.

How it may have developed:

If you learned early on that strong emotions were unsafe, ignored or difficult to manage, your body may now respond strongly when your child has big emotions.

2. I feel rejected when my child pushes me away.



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Logically/intellectually, you may know that your child is just expressing a need for space, independence or connection in their own way. Yet emotionally, it can still feel like rejection.

Why it might happen:

Your child's behaviour may touch on older feelings of being unwanted, rejected, ignored or not good enough.

How it may have developed:

When experiences from childhood are still emotionally sensitive, similar feelings in the present can feel much bigger than the situation itself.

3. I feel like a failure after shouting.

You may lose your patience and raise your voice, then quickly feel guilt, shame or worry that you are damaging your child.

Why it might happen:

Shouting may activate more than guilt about what happened in the moment. It can also bring up old beliefs about yourself, such as “I'm a bad parent” or “I'm getting this wrong.”

How it may have developed:

Perhaps you experienced criticism, high expectations, harsh responses or little room to make mistakes growing up. You may now be particularly sensitive to the feeling that you have failed.

4. I become emotionally numb.

Sometimes, instead of feeling overwhelmed, you may feel very little at all. You might disconnect, shut down, go quiet or feel as though you need to get away from everything.

Why it might happen:

When emotions feel too intense or difficult to manage, the nervous system can respond by shutting down or creating emotional distance.

How it may have developed:

If you learned as a child that it was safer to hide your feelings, stay quiet or disconnect from difficult experiences, your body may have learned to use this as a way of protecting you.

5. I panic when there is conflict.

Arguments, disagreements or tension between you and your child may feel much bigger than they appear from the outside.

Why it might happen:

Conflict can activate your nervous system and create a strong sense that something is wrong or that you need to fix the situation immediately. It can feel like there is a threat/danger just around the corner.

How it may have developed:

If conflict in your childhood felt frightening, unpredictable or unsafe, your body may have learned to respond quickly whenever tension appears.

Understanding your nervous system

These reactions are not simply about choosing to respond differently, but when something feels threatening or emotionally familiar, your nervous system can react automatically. It happens to all of us.

So when that happens, your nervous system might move you into fight, flight, freeze or shutdown. You may become angry, anxious, overwhelmed, withdrawn, numb or desperate to escape. We will look into this in more details shortly.

All of this usually happens so fast, before you have had time to think about what is actually happening. I am hoping that understanding this process will help you move away from asking, "What's wrong with me?" and instead towards asking, "What is my nervous system responding to right now?"

Here is a brief explanation of fight, flight, freeze/shutdown and why these responses can happen automatically. There are a few common ways your nervous system may respond when something feels emotionally familiar (but in a tricky way), stressful or threatening:



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Fight

You may feel angry, irritated, defensive or like you need to take control. You might raise your voice or feel a strong urge to make the situation stop.

Flight

You may feel anxious, restless, panicked or like you need to get away. You might want to leave the room, avoid the situation or quickly fix whatever feels wrong.

Freeze

You may feel stuck, unable to think clearly or unsure what to do. You might go quiet or feel disconnected from what is happening.

Shutdown

You may feel numb, emotionally distant, exhausted or as though you have switched off. Sometimes the nervous system responds this way when something feels too overwhelming to manage.



These responses are not a sign that you are failing as a parent, but instead they are protective responses that your nervous system has learned over time. If you have experienced difficult or frightening experiences in the past, your nervous system may sometimes respond to situations in the present as though you are still in danger, even when you are safe now.

I hope this section helps you recognise yourself here, and that it has felt validating and reassuring. Your reactions have a reason and understanding them is an important first step towards responding to yourself with more compassion and, over time, creating new ways of responding.

Recognising your triggers

You are now slowly moving from recognising your reactions to starting to notice what activates them, such as starting to understand your triggers.

A trigger is anything that causes your nervous system to feel that you need to protect yourself. It is not always the behaviour happening in front of you, but sometimes more about what that behaviour represents to you.

I often explain to clients that we can recognise that we have been triggered because a trigger is something that activates a strong emotional or physical response, so it is helpful to pay attention to what is coming up for us in that moment. However, although sometimes the trigger is obvious, at other times it can be difficult to understand why a seemingly small moment has affected you so strongly.

For example, like we looked at earlier, your child's behaviour might leave you feeling rejected, ignored, out of control, criticised or as though you are not good enough. Your nervous system may respond to that feeling before you have had time to think about what is actually happening.

