



Trauma Triggerland

Live and learn
with love
for life's lemons

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Do you ever experience Trauma Triggers? Do those triggers impact your life? And would you like to gain insight in how to deal with these triggers and gaining back control? If yes, this whitepaper is exactly what you need! Continue reading and get back in the saddle of your story.

At Setting Stages, we believe that everyone adds value to our world. That is why our mission is **Working towards a world where everyone is welcome to share their worth.** Will you work with us to make that happen? In this whitepaper you can learn how to take the first step, by adding value to your own life in the moment when you need it the most.

Trauma Triggerland

Life is like a giant carnival. At least, according to me. There are infinite rides you can get on, there's always a crowd and you can get candy whenever you like. Also, waiting for the things you are excited about is the absolute worst.

This carnival of life is here for you to enjoy. You can hop from ride to ride and discover the various thrills this place has to offer. I have been on the ride of college and university, puked at the rollercoaster of working abroad, had a blast at the teacup of Tinder and at the moment I am standing in line for a ride called 'being a published author'. Just like in real carnivals, the rides have requirements. And even though I often feel like being tall enough is still a must-have, mostly these requirements are based on skills and experience. You need a degree for certain career rides, you need to have people skills to enter the party parade and you might want to try the ferris wheel of finding beauty in reflective spaces. I am still working on my sales skills to be able to join the private mansion funhouse, but as we all know, that line is at a stand still at the moment.

Standing in line and looking at all the possibilities makes me brimming with life. I can't wait to finish one ride, to be able to try the next. The air is filled with cheers, the crowd is excited and my hands are filled with way more cotton candy than I can possibly ever eat.

And then everything changes.

Suddenly, I am all alone. The bright colours have all faded to black. There is no more music, no more laughter and no more fun. The cotton candy in my hands turn into a huge spiderweb binding my arms together and having them crawling with all kinds of insects. The sky is black. The rides are still there. They seem to be moving in slowmotion. And they don't seem to be fun at all.

Welcome to Trauma Triggerland.

Coming to our senses

Now that we have arrived at Trauma Triggerland, it is of utmost importance that we realize where we are. We often think we are back at the moment of our trauma, which is in most cases in the past. Instead, we have come to a place that is not entirely our present and also not fully our past. It is not fully our present, because there are feelings and needs holding us back from being present in the moment. It is not our past, because our past is in the past. Trauma Triggerland is instead a place in the here and now, where we are sheltered from the outside world and invited to engage in introspection. It is the perfect place to reflect on your needs and opportunities for growth. However, at first glance, it can be very scary. That is why it helps to take some time to come to our senses. We can use different grounding techniques. As everyone is different, take as much time to figure out which ones help you and which ones you prefer.

Here are four different grounding techniques, that remind you that you are safe:

Grounding technique

Breathe

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Grounding technique

5-4-3-2-1

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

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Grounding technique

I spy

If you are with somebody else

play the game

I spy with my little eye

with them

until you have calmed down

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Grounding technique

Special Safety

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Endangered emotions

Once you are aware that you are in Trauma Triggerland, you start noticing the big dark shadows lurking all around you. At first, you might think that these scary looking creatures are your enemies. However, once you notice that they are not coming closer, you decide to take a closer look. You figure out that these figures are your friends. Friends who have something important to share with you. They are just as scared as you are and are too shy to straight up tell you. These friends are your feelings.

Instead of looking at our feelings as parts of us that are in the way, I try to look at them like they are my closest friends. If they turn up at my doorstep and a disastrous hour (which they always do), it means that what they have to tell me is just that important. Where I used to push them away, which had the effect that my feelings would always just hide somewhere and continue to pop-up, until I finally sat down to listen. Now I just try to immediately get them to share their knowledge with me, so we can continue to grow together. To do this, I use the FEEL-method.



Feel: **F**rame it, **E**xplore it, **E**ngage with it en **L**et it go.

Frame it: our first course of action is giving my feeling a name. I start with the simple ones, like happy, sad, angry and scared. Once I've got these down, I start naming the more complex emotions. To expand my vocabulary on this, I often use the emotion wheel or other lists I can find on the internet.

Explore it: after naming our emotion, we can try to figure out why it is here. What does it want to tell us? Try to listen without judgement, validating our feeling and accepting it as true. Whatever it is, no matter how trivial, try to take it seriously. We seek to understand, not to undermine.

Engage with it: once we understand why our emotion is visiting us, it is time to use this new insight to make a decision. Will we take action? Will we change something? Will we set new boundaries? Or will we choose to accept reality for what it is? The choice is ours.

