# Betrayal-Trauma Triggers and Activation Signs Worksheet

Betrayal-trauma triggers are reminders, situations, thoughts, or experiences that activate feelings connected to the betrayal. A trigger may be obvious, or it may seem unrelated at first.

Learning to recognize your triggers and early activation signs can help you pause, create safety, and choose a supportive response.

## Part 1: Common Betrayal-Trauma Triggers

Place a checkmark next to any triggers you have experienced.

### Communication Triggers

☐ Delayed responses to calls or messages
☐ Changes in tone of voice
☐ Vague, incomplete, or inconsistent answers
☐ Defensiveness during conversations
☐ Feeling dismissed, blamed, or misunderstood
☐ Avoidance of difficult conversations
☐ Hearing certain words, phrases, names, or explanations
☐ Discovering new or conflicting information
☐ Other: _____

### Technology and Privacy Triggers

☐ Phone notifications
☐ Hidden or turned-over devices
☐ Password changes
☐ Deleted messages or internet history
☐ Social media activity
☐ Secretive phone or computer use
☐ A partner leaving the room to take a call
☐ Unexplained apps, accounts, charges, or contacts
☐ Other: _____

### Situational Triggers

☐ A partner arriving home late
☐ Unexplained changes in schedule
☐ Work trips, nights out, or time apart
☐ Being in places connected to the betrayal
☐ Anniversaries, holidays, or significant dates
☐ Seeing someone connected to the betrayal
☐ Sexual or romantic scenes in television, movies, or books
☐ Hearing stories about infidelity, secrecy, or deception
☐ Other: _____

### Relational and Intimacy Triggers

☐ Physical or emotional distance
☐ Changes in affection or sexual intimacy
☐ Feeling rejected or unwanted
☐ Comparing yourself to others
☐ Discussions about attraction, sex, or relationships
☐ Feeling pressured to forgive, trust, or “move on”
☐ Receiving affection that feels confusing or unsafe
☐ Conflict, criticism, or perceived abandonment
☐ Other: _____

### Internal Triggers

☐ Intrusive memories or mental images
☐ Dreams or nightmares
☐ Sudden feelings of suspicion
☐ Remembering past lies or discoveries
☐ Questioning your memory or judgment
☐ Feeling vulnerable, tired, lonely, or overwhelmed
☐ Body-image concerns
☐ Fear that more information will be discovered
☐ Other: _____

## Part 2: My Activation Signs

Activation signs are the emotional, physical, cognitive, and behavioral changes that occur when your nervous system senses danger.

Place a checkmark next to the signs you notice in yourself.

## Emotional Signs

☐ Fear
☐ Anxiety
☐ Panic
☐ Anger or rage
☐ Sadness or grief
☐ Shame
☐ Hopelessness
☐ Irritability
☐ Emotional numbness
☐ Feeling abandoned or rejected
☐ Other: _____

## Physical Signs

☐ Jaw tightness or teeth clenching
☐ Racing heart
☐ Chest tightness
☐ Shaking or trembling
☐ Nausea or stomach discomfort
☐ Muscle tension
☐ Headaches
☐ Difficulty breathing
☐ Feeling hot, cold, dizzy, or lightheaded
☐ Restlessness or an urge to escape
☐ Other: _____

## Cognitive Signs

☐ Feeling like I am in a “fog”
☐ Difficulty concentrating
☐ Racing thoughts
☐ Obsessing over details
☐ Replaying conversations or discoveries
☐ Imagining worst-case scenarios
☐ Difficulty distinguishing fear from current facts
☐ Questioning my memory or perception
☐ Feeling confused or disoriented
☐ Feeling unable to make decisions
☐ Other: _____

### Behavioral Signs

☐ Checking phones, accounts, locations, or messages
☐ Repeatedly asking questions or seeking reassurance
☐ Withdrawing from others
☐ Avoiding conversations or reminders
☐ Raising my voice or becoming confrontational
☐ Crying or becoming unable to speak
☐ Isolating myself
☐ Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
☐ Changes in eating, work, or self-care
☐ Using substances or other behaviors to numb emotions
☐ Other: _____

## Part 3: Understanding My Trigger Pattern

**Describe a recent situation in which you felt triggered.**

**What happened immediately before you became activated?**

**What thoughts, memories, or fears came up?**

**What emotions did you experience?**

**What physical sensations did you notice?**

**What did you feel an urge to do?**

**What did you actually do?**

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## Part 4: Rate Your Activation

When this trigger occurred, how activated did you feel?

**0 — Calm and grounded**
**1–3 — Mildly unsettled**
**4–6 — Moderately activated**
**7–8 — Highly activated**
**9–10 — Overwhelmed or unable to feel safe**

My activation level was: _____ / 10

What helped lower the intensity, even slightly?

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## Part 5: My Early Warning Signs

The earliest signs that I am becoming activated are:

1. 
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2. 
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3. 
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When I notice these signs, I can pause before my activation becomes more intense.

## Part 6: Creating Safety

When I feel triggered, the following may help me feel safer or more grounded:

☐ Take slow, intentional breaths
☐ Place my feet firmly on the floor

☐ Name five things I can see
☐ Step away from the conversation temporarily
☐ Ask for clarification without demanding immediate answers
☐ Write down my thoughts before responding
☐ Contact a trusted support person
☐ Attend a therapy or support-group session
☐ Remind myself of what I know in the present moment
☐ Engage in movement, stretching, or a calming activity
☐ Set a boundary
☐ Ask for a specific form of reassurance
☐ Other: _____

# My Personal Grounding Plan

**When I notice that I am becoming activated, I will first:**

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**A person I can contact for support is:**

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**A boundary or request that may help me feel safer is:**

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**A grounding statement I can remind myself of is:**

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Examples may include:

- “I am having a trauma response, and I can pause.”
- “This feeling is intense, but I do not have to respond immediately.”
- “I can seek information while also caring for my nervous system.”
- “I am allowed to ask for safety, honesty, and support.”
- “I can take this one moment at a time.”

# Reflection

**Which triggers affect you most frequently?**

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**Which activation signs tend to appear first?**

**What responses help you feel supported rather than dismissed or overwhelmed?**

**What would you like your partner, therapist, or support system to understand about your triggers?**

*Triggers and activation signs are not personal failures. They are understandable nervous-system responses to an experience that disrupted safety, trust, and connection. Recognizing these patterns can help you respond with greater awareness, self-compassion, and support.*