Some of the things that might help is to pause and notice:



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- What happened?
- What was happening just before I reacted?
- What did I feel?
- Was I angry, frightened, rejected, overwhelmed, helpless or ashamed?
- Does this experience remind me of something I have experienced before?
When is the earliest time I can remember feeling this way?
- What happened in my body?
- Did my heart race? Did I tense up? Did I feel hot, shaky, numb or disconnected?
- What did I want to do?
- Did I want to shout, leave, fix the situation, withdraw or make everything okay immediately?

If you find it helpful, you are also more than welcome to use these questions as guided journaling prompts. Writing things down can sometimes help you explore your thoughts and feelings in a little more depth. Sometimes, when we write without overthinking or trying to find the “right” answer, we can also become aware of thoughts, feelings, memories or connections that we were not consciously aware of before. There is also evidence that expressive writing can support emotional processing and wellbeing.

However, there is absolutely no need to start with journaling. For many people, especially when they are first beginning this work, simply learning to pause and notice what is happening is a really important first step in itself. You can stay with that for as long as you need to, and then, slowly, in your own time and at your own pace, you may find that you feel ready to start writing down some of the things you notice. There is no right or wrong way to do this, and you should always work at a pace that feels manageable and emotionally safe for you.



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When you pause to notice (or if you choose to journal), there is no need to judge your answers as the aim is simply to become more aware of your pattern. Over time, noticing these patterns can help you understand what your nervous system finds difficult. This is very important as understanding your reactions is an important first step, but understanding alone does not always change the pattern.

You may recognise some of your reactions and start to wonder, “Okay, I understand what is happening, but how do I stop doing it?” For many parents, both myself and parents I have worked with, this is often the most challenging and frustrating part, and also one that can often lead to shame and a sense of helplessness because people often naively think that, because they now understand and have perhaps a newfound awareness or deeper self-awareness, they might be able to manage better. For some, yes, they might navigate the challenging moments better; however, because the triggers are so automatic and intense, awareness, thought processes and willpower alone may not be enough to stop the reaction from happening.

This is where it is helpful to understand the difference between knowing why you react and being able to change how your body responds. For example, if you are afraid of dogs, knowing that dogs are not dangerous does not necessarily stop your body from jumping or feeling frightened when a dog suddenly barks. Your body can react before your thinking mind has had time to catch up.

Trauma work in a similar way such as you may understand that a reaction is connected to your past, but your nervous system can still respond as though you are in danger. I experienced this myself where many years ago, my therapist explained this in a letter:

“PTSD sufferers are prone to experience certain ordinary everyday events as life-threatening experiences - for example the war veteran who dives behind the sofa for cover when he hears a motorbike backfiring.

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In Sharmi's case, one of her triggers is unexpected visitors to her home. An unexpected visit from a landlord can leave (and has left) her in a state of terror, and it can take her several hours or even days to recover"

