



RECOVERY IN FOCUS · GROUP CURRICULUM · FACILITATOR GUIDE

# Triggers in a Connected World

Trigger identification and chain-breaking, old world and new. Four parts, two group classes.

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| <b>Topic category (billing anchor)</b> | Relapse Prevention / Trigger Identification and Management, with Craving Management                                                              |
| <b>Clinical focus</b>                  | Conditioned cues, including digital cues, as relapse drivers; the trigger-thought-craving-use chain and early interruption as relapse prevention |
| <b>Evidence base</b>                   | Relapse Prevention (Marlatt) · CBT · cue-reactivity and conditioning research                                                                    |
| <b>Format</b>                          | One participant packet · two group classes of about 2 hours each · Class 1 = Parts 1–2 · Class 2 = Parts 3–4                                     |
| <b>Group rules</b>                     | 2 to 12 clients, same time · at least 1 active Medi-Cal beneficiary · no minors mixed with adults                                                |

**This file:** facilitator guide

class agendas, activation guardrail, FIRP

**Companion file:** participant packet (print one per member)

4 parts · 9 exercises · 1 vignette · full trigger list · chain work

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## FACILITATOR GUIDE

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### How to run this session

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- **NO FAULT FIRST:** the opening job is separating triggers from blame. Conditioning happened to them; managing it is the work. "Nobody decides to salivate" does that in one line.
- **LINK:** matching triggers drive cohesion ("payday got three hands; you three compare plans"). The strange-trigger shares (Exercise 2) produce the best linking of the session; welcome the weird ones.
- **WALK-IN NOTE:** this module's screen content arrives as the fourth kind of a familiar concept, not as the headline, which is the \$A10 walk-in working. Don't front-load phone talk in your opening; let the list get there.
- **LAND IT CLINICALLY:** everything funnels to the chain and the early break. If a segment ends without "breaking it early is easier" being true in the room, say it again.

### Mixed-functioning group adjustments

- Read everything aloud; writing optional; initials only for people-triggers, always.
- Draw the four-step chain on the board and keep it up both classes.
- Lower-functioning rooms: the whole session can run on the trigger list plus "name it, move, ten minutes, tell somebody."

#### ACTIVATION GUARDRAIL

Listing triggers stirs them up. Two rules: no war stories (the high never gets described; "name the trigger; don't relive the high"), and both classes end with the long exhale together. If a member gets visibly activated mid-list, pause the room, run the interrupt live (name, breathe, ground), and frame it as a demonstration. Check on them individually before they leave. Members name people-triggers by initials only; this packet goes home with them.

**HOOK SOURCE NOTE:** the below-the-waterline imaging point is the classic cue-reactivity finding (drug-cue videos activating amygdala/limbic circuits in seconds; the old cocaine-video studies). Present as "brain-scan studies have shown" and move on.

#### CLASS 1

### Parts 1 and 2 (about 2 hours)

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#### Opening (10 min)

Frame: "This session is about triggers: how your brain learned them, where yours show up, including the ones that travel in your pocket, and how to break the chain they start." Icebreaker: "Name a trigger that

would sound harmless to anyone outside this room." Board them; the weird list IS the lesson: triggers are personal.

## Part 1: How Triggers Get Made (35 to 45 min)

**Teach (5 min or less):** conditioning in plain words, the salivation line, the four kinds with screens introduced last, as the newest.

**PLAIN** "What's something that pulls at you that you never chose?"

**DEEPER** "What's the difference between being triggered and being weak? Does your gut actually believe the difference yet?"

- **Exercise 1** (yes/no): item 3 (phone-triggered) by show of hands; near-universal, and it warms up the fourth kind without lecturing.
- **Exercise 2** (strangest trigger): volunteers; link matches; honor the strange ones loudest.

## Part 2: Your Trigger List (55 to 65 min)

**Teach (2 min):** the four kinds, then members write their lists quietly for ten minutes. This is the session's inventory; give it real time.

- **Exercise 3** (the full list): go around on "my three strongest, from anywhere." Board and cluster them; the clusters become Class 2's working groups.
- **Brianna vignette + Exercise 4:** read aloud. The point lands itself: she out-moved the old world and the phone brought it to her couch. Question 3 ("what's still in YOUR phone") is homework-grade material; collect answers for Class 2's avoid list.

**Close Class 1** with the talk-it-out questions and the long exhale. Assign: watch for one trigger firing this week and just note which of the four kinds it was.

**CLASS 2****Parts 3 and 4 (about 2 hours)**

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**Opening (10 min)**

Check in: what fired this week, and which kind? Note how many came from screens; the room usually surprises itself.

**Part 3: The Four-Step Chain (45 to 55 min)**

**Teach (5 min or less):** the chain on the board; each step named with its truth (automatic / not an action / body joins / barely a decision); the backwards-fighting trap; breaking it early is easier.

- **Exercise 5** (walk one chain): model one on the board first (Brianna's works). Members walk their own; go around on "where it would have been easiest to break." Every answer will be step 1 or 2; let the room notice that out loud.
- **Exercise 6** (yes/no): item 3 (scheduled chains) feeds directly into the avoid list; scheduled chains are the most plannable kind.

**Part 4: Breaking It Early (55 to 65 min)**

**Teach (5 min or less):** avoid, interrupt, tell, starting with the easiest; avoidance reframed as skipping a fight you don't have to have; screen triggers turned off in the phone's settings; secret triggers get stronger.

- **Exercise 7** (avoid list): all three lines, read aloud, specific. The contact-deletion moment can be done in the room, live, where members want witnesses; it's a powerful ritual, offer it, never force it.
- **Exercise 8** (interrupt plan): naming lines said out loud twice around the room; rehearsed lines survive adrenaline.
- **Exercise 9** (the protected trigger): the most honest minute of the session; treat whatever surfaces gently and follow up individually where it's big.
- **Skill of the day:** break one chain at step one. Promise the check-in.

**Close** with the group questions, the summary read aloud, and the long exhale together.

## FIRP scaffold (one note per member, per class)

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**Class 1. Focus:** member's relapse-prevention / trigger-management objective, plus today's topic: conditioned triggers across emotional, environmental, sensory, and digital domains. **Intervention:** *Educated group on classical conditioning of substance cues and automatic cue reactivity; facilitated a comprehensive four-domain trigger inventory including digital cues; facilitated vignette analysis of digital cue exposure despite environmental change; linked members' trigger patterns and processed responses; closed with group grounding.* **Response:** individualize. **Plan:** observe and record one trigger activation by domain; return for Class 2.

**Class 2. Focus:** same objective, plus today's topic: the trigger-to-use chain and early interruption. **Intervention:** *Reviewed observation homework; educated group on the four-step trigger-thought-craving-use sequence and the efficiency of early interruption; guided each member through analyzing a personal chain and identifying its earliest break point; guided written avoidance planning (contacts, digital settings, routes) and a rehearsed interrupt plan with a disclosure contact; processed ambivalence about retained triggers; assigned one early chain-break with report-back; closed with group grounding.* **Response:** individualize, including specificity of avoid/interrupt plans. **Plan:** execute avoid list and one early break; individual follow-up where protected-trigger disclosure indicated.

**COMPLIANCE NOTES:** 2 to 12 clients, same time; at least one active Medi-Cal beneficiary; no one 17 or under mixed with adults (outside a certified school site). Facilitator: licensed/registered clinician or certified/registered AOD counselor, in scope. Participant list each class; one note per member per class with attendance plus that member's specific response, provider-signed, finalized within 3 business days (service day counts as day 0), tied to that member's problem list or objective. Land every segment on the substance-use and relapse link.