

Kinds of PTSD Triggers

<https://www.verywellmind.com/ptsd-triggers-and-coping-strategies-2797557>

Triggers can fall into two categories: *Internal Triggers* and *External Triggers*. Internal triggers are things that you feel or experience inside your body. Internal triggers include thoughts or memories, emotions, and bodily sensations (for example, your heart racing). External triggers are situations, people, or places that you might encounter throughout your day (or things that happen outside your body). Listed below are some common internal and external triggers.²

Internal Triggers

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Feeling abandoned
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling out of control
- Feeling vulnerable
- Frustration
- Memories
- Muscle tension
- Pain
- Racing heartbeat
- Sadness

External Triggers

- An anniversary
- An argument
- Certain smells
- End of a relationship
- Holidays
- Reading a news article that reminds you of your traumatic event
- Seeing someone who reminds you of a person connected to your [traumatic event](#)
- A specific place
- Watching a movie or television show that reminds you of your traumatic event
- Witnessing a car accident

Identifying Your Triggers

Try to think of when your PTSD symptoms usually come up. Ask yourself the following questions to identify your triggers: What types of situations are you in? What is happening around you? What kind of emotions are you feeling? What thoughts are you experiencing? What does your body feel like? Get out a sheet of paper and write down as many internal and external triggers as you can.²

Coping With Triggers

Now, the best way of coping with triggers is to avoid them altogether. However, this is almost impossible to do. Why? Well, you cannot really avoid your thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations. Much of these are out of our control.

In regard to external triggers, we can take some steps to manage our environment (for example, not going to certain places that we know will trigger us), but we cannot control everything that happens to us. For example, you might inadvertently come into contact with a news story or conversation that reminds you of your traumatic event.³

Because we often cannot avoid triggers, it is important to learn ways of coping with triggers. Effective, healthy coping strategies for lessening the impact of triggers include:²

[Deep breathing](#)

[Expressive writing](#)

Grounding

[Mindfulness](#)

Relaxation

[Self-soothing](#)

[Social support](#)

The more strategies you have available to you, the better off you will be in managing your triggers. In addition, the more coping strategies you have, the more likely you will be able to prevent the development of unhealthy coping strategies, such as [alcohol and drug use](#).

Further, simply being more aware of your triggers can be beneficial. As a result of this increased awareness, your emotional reactions may begin to feel more understandable, valid, predictable, and less out of control. This can definitely positively impact your mood and overall well-being.²