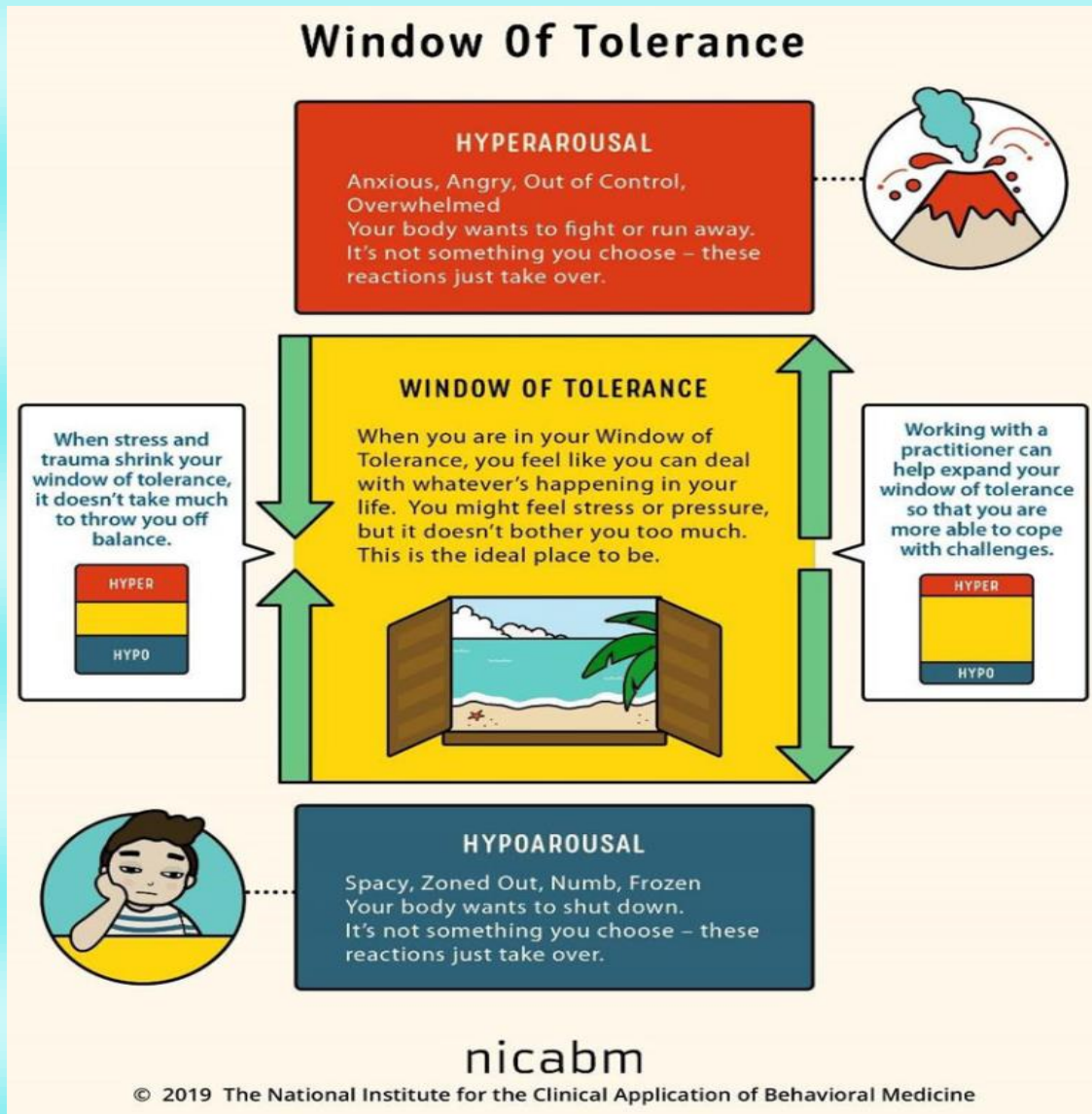
Knowing that my reaction was connected to my past did not, on its own, make the reaction disappear, but what helped was learning to notice what was happening in my body, understand my triggers, and gradually practise responding differently.

The Trauma Parenting Cycle

Sometimes these reactions can become part of a repeating cycle. For example, a trigger can activate your nervous system, which can lead to a strong emotional reaction. This may then affect how you respond to your child, and you may react in a way that you later regret. Afterwards, you may experience guilt and shame (for many, there is also self-hatred, self-loathing and self-criticism), which can increase your stress and sensitivity and make you more vulnerable to the next trigger. So, as you can see, it can become a vicious cycle.



This can be especially true if you are already living with PTSD or CPTSD, as your body's stress response can be more easily activated. You may also find that it takes longer for your nervous system to calm down and return to a more settled state after something has triggered you (this is called window of tolerance).



The important thing to remember is that a cycle is a pattern, not a life sentence, although I completely appreciate that it can feel like one when you are right in the midst of it!

When you begin to recognise what is happening, you can gradually create more space between the trigger and your response, and this is exactly where healing and change can begin.

Why insight alone doesn't change patterns

As we have already explored, sometimes your body reacts before your thinking mind has had a chance to catch up. This means that understanding your patterns, while important, does not always mean you can immediately respond differently when you are triggered.

For this reason, we do not simply need to understand our patterns, but instead also need opportunities to practise responding differently when those patterns are activated.

This is why small, repeated moments of practice are so important, because each time you pause, notice what is happening, regulate your nervous system or try a different response, you are creating an opportunity to do something slightly differently. Our brains are constantly learning from our experiences and repeated patterns of thinking, feeling and responding can strengthen the neural pathways involved in those reactions, making them more automatic over time. The good news is that our brains can change too, so when we repeatedly practise a different response, we can begin to strengthen new neural pathways, making that response more familiar and easier to access over time. This ability of the brain to change through experience and practice is known as neuroplasticity and is sometimes described more simply as rewiring the brain.