Let it go: we've named and validated our emotion and decided on our courses of action going forward. Now it is time to be grateful towards our emotion for taking the time and effort to raise our awareness on a certain issue. Let's actively thank our feelings for supporting us and make sure that they are always welcome. For now, it is time to let them go.

Need

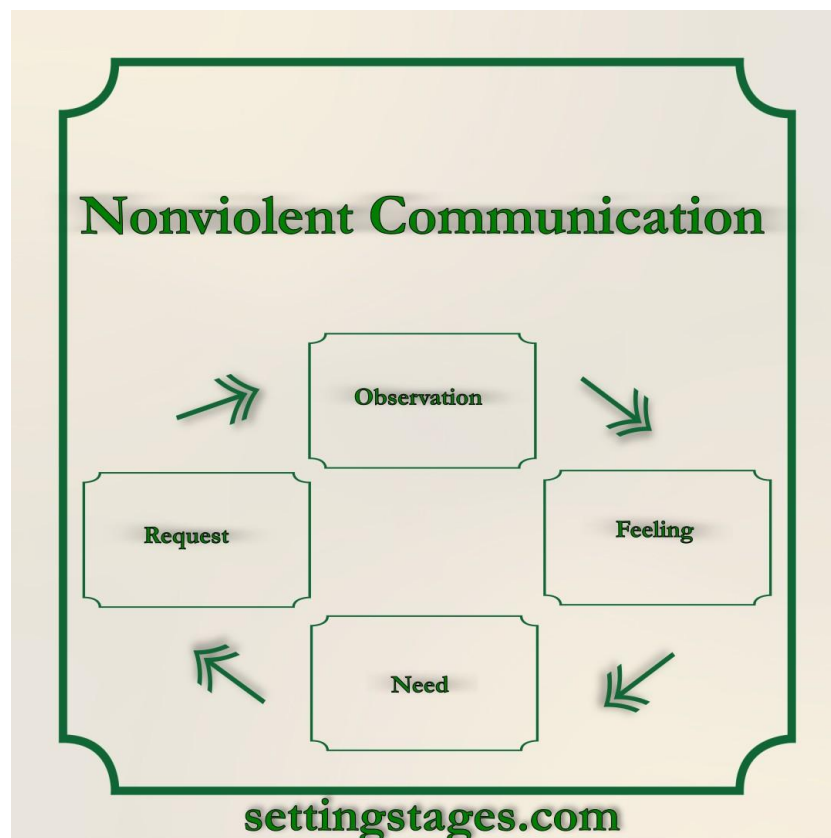
After learning from our feelings, it is time to take some steps into the real world. Because we can not do everything by ourselves, we can ask others to help us on our way. One way to ask them for support, is using the Nonviolent Communication framework. Here we start with an observation, followed by a feeling, followed by a need and ending with a request.

Observation: make sure that the observation is something that is sensible. It should be something that is observed by your senses. So talk about something you see, hear, feel, smell or taste.

Feeling: state the feeling that you are having.

Need: state what it is that you are lacking at the moment and wish you had more of.

Request: let the other know how they can support you. Remember that they have the choice to turn down your request.



If you want to try out asking for what you need in a safe environment, you can find a game at settingstages.com made especially for this purpose! And the best part is, that in this game your fellow players always have to oblige to your request.

Minesweeper

Now that you have come to your senses, learned from your feelings and phrased your need, it is time to leave Trauma Triggerland and put it all in action. But outside of Trauma Triggerland, you will run into people who have never visited this place before. How will you explain to them where you have just been?

To give them insight in what just happened, I often use the comparison with Minesweeper. This videogame from 1990 is a classic that most people are familiar with, but if you or someone else doesn't know it yet, you can find a playable version on settingstages.com.



How I explain the similarity between minesweeper and trauma triggers:

- The mines are already there. My friends and I are not responsible for their existence
- Sometimes I experience smaller emotions, like the 1. Whenever this comes to my attention, I will know that there is something bigger that I can explore
- Other times, I experience bigger emotions, like the 2. That gives me the insight that the problem is more complex and I might need some time to figure it out
- Sometimes it goes wrong for a minute. This happens and is a part of my life.
 - This doesn't mean:
 - ◆ That I can't play again and have fun
 - ◆ That I lose everything that is dear to me
 - ◆ That I can't learn from the experience
 - This does mean:
 - ◆ That I have something to learn
 - ◆ That I have to deal with the consequences of trauma that wasn't my fault
 - ◆ That I have the courage to continue playing

Thank you!

Thank you for visiting Trauma Triggerland! If you are a regular, like me, you might want to consider keeping in touch. You can find Setting Stages on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [our website](#). And if you ever need a tour-guide, we will gladly help you on your way.

Have fun enjoying the carnival of life!