

JOURNAL PROMPTS

As you listen to this week's audio.

What were your biggest take-aways from this audio about healing emotional triggers?

1.

2.

3.

What is a realistic action step for you to take for self-healing?

How can you support yourself so your action is more likely to be successful?

GOING DEEPER

Below you will find two sections of questions: one relating to your mother, and one relating to your father. These questions are inspired by the Adult Attachment Interview (mentioned at the end of the main audio) and are designed to help you reflect on your childhood.

The experience of remembering your childhood and considering how you “tell your story” will bring up tender feelings for most of us. The secret to healing is to allow those feelings to move through you *at the same time that you hold yourself with compassion and resist taking action*.

Reflecting and journaling like this has been proven to help you better integrate your experience, which gives your rational brain more understanding, so that you don't get triggered by your past so easily. Interestingly, doing this work will change your understanding so that you understand your childhood from a more adult perspective, deepening your compassion and helping you see things in a more empowering way.

Trigger Warning: If you feel it will be too dysregulating to consider your childhood experiences, or if you find yourself becoming very upset as you answer these questions, please find a counselor you trust to support you as you answer them. In the meantime, please go on to the Practice With Your Child Section on page 9.

What five words describe your childhood *relationship* with your mother?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What *specific* experiences come to mind that made you choose each word?

Week 10: Healing Your Triggers

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Week 10: Healing Your Triggers

How do you think these experiences, and your overall relationship with your mother, affect you today?

What was positive about the way your mother interacted with you?

In what ways would you like to be a different kind of parent than your mother was?

Can you imagine your mother as a child? What was she like? What was her childhood like?

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If you could write a letter to your mother *when she was a child*, what would you say? Obviously, her own childhood experiences do not excuse any ways in which your mother was not able to be the parent you needed, but understanding what shaped her can be very healing for you, as it helps you to realize that her behavior toward you actually had little to do with you personally, no matter how you behaved. This letter is worth writing because it is another step in helping you come to terms with your own childhood.

Week 10: Healing Your Triggers

What five words describe your childhood *relationship* with your father?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What *specific* experiences come to mind that made you choose each word?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

How do you think these experiences, and your overall relationship with your father, affect you today?

What was positive about the way your father interacted with you?

In what ways would you like to be a different kind of parent than your father was?

Can you imagine your father as a child? What was he like? What was his childhood like?

If you could write a letter to your father *when he was a child*, what would you say? Obviously, his own childhood experiences do not excuse any ways in which your father was not able to be the parent you needed, but understanding what shaped him can be very healing for you, as it helps you to realize that his behavior toward you actually had little to do with you personally, no matter how you behaved. This letter is worth writing because it is another step in helping you come to terms with your own childhood.

PRACTICE WITH YOUR CHILD

Print out this sheet and keep it handy. As you go through your week, notice when you get triggered. Write down how you feel in your emotions and in your body.

For example:

1. My child is being defiant. I feel so angry I want to slap her. My mouth feels tight and my hands are in fists.
2. I have been constantly picking up after my children today. I feel exhausted and resentful. MY body feels heavy, weighted down.
3. My children are being too wild before bedtime. I'm getting more and more tense that someone will get hurt and there will be tears. My throat feels tight and I feel short of breath.

1.

2.

3.

4.

REFLECTION AFTER PRACTICE

Later, as you consider each situation, breathe and notice any lingering feelings in your body. Simply breathing into those tense places in your body helps to heal the emotions that are causing you to get triggered.

In each case, consider what past experiences or beliefs might be causing you to get triggered in that situation. What could you say or do to lessen your upset next time this situation comes up?

For example:

1. My child is being defiant. I feel so angry I want to slap her. My mouth feels tight and my hands are in fists.

If I talked back to my parents, I was physically punished... So when my child talks back to me, all that rage comes up. It feels like an emergency. And I just want to lash out, because I feel so terrible.

Next time I could stop, drop and breathe. I could remind myself that my rage is not actually about her, that her defiance is not actually a threat to my authority. I could try empathizing about how upset she must be to speak to me that way.

2. I have been constantly picking up after my children today. I feel exhausted and resentful. MY body feels heavy.

When I have to pick up after everyone, I feel like my needs don't matter and will never be met... I feel uncared about.... devalued and hopeless and invisible. Like I'm carrying such a heavy weight. I just wish someone would take care of me once in awhile. I don't know if anything in my childhood explains this, but I sure get tired of having to be the grownup all the time. I wish I could get away with being irresponsible like my kids do.

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I am going to set up more routines for the kids to put their things away. But also, I am going to take better care of me. They're kids; they are bound to make messes. If I didn't feel so depleted, it wouldn't bother me so much. I need to make sure I feel good, so I'm not so impatient with them when I ask them to pick up. I think they would respond more positively.

3. My children are being too wild before bedtime. I'm getting more and more tense that someone will get hurt and there will be tears. My throat feels tight and I feel short of breath.

I'm just beat by bedtime. I don't have any patience left. But really, it's because I don't want anyone to get hurt and cry. It's hard enough during the day, but at night when I'm tired, I just can't stand it. I remember that when I cried, my parents told me to stop, and if I didn't, I had to go to my room. I hated that I couldn't stop crying and got sent away. And I realize that I do try everything I can to stop my children from crying.

Next time I could roughhouse with the kids BEFORE bath. But also I could remind myself that crying is not an emergency, even if someone gets hurt. It is a chance to empty their emotional backpacks. I could even laugh WITH them, to get out my own tension. And if I do start to hyperventilate because someone gets hurt and cries, I will just try to breathe and remember that it's not an emergency.

Your turn. For each situation when you got triggered this week, what past experiences or beliefs might be causing you to get triggered in that situation. What could you say or do to lessen your upset next time this situation comes up? Remember to breathe and notice any lingering feelings in your body.

1.

2.

3.

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4.