Think of it like learning any new skill, such as understanding how something works is helpful, but it is the practice that helps it become more familiar. In the same way, knowing what you *could* do in a difficult parenting moment is different from having practised it enough that it becomes easier to access when you are actually triggered.

This is also why change takes time, as you are not trying to completely change your reactions overnight. You are giving yourself repeated opportunities to notice, practise and respond differently, little by little. Hopefully, you are able to do this while giving yourself grace, patience and loads of compassion.

The few tools in the next section are designed to give you some simple ways to begin doing exactly that. You can take them at your own pace and come back to them as often as you need. The more opportunities you have to practise, the more familiar these new responses can become. You can start with just one and keep practising it until you feel ready to introduce another tool, so please know you don't need to rush through this, but instead make sure you are listening to your body and doing things at your own pace.

Three things you can start today

I am fully aware that, during a moment of intense triggering, the last thing you may have in mind is engaging in grounding activities. Yet, one of the simplest things that can help many trauma survivors to 'snap out of it' is a gentle reminder that the trigger is connected to the past and has nothing to do with the child in front of us or their behaviour/actions (even though, yes, it can definitely feel like it has everything to do with them).

Here are some practical things you can take away from this PDF, which you can practice in your own time:



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Simple grounding, mindfulness and emotional regulation exercises: One thing I often gently but consistently remind my clients of is not to wait until they feel triggered or overwhelmed to use these tools. That is simply not how our brain and nervous system work. In fact, this can be the worst time to introduce a completely new tool, because when we are highly triggered or overwhelmed, our thinking brain is not working in the same way it does when we are calm (hijack of prefrontal cortex).

Instead, what I recommend is finding a time in the day when you feel the calmest (even if your calmest still means you feel somewhat overwhelmed) and practising the new technique then. Keep doing this every day and, if you feel able to, you can practise it more than once, but if it starts to feel like another chore on top of everything else you already have on your plate, practising it at least once a day is more than good enough. If you miss a day, it is not the end of the world. Just try your best to dust yourself off and go back to it the next day.

Once you have practised the technique regularly for a few weeks, your nervous system will have had time to become more familiar with it, so it is no longer completely new information. You can then start using it during moments of distress, overwhelm, stress or when you feel triggered, but I would still encourage you to keep practising it during your calmer moments too, as this continued practice helps keep the response familiar and easier to access when you need it most.

If we only try to use these tools once we are already highly triggered or overwhelmed, they can feel like they are not working, or simply too difficult to do in that moment. This can understandably leave you feeling frustrated or like you are failing at using the tools, when actually your nervous system may simply not have had enough opportunity to become familiar with them yet. This is why practising them regularly when you are calmer can make such a difference. You are not doing it because you are expected to be calm all the time; you are giving your brain and



nervous system the chance to learn the skill before you need it most, which is very important.

It can also be tempting to stop practising once things start to feel better, especially if you feel like you no longer need the tools, but this is actually when continuing with some regular practice can be really helpful. If we only use these skills when things are going badly, they may not feel familiar enough to access when we need them most. Regular practice helps your brain and nervous system become more familiar with the skill, so it is easier to draw on during difficult moments.

You do not need to practise for long or turn it into another task on your to-do list. Even a few minutes a day can help keep the skill familiar. Think of it less as something you only use when things go wrong and more as something you are gradually building into your everyday life. Then, when a difficult moment does come along, you are more likely to have something familiar to fall back on. I hope this helps.

A personal favourite of mine, both to use and to teach, is the five-finger breathing technique, which literally takes less than a minute to practice, so there is no excuse! 😊 It is very accessible and suitable for all ages. You can find it here:

