

REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE

Susie's Story:

Years ago, Susie was in a car accident. She awoke strapped to a gurney, unable to move or speak, hearing only a deep male voice – terrified for her child's safety.

Years later, at a social event, she hears another deep male voice and suddenly feels panic and helplessness.

Her body reacts as if she's reliving the trauma – This is how physiological trauma responses work: in an effort to protect ourselves from a perceived harmful, dangerous, or abhorrent situation, our body involuntarily reacts as if the situation is happening again.

Though she's safe, her body responds as if danger is present.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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HOW SUSIE MIGHT RESPOND

Fight

- Becomes angry or verbally aggressive toward the person.
- May not understand why she's reacting this way.

Flight

- Leaves the room quickly.
- Avoids interaction.

Freeze

- Becomes silent, numb, or disconnected.

Fawn

- Overly friendly or accommodating, despite discomfort.

Flop

- Body feels heavy or limp.
- May need to sit or lie down.

➔ In all cases, nobody is at fault.

These are involuntary physiological reactions to perceived threats.

*This example concerns someone hearing a voice, but a trauma trigger can be a sight, smell, object, sensation, or even an errant thought

HEALING FROM TRAUMA

Understanding your triggers and responses is the first step toward healing.

Professional trauma-informed therapy can help you recognize and manage these involuntary responses.

Learn more about Trauma Therapy



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UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA TRIGGERS

Learn how your body and mind respond to reminders of past trauma – and how awareness can support healing.

Contact Us Here!



WHAT IS A TRAUMA TRIGGER?

A trauma trigger is a psychological stimulus that prompts recall of a previous traumatic experience.

The trigger itself doesn't have to be frightening – it could be a sound, smell, texture, or situation that reminds someone (even subconsciously) of a past trauma.

When triggered, the response can go far beyond discomfort.

A person may experience:

- Anxiety attacks
- Flashbacks
- A powerful urge to escape to safety

Triggers are often subtle, personal, and unpredictable – but they are always real bodily responses to perceived danger.

Resources

- National Institute of Mental Health – Coping with Traumatic Events.
- NIMH – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

COMMON TRAUMA RESPONSES

Response	Definition	Example of Behavior
Fight	Move toward the threat	Anger, aggression, irritability
Flight	Move away from the threat	Avoidance, fear, panic
Freeze	Become still, disconnect	Numbness, immobility, dissociation
Fawn	Seek safety by appeasing	People-pleasing, conflict avoidance
Flop	Collapse or “shut down”	Limpness, faintness, passivity

SHARED CHARACTERISTICS

Any trauma response may include:

- Cognitive dissonance (your body acts opposite to what your mind wants)
- Feeling out of control
- Sympathetic nervous system activation:
 - Digestion slows to conserve energy
 - Blood flows away from extremities
 - Elevated heart rate and blood pressure

Note: Experiencing any of these behaviors does not necessarily mean you are having a trauma response.

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