

7 ways to cool your emotional hot triggers

[Psychology](#), [Child Development](#)



We are all human. We all have triggers, sensitivities and places where we are susceptible to having negative emotional reactions. These vulnerabilities are the areas where we experience irritations, hurt or anger and feel compelled to respond. Hot buttons are hot because they touch upon our values and what we hold as important or not important in terms of respect and integrity.

The majority of our triggers touch upon the values of “rightness” or “wrongness” that we quietly hold. These values are not often obtrusive, until we get triggered. Once they are triggered they take over and direct our behavior. Because they are attached to strongly cherished values, they carry a strong emotional charge. When activated our behavior is driven by pure emotion, so our behavior tends to be larger than the situation calls for.

There is nothing rational or considered about a response which comes from our hot spots. Success in business can be boiled down to positive relationships, so to improve your chances at success you must consistently work to improve yourself.

1. Awareness

The trick to preventing the eruption of our emotions around a hot button is to become deeply aware of what rattles our cage. The more mindful we are in our awareness of where our triggers are, the better able we will become in stopping our emotions from changing our behavior into that of a crazy person. Awareness is the essential ingredient when trying to change anything about ourselves. We must become wise enough to take “time-outs” in lieu of losing our minds, making jerks of ourselves, and causing

damage that may potentially be irreparable for our reputation, and the thoughts others take of us.

When we're adrenalized we feel like we need to act *now*. Nothing is an emergency. We have to train ourselves to take a moment to slow down the minute we feel adrenalized. We can make commitmentments to ourselves that we will only speak once we are no longer adrenalized and overly emotional. Many of life's problems are caused by these unconscious hot buttons. When we learn to use time as the intervention between our emotions and our mouths, we will save ourselves much grief and apologizing.

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2. Listen

Be aware that words, issues, situations, and personalities all trigger us emotionally. When these differing variables trigger our hot-buttons, verbal messages become one-sided. Because these issues are emotional they create barriers to us being able to listen effectively. When we're reactive we tend to tune out, act out, shut down, distort, or prejudge what we're hearing. Breathe when listening. Breathing provides the brain with the oxygen levels necessary for us to process our emotions more logically. When we feel triggered we tend to take short, shallow breaths which do not provide the brain the oxygen it needs to slow down, stay calm, and to think rationally enough to focus on listening to the person we are speaking with.

3. Choose your response.

We must make conscious choices about who and how we want to be experienced, perceived and respected by ourselves and others. When we lose emotional control we not only lose the respect of others, but more importantly we lose respect for ourselves. There is nothing more dangerous than that. We can get angry, try to solve the problem, or ignore it. If we choose to solve the problem, we become better able at preventing them from happening again. We get to choose how we respond in every situation we are in. It is 100% in our control and ability to master ourselves in the ways which gain the respect and trust of others. Feeling a sense of agency over our responses also helps us to build and maintain the trust and respect we have for ourselves.

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4. Acknowledge the other.

When we are triggered we become self-righteous, self-centered and fixed in our mindset. This does not allow us to see or acknowledge the feelings and rights that others have to their own feelings, thoughts and values, which may be different, but no less valid than our own. Practice acknowledging the feelings, ideas and thoughts of others. Acknowledge that it is okay for them to feel the way that they do. What others think, feel and believe doesn't have to be perceived as a personal offense to us because it doesn't mean we are wrong or have to change our opinions. Acknowledgement simply demonstrates that we possess a tremendous depth of character and integrity for all involved.

5. Seek understanding.

Oftentimes we get hot because we're feeling offended, when really what may be going on is that we have misperceived or misunderstood something that is being communicated. We then proceed to take things in a way which was not intended, we react and cause a tremendous amount of damage to ourselves and others. Before reacting train yourself to ask objective questions in an effort to seek clarification. Ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are the most useful way to get the clarification we need. This way, if we have a reaction it will be based in a true understanding, not a misunderstanding. Having a true sense of understanding can nearly abate a negative reaction all together.

6. Open your mind.

Work on seeing another's viewpoint. In the willingness to open our minds we may actually learn something about ourselves that could actually be transformational for a trigger we have. Again, when we're hot our minds are not open, they are closed. The opportunities for growth and expansion available to us are exponential when we're willing to learn, grow and open our minds. If we cannot take in another's point of view we cannot grow or mature as people, which grossly limits the type of success we can have in our own lives and careers. If we're always "right" then we will have zero motivation to grow. Being close minded to another's viewpoint makes us rigid and un-coachable. This is a recipe for disaster. It will not kill us to have another person be right. I can only help us grow.

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7. Stick to the subject.

When we get triggered we get lost in wanting to prove to ourselves, which make us lose complete track of the facts, of the subject matter at hand, and of the objective quality of the subject. Every topic has an objective and subjective/emotional quality to it. This means that every topic has a circle of facts which surround it. If we can stick to the subject by veering away from the compulsion we have to emotionally manipulate our sense of “rightness” through deflecting the conversation onto other topics, we are more likely to have a productive conversation. It is maddening to be in a conversation with an emotional person who manipulates and deflects to be right. This is the quickest path to people not wanting to communicate or connect with us.

We know we’ve been triggered when we start to get defensive around “matters of principle,” or when we become emotional over something which seems relatively unimportant. When we react and regret what we said or did, we end up wishing we could have just taken one moment to cool off and think before we reacted. When we react we don’t think about the damage until afterwards. For this reason, we must develop an awareness for where our trigger points are, and then proceed to do the work we need to do to be as conscious of them as possible. This way, when they get hit we can operate with a mindfulness that will keep us open, respectful and in a place of growth and learning. This type of mindfulness will increase our opportunities for success tenfold. People do not like working with difficult people who cause others to feel as if they must walk on eggshells.