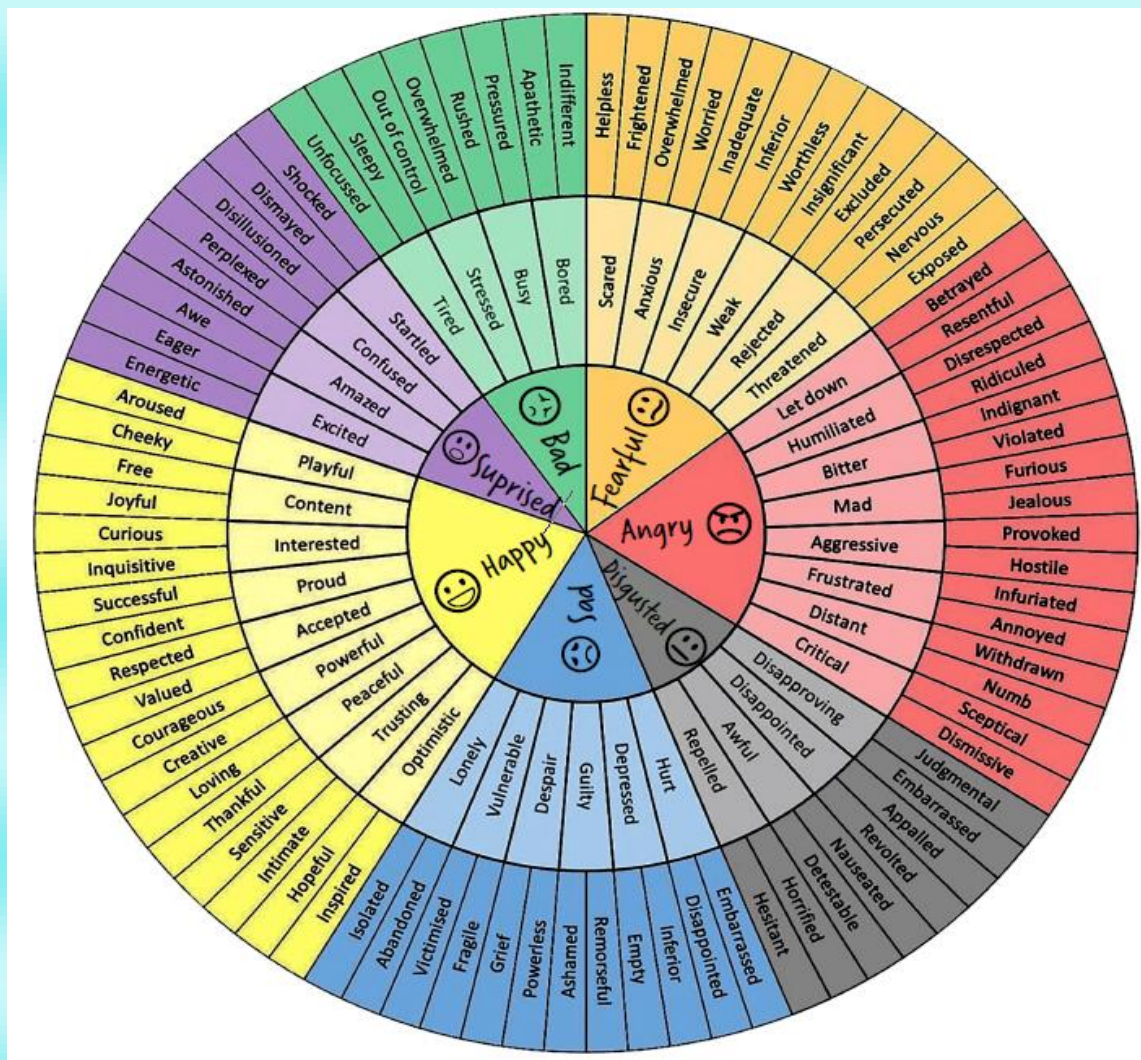
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hbnese_Lofs

Here is a list of 30+ short guided self-help videos by the lovely trauma-informed and attachment-based therapist, Masha Bennett:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuL2HA2SHPwbsldencsk6wTivPcRRjjoT>

This might also be helpful: <https://steppingstonespsychology.com/blog-resources/what-is-the-difference-between-mindfulness-grounding-and-emotional-regulation/>

Naming your emotions: Putting your feelings into words can help you make sense of what is happening and create a little space between the feeling and your reaction. Research suggests that simply naming an emotion can help make the feeling feel less intense. I have included an emotion wheel below to help you identify and name what you may be feeling.



Bilateral Stimulation (BLS): Gently tapping your body alternately from left to right while repeating “I am safe right now” can be a simple grounding exercise. The gentle



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rhythm gives you something physical to focus on while the words help remind your brain and nervous system that you are in the present moment, rather than back in the past.

You can tap gently on your shoulders, knees or the sides of your hands, alternating from left to right. This type of alternating stimulation is also used in EMDR, although this exercise is not the same as EMDR therapy.

The combination of the rhythmic tapping and the safety statement may help you feel more grounded and bring your attention back to the present when you are feeling overwhelmed or activated.

