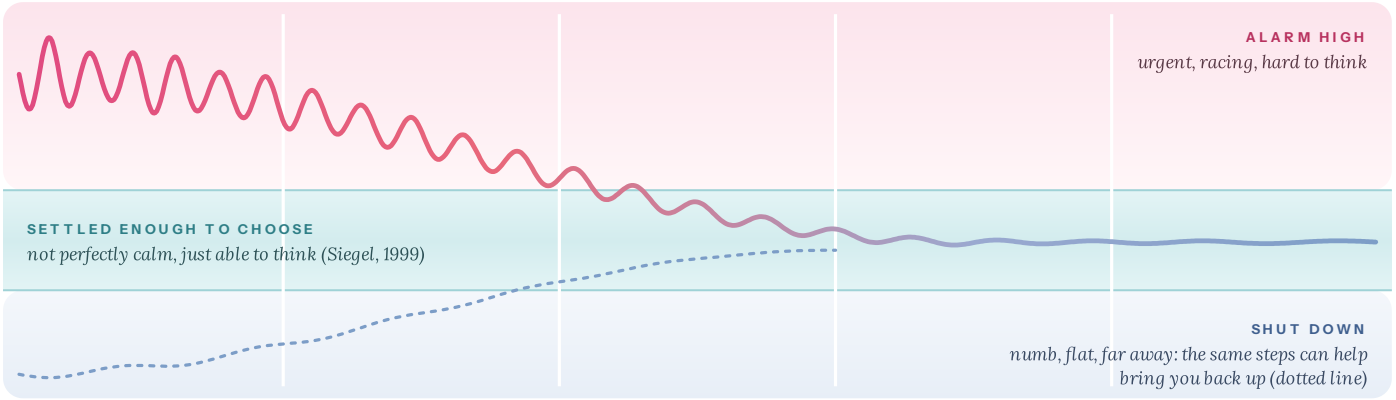
When I'm Triggered: A Step-by-Step Plan

TRAUMA, TRIGGERS & THE BODY

Notice, orient, regulate, check, choose

A trigger is a reminder, inside or outside you, that sets off your body's alarm, sometimes before you know why. The alarm can respond to the past as if it were happening now (Ehlers & Clark, 2000). Work through the steps in order, at your own pace. Short answers are fine.



1 Notice · 2 Orient · 3 Regulate · 4 Check · 5 Choose

One step at a time. You don't need to feel calm to start; each step can lower the alarm a little.

Steps can repeat. If the alarm rises again, go back a step. That is part of the process, not a failure.

1 Notice

name it, without judging

Putting feelings into words may help ease their intensity a little (Lieberman et al., 2007).

What happened?
just the facts, briefly

What am I noticing in my body?
heart, breath, muscles, stomach

What emotion is here?
name it, even roughly

2 Orient

come back to here and now

Grounding in present-moment detail can help the mind register that this is now (Najavits, 2002).

What tells me I am here, now?

- ○ today's date
- ○ where I am
- ○ what I can see
- ○ what I can hear
- ○ my feet on the floor
- ○ my age now
- ○ who is around me

3 Regulate

settle the alarm a notch

Try one thing that fits, then notice. The aim is to return to a range where you can think (Siegel, 1999; Ogden et al., 2006).

What do I need right now?

- ○ slower out-breaths
- ○ press my feet down
- ○ cool water
- ○ move or walk
- ○ step outside
- ○ less noise or light
- ○ reach out to someone

4 Check

then, or now?

Triggers can make the past feel present; spotting differences between then and now can help (Ehlers & Clark, 2000).

What does my alarm seem to be responding to?
a sound, smell, look, tone of voice, place or date can echo something from before

WHAT IT REMINDS ME OF

WHAT IS DIFFERENT NOW

5 Choose

one safe, useful step

You don't need to feel fully calm to choose; settled enough is enough.

What can wait?
big decisions, replies, hard conversations

What is my next safe, useful step?
small, doable and kind to myself

SOURCES

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