

Understanding My Response

Trauma & parts: tracing a reaction with curiosity, not judgement

Name _____ Distress before (0-10) _____ After _____

After trauma, our reactions can make more sense when we slow them down. Choose a **recent, manageable moment** (not your most painful memory) and trace it step by step. Every response, even one that now causes problems, **once helped a part of you get through**.



NOTICE

What happened,
inside and out

1 What happened

A brief outline is enough. You don't need to go into detail.

2 What did my body notice?

Heart, breath, muscles, stomach, temperature, energy...

3 What meaning did my mind make?

The thought or story that came, e.g. "I'm not safe", "It's my fault".

RESPOND

How I felt, and
what I did

4 What did I feel?

Name the emotions, and roughly how strong (0-10).

5 What did I want to do?

The urge: fight, flee, freeze, please, hide, numb...

6 What did I actually do?

What I did, said or held back, without judging it.

UNDERSTAND

Meeting the part
that responded

7 What might this response be protecting?

A part of me that learned this was the safest way to get through.

8 What do I know now that I didn't know then?

About the situation, about myself, or about what I need.

9 A kind word to that part of me

What I'd say to the part of me that responded this way.

Go gently

Before and after, ground yourself: feel your feet on the floor, name five things you can see, and lengthen your out-breath. **You can stop at any point.** If a memory feels too big to hold alone, save it for your next session.

SOURCES

Schwartz, R. C., & Sweezy, M. (2020). *Internal family systems therapy* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
Siegel, D. J. (1999). *The developing mind: Toward a neurobiology of interpersonal experience*. Guilford Press.