Reminding yourself what is happening: Along with the BLS, another thing that can be really helpful during a moment of trigger is gently reminding yourself: “This is me being triggered. My nervous system is being reminded of something from the past. I am here, in the present, and this has nothing to do with my child.”

You can make this specific to whatever you are experiencing. For example:

- “My child is crying, but their crying does not mean there is danger.”
If it feels helpful, you could then add: “I am safe right now.”
- “My child pushing me away does not mean I am being rejected. They are responding to their own needs right now.”
You could then add: “I am loved and valued.”
- “I made a mistake and shouted, but this does not mean I am a bad parent.”
You could then add: “I am allowed to make mistakes. I can repair and try again.”
- “I am feeling numb and disconnected because I am overwhelmed.”
You could then add: “I do not have to judge myself. I can give myself the time and space I need.”



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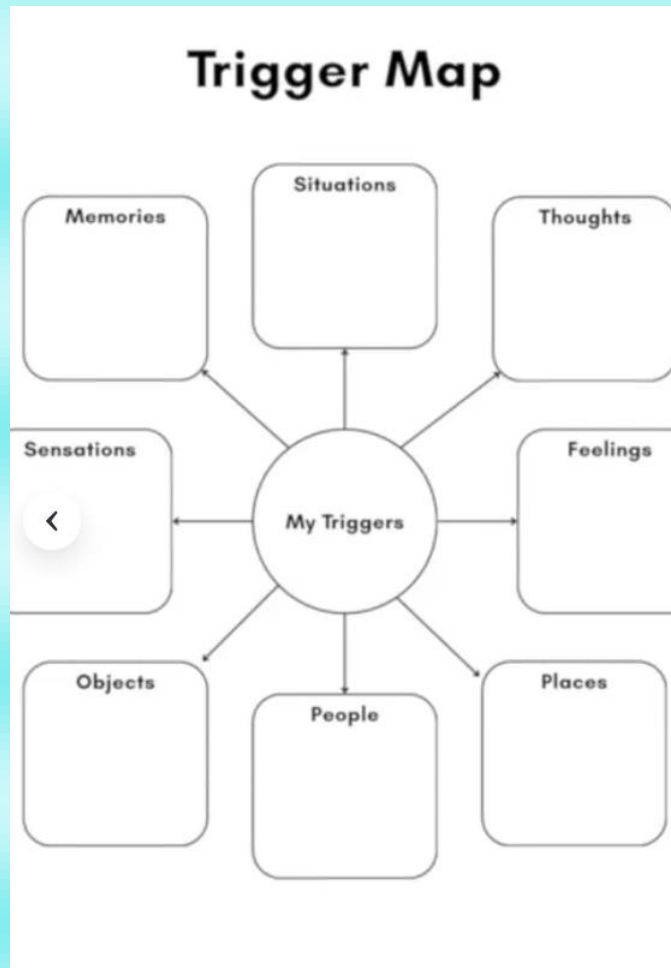
- “There is conflict right now, but conflict does not mean something terrible is about to happen.”

You could then add: “I am safe right now. I can take this one moment at a time, at my own pace.”

These second statements are what is called reframing statements and they are not about pretending that everything is fine or trying to force yourself to feel differently, but they can act simply as gentle reminders that offer your brain and nervous system a different message from the one your trigger may be telling you.

You do not have to use the exact words above. If a statement does not feel believable or helpful to you, you can change it to something that feels more realistic and supportive. The aim is to gently bring yourself back to what is happening now, rather than getting pulled into what your nervous system may be remembering from the past.

Trigger Mapping and Trauma Diary: These tools can help you better understand what tends to trigger you, what happens in your body and emotions, and where some of these reactions may come from. They can help you start to see patterns that may be difficult to notice in the moment, so you can recognise your triggers sooner, see them coming and have a better chance of coping with them before they become too overwhelming. <https://psychology.com/tools/trauma-triggers> Triggered trauma management - Building a trigger map and response plan · ReNurture



Small wins: Finally, take a moment to notice the things that are going well, however small they may seem. If you wish you could write down one or two things each day that went a little better than usual, perhaps you noticed a trigger, paused before reacting, repaired things after shouting, stayed present when your child was upset, or showed yourself some compassion.

These small moments matter as healing isn't about getting everything right or pretending everything is okay, but instead about noticing and building on the small changes. It is about helping your mind notice that alongside the difficult moments, there are also moments of progress, connection and things you are doing well.

Scientific research suggests that regularly noticing and writing about positive experiences can support wellbeing and help us pay more attention to progress, rather than only what went wrong.

