

Conversation 8: A Calmer Me

Understanding Triggers, Reactions, & Emotional Regulation

One of the biggest misconceptions taught today in therapy is that we can stop feeling triggered. We can't. Throughout our lives we're *all* going to be triggered from time to time. Someone's going to misunderstand us. We'll be rejected, messages won't be acknowledged, life will disappoint us. We'll make mistakes, have difficult days, and none of that disappears simply because we've started healing our triggers.

The difference we *can* embrace is how we **respond** to our triggers and **what happens next**.

Up until now, avoiding people and places who trigger you, or trying **too hard** to suppress your responses **may have defined your life**. The trigger-feeling arrived and almost immediately the reaction followed. You apologised. You withdrew. You lashed out. You overthought. You shut down. You abandoned yourself - not because you've fallen off the healing wagon, but because your nervous system has learned a sequence:

Trigger.

Reaction.

Relief.

But there's a moment of quiet between the trigger and the reaction. In that moment there's the potential for you to **mute your trigger and your response**. In that moment you have **an opportunity to ask a different question** - not 'how quickly can

I get away from this feeling' but: **what does this moment need from me?**

The answer to that question changes everything that happens next.

- ♥ I need to leave this situation.
- ♥ I need to speak honestly.
- ♥ I'm not saying anything until I've calmed down.
- ♥ I need to stop assuming the worst.
- ♥ I need to remember that this feeling belongs partly to my past and partly to my present.

Those answers encourage your nervous system - and your fight or flight response - to emotionally regulate. You're not suppressing your emotions or pretending you're fine, you're not smiling when you're hurting or sugar coating your emotions. You're learning that your emotions deserve to be heard, but not in a way that feels chaotic, destabilising, or creates additional anxiety or pain to your already overloaded nervous system.

We've spent years allowing our fear, shame, guilt or anxiety to control our lives. Emotional regulation is not asking those emotions to get out of the way; it's gently moving them into a space of peace and protection. It's the conscious adult taking the frightened child's hand and telling them, 'I've got you.'

Your emotions have a voice, but they don't have the final vote.

Calm is not a personality; it's a practice. It's built one quiet moment at a time. One slower breath at a time. One decision

not to react immediately. One moment of curiosity. One choice to respond and repeat a *conscious* behaviour, rather than automatically repeating an *unconscious* action of self-abandonment.

Every time you choose a calmer practice, you teach your nervous system something new. You teach it that:

Not every disagreement is danger.

Not every silence is rejection.

Not every mistake is a failure.

Not every uncomfortable feeling requires immediate action.

You're showing your nervous system evidence that your emotional world is bigger than the experiences that shaped it.

This is why emotional regulation is not something you master but something you practise. Each time you pause before reacting, you weaken the old trigger, reaction, relief, sequence and create a new sequence:

Ttrigger.

Pause.

Choice.

Response.

Emotional regulation.

That's how we get out - not by controlling the world around us, but by reclaiming what happens between the trigger and the response.

That space, however small it seems today, is where your emotional power waits. If you continue to practise protecting that space, one ordinary day at a time, you'll discover what once felt impossible gradually becomes instinctive. Not because life became easier, but because you stopped allowing every emotional storm to dictate the emotional weather of your life.