

Chapter 7

Your Triggers

Self-abandonment usually emerges in response to certain emotional situations that the nervous system has learned to interpret as potentially threatening. These situations are often referred to as **triggers**.

A trigger is not necessarily an intense event. In many cases it can be something small: a tone of voice, a shift in someone's mood, a moment of disagreement, or the possibility that someone might feel disappointed with us.

When these moments occur, the nervous system may react quickly and automatically. You may feel a sudden urge to smooth things over, reassure the other person, apologise, or agree with something you're uncertain about.

This reaction happens because the nervous system is drawing on earlier emotional experiences. It's trying to prevent tension or preserve connection in the fastest way it knows how. This response is not *irrational*. It's simply *familiar*.

For example, someone who grew up in an environment where disagreement led to conflict may still feel a strong

internal response whenever disagreement appears in adulthood. Someone who experienced emotional withdrawal after expressing needs may feel anxious about asking for help. Someone who was criticised for mistakes may feel strong pressure to appear agreeable or accommodating.

The nervous system is not reacting to the present moment alone. It's reacting to patterns it learned earlier in life.

Because these patterns are stored in the body, they often appear before conscious thought has time to intervene. You may notice your response *after* it has already happened - you catch yourself agreeing too quickly or reassuring someone before you've had time to consider what you really feel.

This is why **recognising triggers** is such an important step in interrupting the self-abandonment loop. When you begin to **identify the situations** that activate the pattern, you create the **possibility of pausing** before the automatic response takes over. Instead of **reacting immediately**, you can observe what is **happening inside you**. You may notice the moment when tension appears, the impulse to adapt quickly, or the familiar urge to keep the peace. This awareness does not mean you must respond differently immediately. For now, simply recognising your triggers is enough.

Once the situations that activate the pattern become visible, you'll no longer react automatically but begin instead to understand how the pattern operates in real time. This understanding gradually creates space for new choices.

Reflection Exercise

Identifying Your Triggers

Take a few moments to reflect on situations where you tend to abandon your needs or adjust yourself quickly. Try to think about moments where you felt pressure to maintain harmony or prevent tension.

Situations that tend to trigger my self-abandonment pattern include...

For example:

- when someone seems upset
- when conflict appears
- when someone criticises me
- when someone asks for help
- when someone seems disappointed

Write whatever feels true for you.

When these situations occur, I often respond by...

Examples might include:

- agreeing quickly
- apologising
- reassuring the other person
- staying quiet
- changing the subject

What physical sensations do you notice when these situations appear?

Examples might include:

- tension in the chest
- a tight feeling in the stomach
- racing thoughts
- an urge to fix the situation quickly

What emotions appear most strongly in these moments?

Examples might include:

- anxiety
- guilt
- worry
- fear of conflict
- fear of disappointing someone

Final Reflection

Looking at your answers, do you notice any patterns?

Are there particular types of situations that consistently activate your urge to adapt?

Recognising your triggers is not about avoiding these situations; it's about understanding when your nervous system is most likely to activate the self-abandonment loop.

The more clearly you can see these moments, the easier it becomes to pause before the pattern automatically repeats. During that pause you get to break the loop and reset the pattern.