The biggest myth

I just need better parenting strategies.

If you've ever found yourself thinking:

- I just need to be more patient.
- I need to stop shouting.
- I know what I should be doing...so why can't I do it?
- Maybe I just need to learn how to parent better.

You are not alone ❤️ You may already know what you would like to do and may have read the books, listened to the advice, understood the importance of connection, and promised yourself that next time you will respond differently. Then your child cries, refuses, screams, pulls away or pushes a boundary, and suddenly you find yourself reacting in a way you didn't want to. Afterwards, you may feel guilty, ashamed or disappointed in yourself and wonder: Why did I do that when I knew better?!

I know this exact feeling because this was me for many years and had cried myself to sleep countless nights. I knew what I wanted to do differently and knew how I *wanted* to respond, and I spent a lot of time trying to understand myself and learn how to parent differently. The tricky thing was knowing what I wanted to do and

actually being able to do it in those difficult, highly emotional moments were two very different things.

This is one of the reasons I am so passionate about this work. I know how much I would have valued having someone help me understand what was happening underneath my reactions, rather than simply being told what I should be doing differently.

That is a big part of why I created this guide, as I want to offer parents some of the understanding, tools and support that I wish I had had during those years.

As we have already explored, knowing what to do and being able to do it when you are triggered are two different things. When old patterns are activated, it can be much harder to respond in the way you know you want to. This obviously doesn't mean you have failed or that you don't love your child enough, and it certainly doesn't mean you are a bad parent. It simply means that there is something deeper happening underneath your reaction.

What healing really looks like

Parenting doesn't create your wounds, but it can reveal them. The moments that feel hardest, such as your child's crying, rejection, anger, needs, independence, conflict or closeness, can often touch places in you that have been hurting for a long time.

This is why healing is not simply about learning more parenting strategies and instead also about understanding your own story, recognising what gets activated in you, learning to feel safer in your body and gradually developing new ways of responding. Most importantly, it is being patient and compassionate with yourself, accepting that this is a process and takes time. You may understand something about yourself one day and still struggle with it the next, and you may have moments

where you respond differently, and moments where you fall back into an old pattern. It is so important to remind yourself during those moments that struggling or falling back into an old pattern does not mean you are going backwards.

In fact, these are the exact moments when you need the most self-empathy and self-compassion. If we respond to our struggles with shame, self-criticism or self-blame, we can end up adding another layer of distress to what is already difficult, which can then make it harder to regulate, learn from what happened and try again.

Instead, try to offer yourself some extra TLC during these moments, such as reminding yourself that you are learning, that change takes time and that struggling does not mean you have failed. You can acknowledge what happened, take responsibility where needed, repair and then gently try again. Neuroscience suggests that self-compassion and forgiveness engage brain networks involved in emotion regulation and self-reflection, helping us move away from threat and self-criticism and towards a more regulated response.

Healing doesn't mean you will never become overwhelmed, lose your patience or get things wrong, but instead that over time, you can begin to notice what is happening sooner, recover more quickly, respond with greater choice and repair when things don't go as you hoped.

Most importantly, I hope you can begin to relate to yourself with the same compassion you want your child to experience from you. You don't need to become a perfect parent. In fact, allowing yourself to be human, make mistakes, repair and try again also teaches your child that they don't need to be perfect either. You are basically modelling that mistakes do not make us unworthy of love, and that we can be accepted and loved for who we are, even when we struggle or get things wrong. Isn't that a great message for them to receive from a young age?



You don't need to erase your past

You can begin by understanding what happened to you, understanding what happens inside you now, and giving yourself opportunities to practise a different way forward.

By working with what parenting is bringing to the surface, you are creating more choice in how you respond as a parent.

If there is just one thing I like you to take away from this guide, it is that I hope it is the one important message that there is nothing fundamentally wrong with you. There are patterns that developed for a reason, and with understanding, practice and support, those patterns can begin to change. You obviously don't have to change everything at once, but can start with one small step, and then another.

If this guide has resonated with you

If you have recognised yourself in these pages, I want you to know that I really do understand how difficult this can be.

Like I mentioned before, I know this work not only professionally, but personally, as I have my own lived experience of trauma, and I know what it is like to understand something intellectually while your body and nervous system seem to respond in a completely different way.

That is one of the main reasons I created the 21-Day Trauma-Informed Parenting Reset.

