

FACING YOUR TRIGGERS

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When it comes to struggles with pornography (or lust, fantasy, or masturbation), it is helpful to view triggers as "something that directs my focus toward [behavior]." Think of it as a driving force or the first step in your journey to the behavior. It is not the same as a temptation. A temptation is something that draws you toward. A trigger drives. A temptation draws.

Example: I might find myself thinking of pornography when I am stressed. Stress is the trigger. The promise of release of stress is the temptation.

Or, I may realize that spending excess time on Facebook is a trigger, but the clickbait article that seems inappropriate is a temptation.

The goal of this little "workbook" is to help you identify and come up with strategies for facing your triggers. It is not exhaustive and is merely a tool.

EMOTIONAL/MENTAL TRIGGERS "INTERNAL"

- Arise from within your heart, soul, body, or mind
- Something you feel or think
- May have nothing to do with pornography or sex
- May make you feel the need to escape to pornography

Do you find yourself running from something into the dark, quiet, anonymity of pornography?

ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS "EXTERNAL"

- Are part of your surroundings or environment
- Could be very innocent
- May start a "domino effect" triggering an internal trigger
- May only be powerful in a "combination" (ex. being alone + having a phone)

Do you find yourself "sidetracked" by pornography without any real emotional drive?

KEEP IN MIND

You may have both internal and external triggers or triggers that change over time.

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If you're wanting to walk in freedom, it can be helpful to know your triggers

Often, when we hear the concept of triggers discussed, it's in reference to internal triggers (perhaps you have heard of H.A.L.T - hungry, angry, lonely, tired). But there are other emotions and even non-emotions (external triggers) that can drive us.

From the list below, mark the things you believe may be triggers for you. If you know a trigger and it isn't on here, add it.

INTERNAL TRIGGERS

- Stress
- Anger/Frustration
- Fear/Anxiety
- Illness/Physical pain
- Loneliness
- Grief/Sorrow
- Boredom/laziness
- Fatigue/Insomnia
- Distraction
- Hormonal Fluctuation
- Thinking about singleness
- Feeling misunderstood
- Confusion/uncertainty
- Feeling out of control
- Break from routine
- Memories from childhood/trauma

EXTERNAL TRIGGERS

- Being alone
- Darkness/night
- Mirrors
- "Romantic" books
- TV shows
- A certain body spray, lotion, etc
- Dreary weather
- Taking a bath/shower
- Being intimate with your spouse
- Certain sensations (like vibration)
- Sounds/music
- Having a camera
- Certain pieces of clothing
- Spending time online
- Being with a certain person

LIST YOUR "TOP THREE" IN ORDER

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STILL STRUGGLING TO PINPOINT?

Think about the last few times you've engaged watching porn/fantasy/masturbation and answer the following.

Before you engaged, what were you thinking/feeling/doing?

While you were engaging in the behavior, what were some thoughts/emotions you experienced?

What additional steps, if any, did you take to make space for the behavior? (ie. "went to my bedroom")

What emotions/thoughts did you experience immediately after finishing? Did these change? How much time elapsed before they changed?

HIGHLIGHT OR STAR ANY IMPORTANT PATTERNS YOU THINK YOU SEE.

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INTERNAL TRIGGERS

Internal triggers can be dealt with through decreasing exposure to the emotion or through disabling the trigger.

(For more information: <http://www.beggarsdaughter.com/pornography-facing-internal-triggers>)

For each of your internal triggers, answer the following:

Can I work to decrease my exposure to this trigger? How? (ie. Limiting stress by taking on less responsibility)

What are some things I can do to disable my triggers/,make acting on them less convenient? (For help, look back at the "additional steps" question on the previous page)

If your trigger is related to a trauma, please consider speaking with a trained professional who can help you process that trauma in a healthy way.

USE A CONCORDANCE TO LOOK UP BIBLE VERSES THAT SPEAK TO YOUR SPECIFIC TRIGGERS. WRITE THE REFERENCES TO SOME OF YOUR FAVORITES HERE.

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EXTERNAL TRIGGERS

When dealing with external triggers, we can respond from a place of brokenness or a space of boundaries. Responding from a place of feeling defective and broken undermines our freedom journey as it amplifies shame.

(For more information: <http://www.beggarsdaughter.com/pornography-external-triggers>)

Before we address external triggers, consider the following:

Think about how you are approaching your triggers. Are you doing it from a place of shame? Do you find yourself scolding yourself for being weak, etc? Write out those shame statements here.

Approaching triggers with boundaries means that you understand your weakness, and God's grace, and are doing what you can to protect your freedom walk. For each of your shame statements, write the grace-filled equivalent.

With 1 being easy and 10 being hard, how difficult was it for you to think of "grace statement" to combat the "shame statements?" Why do you think that is?

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EXTERNAL TRIGGERS

There are three basic ways you can address external triggers:

Avoidance- cutting the trigger out all together

Annihilation- trying to eliminate the fact that something is a trigger

Awareness- moving forward with the trigger but placing boundaries to help weaken it.

For each of your external triggers, pick a strategy and answer how you can implement that **starting now**.

AVOID

ANNIHILATE

AWARE

Sometimes triggers are unavoidable or shouldn't be avoided (for instance, if pornographic images tend to pop up in prayer). In these circumstances, we should be aware but we also may need to adapt or be accountable. If that is the case for you, list those triggers here and ways you can adapt (pray with your eyes open or while journaling) or be accountable.

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WHAT NOW?

It didn't feel right making the last page the final page. Now that this "worksheet" has turned more into a workbook, I want to first off, applaud you for putting in the work to get this far! Some people want an easy 1, 2, 3 plan for breaking free and, frankly, there isn't an easy 1, 2, 3 plan. Work like this requires work. It requires us to put off old habits, to set aside besetting sins, and to actively surrender our desires. That's not easy nor it is a one-time thing. As your final "wrap up" consider the steps you want to take to deal with the triggers you have found, and also consider the steps you want to take to pursue healing and growth.

STEPS I WANT TO TAKE TO DEAL WITH INTERNAL TRIGGERS

STEPS I WANT TO TAKE TO DEAL WITH EXTERNAL TRIGGERS

STEPS I WANT TO TAKE TO PURSUE GROWTH AND HEALING

Implement as many of these as you can now, but understand that trying to do all of them at once (depending on how many there are) may be a bit of a shock to your system. If you need to "transition" then implement the steps that are easiest (throwing out lotion) and that deal with the triggers you encounter the most. Then, continue pressing forward from there.

It may be helpful to share this completed worksheet with a trusted friend, counselor, spouse, or pastor as a way to get a different perspective, encouragement, and support.

"Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen." - Jude 24-25 (ESV)