

# Facilitator Guide: Identify Triggers

## Introduction: Why Identifying Triggers Matters

### You Say:

"One of the most helpful things we can do in recovery is recognize what sets us off—what triggers cravings, urges, or risky situations. Triggers can be obvious or subtle, predictable or surprising. Today we're going to talk through some common examples, and then you'll have the chance to reflect on your own."

### Key points to highlight:

- Triggers are **internal or external cues** that increase the urge to engage in a behavior of concern.
- They can include **people, places, times, feelings, routines, or stressors**.
- Identifying them ahead of time helps us **prepare, respond, and stay in control**.

## Step 1: Brainstorm Common Triggers Together

**You Say:** "Let's start by brainstorming together. What are some common triggers people experience that might make it harder to stick with their goals?"

Examples to prompt:

- People: being around certain friends, family, or coworkers
- Places: bars, bathrooms, bedrooms, old neighborhoods, casinos
- Times: weekends, after work, late at night
- Feelings: boredom, loneliness, stress, anger, shame
- Thoughts: "I deserve this," "Just this once," "It won't matter"
- Physical cues: pain, fatigue, hunger

### Facilitator's Role:

- Write ideas on a whiteboard or shared screen.
- Encourage sharing without pressure—some may reflect silently.
- Acknowledge that **triggers vary widely** from person to person.

## Step 2: Invite Personal Reflection

**You Say:** "Now that we've seen some examples, think about your own experience. What has triggered you in the past—or what might be a challenge coming up?"

Invite participants to:

- Identify 2–3 **recent or anticipated triggers**.
- Consider whether they are **internal or external**.
- Reflect on how they usually react—and how they might respond differently.

**Optional prompts for sharing or journaling:**

- "What happened the last time I felt triggered?"
- "What situations or feelings catch me off guard?"
- "What's one trigger I want to plan for differently next time?"

**Step 3: Reinforce the Purpose of This Tool**

**You Say:** "Triggers are part of life—and part of recovery. This tool isn't about avoiding everything or trying to be perfect. It's about **noticing your patterns** so you can make choices that protect your progress."

**Ask the group:**

- "What did you learn from identifying your triggers today?"
- "Did anything surprise you or make you think differently?"

**Facilitator Quick Tips:**

- Normalize common triggers—no need for shame.
- Emphasize self-awareness over avoidance.
- Encourage participants to revisit their trigger list regularly and update it as life changes.

**Summary**

The **Identify Triggers** tool helps participants become more aware of what situations, feelings, or thoughts lead to cravings or unwanted behavior. By naming and reflecting on these triggers, they can begin building strategies for managing or avoiding them—and staying aligned with their recovery goals.