I wanted to create something that feels less like being given another list of parenting strategies and more like having someone alongside you, helping you understand what is happening, why it is happening, and what you can begin to do differently.

A more personal kind of support

The Reset is delivered through short, pre-recorded sessions where *I speak directly to you*.

Although the sessions are pre-recorded, I wanted them to feel personal and connecting, almost as though we are sitting together and having a conversation about what you are experiencing. This sense of connection is particularly important in trauma work, where experiences of isolation, disconnection and shame can often be part of what makes healing so difficult. My hope is that, even through a pre-recorded session, you feel accompanied, understood and gently supported as you move through the material.

You'll have 15–20 minute video sessions, with the option to listen to the sessions as audio if that feels more comfortable or accessible for you. Each session also includes practical tools and reflective exercises connected to the theme

There is no expectation that you will do everything perfectly or complete every exercise, but instead the intention is simply to give you manageable opportunities to learn, reflect and practise at your own pace.

Keeping it accessible

I also wanted the series to be financially accessible, as I recognise that the effects of trauma can sometimes have a ripple effect across different areas of life, including

work, relationships and financial circumstances. I didn't want the cost of accessing this support to become another barrier for parents who may already be carrying a lot.

For that reason, I have deliberately kept the price for parents coming through the free PDF at £27. I have done this because I genuinely believe that support around trauma-informed parenting should be accessible to as many parents as possible. I also know, personally, from past experience what it is like to desperately want support and to find that financial hardship is the very thing standing in the way of accessing it. I never wanted cost to be that barrier for a parent who is already doing their best to understand themselves, support their child and create something different within their family. My hope is that keeping the programme affordable makes it possible for more parents to access the support, understanding and tools they need.

For parents who purchase the 21-Day Trauma-Informed Parenting Reset separately, the video sessions will be available for £37, or £47 for the complete programme, including all accompanying resources.

However, for you as a parent reading this free PDF guide, the £27 price is a special reduced rate should you choose to continue on to the 21-Day Trauma-Informed Parenting Reset, and you will then have access to the full programme, including videos and the resources.

What I hope you take from it

This isn't about becoming a perfect parent in 21 days or about never becoming triggered again, and it definitely isn't about blaming you for the impact your trauma

may have had on your parenting. Instead it will be about understanding yourself with greater compassion, recognising your patterns, learning how to support your nervous system and beginning to practise different ways of responding.

The reason for this is that when we begin to work with our own wounds, we create possibilities for something different, not only for ourselves, but for our children too.

There is something I often say to my own son:

“I cannot change my past. I cannot change the challenging experiences I had, or the past in terms of my relationship with him, including the times when I wasn’t always able to control my triggers or the reactions that came up for me. There have been reactions I haven’t been proud of, but there are things I can take responsibility for.

It is my responsibility to break the cycle and to choose not to stay stuck in the past. I can do this by choosing to work through my trauma, understand my triggers and learn to respond differently. When I get it wrong, because I am human, and I will sometimes get it wrong, I can take responsibility for that too. I can apologise and repair. I can acknowledge when my behaviour has affected someone else, without using my trauma as an excuse.”

For me, that is an important part of healing, such as understanding where our behaviour comes from does not mean we are powerless to change it, and it does not remove our responsibility for how we treat others.



I strongly believe that we are not responsible for what happened to us, but as adults, we can take responsibility for what we do with what happened to us.

What happens next?

We cannot change what happened to us, but we can begin to change what happens next, and often that is where breaking a generational pattern begins.

The 21-Day Trauma-Informed Parenting Reset

If what you've read in this guide has resonated with you and you would like some support putting it into practice, I created the 21-Day Trauma-Informed Parenting Reset with exactly that goal in mind. All of the following will be included in the series:

- 15–20 minute pre-recorded videos
- Me speaking directly to you
- Audio option
- Daily practical tools
- Daily reflective exercises
- Everything will be manageable, small tasks
- All for under £30

Please get in touch via contact@steppingstonespsychology.com if you are interested.

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If you like to follow my work, here are my social media links:

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Integrated Mental Health and Specialist Trauma Services

Please note: I am the most active on my Facebook Page:

[Facebook Page](#)

[Facebook Group for clients/those seeking trauma resources](#)

[Facebook Group for therapists/mental health professionals](#)

[Instagram](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Youtube Channel](#)

[Support group for parents living with trauma/CPTSD](#)

[Support group for therapists and other helping professionals \(burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma\)](#)