Episode 2: How to deal with emotional triggers

Hi Guys!

Welcome to Episode 2 of *The Resilient Type* podcast! Today's topic is how to deal with emotional triggers.

Quick disclaimer: This episode should be used for informational purposes only. If you regularly feel "triggered" and unable to cope, it's important to speak to a doctor or mental health professional who can help you further. Please do not take the following information as professional medical advice.

In this episode, I'll be explaining what emotional triggers are, sharing a few clues that indicate you're being "triggered", and I'll be sharing a strategy to help you reframe the thoughts that are causing negative stories, and ultimately "triggering" you. By the end of this episode you'll *understand* what emotional triggers are, be able to identify your *own* trigger symptoms, and have a strategy up your sleeve the next time you start buying in to negative stories!

If you're listening to this on the go, take a screenshot, share it on Instagram and tag me @empoweredmillennialgirl so I can send you some love!

What are emotional triggers?

Triggers. You've probably heard the word a lot recently. It's definitely a trending term right now. I'm going to be talking about it on the most *basic* level here. This is not an episode on coping with PTSD or other mental health triggers.

An emotional trigger is, simply put, an emotional reaction to an uncomfortable thought, caused by an event. It may cause fear or shame and make you feel *resistance*. Emotional triggers usually come up when there are things in our lives that we feel unsatisfied or frustrated with. Anger, jealousy, sadness, guilt – any of these emotions can surface when you're "triggered."

But why do we have triggers? Well, like most things in psychology, it can be traced back to our childhood. We may have experienced pain or emotional suffering that we couldn't acknowledge or deal with at the time. And as adults, it surfaces again when we're triggered by something similar.

I've been on the job hunt recently. As you know, there was a time when I struggled to find work and was unemployed. If this is a surprise, go back and listen to Episode 1. Not only was it extremely stressful trying to find a job, but it was extra challenging dealing with my family at the time. I'm sure you can read between the lines here.

This time, I didn't want to repeat that experience so I only told a couple of family members in confidence. When the topic was brought up at a family dinner a couple of weeks later, you could say that I was experiencing an emotional trigger.

I was asked "Have you heard about any jobs yet?" I said, "No, not yet." They looked at me sympathetically. I interpreted the expression as pity. This made me think, "Am I failure?" which made me feel shame.

Maybe that question doesn't seem like a big deal to you because everyone struggles with something different. Your sensitive topics might be your relationship status or the state of your finances, for example. If you want to effectively deal with your emotional triggers, the first thing you need to do is identify the topics which make you feel uncomfortable.

Clues you've been "triggered"

Have you got a few topics in mind? Good. Let's go a little deeper.

I mentioned that past experiences may be influencing you. It might be hard to pinpoint the exact event or feeling, so before I move on, I just want to share some common ones that might help. These include:

- Rejection
- Abandonment or the threat of abandonment
- Helplessness
- Being ignored
- Being unavailable
- Judgement or criticism
- Shaming or blaming
- Not being accepted or welcomed
- Manipulation or being controlled

Which of these feelings can you relate to more? Which cause the strongest reaction in you?

If you're not sure, let's look at the symptoms of emotional triggers. They can include:

- Tightness in the chest
- Racing heart
- Dropping feeling in the stomach
- Feeling hot in the face

What do these symptoms remind you of? To me it sounds like the sensations you'd have when you're embarrassed or ashamed. And this makes sense. Know why? Triggers can cause feelings of shame!

Think of the last time you were upset. Then try and think back to when your mood changed from happy/neutral to unhappy. You might have been having a nice hot shower, but then you got out, stood on the scales and your day went downhill from there. In this scenario, your weight might be causing an emotional trigger.

While there are definitely some situations or people we can avoid to reduce our reactions, ignoring our triggers altogether isn't really an option. And if we try to, our triggers will appear in the form of habits and how we show up in our lives.

Going forward, I encourage you to be aware of your reactions. If you notice yourself getting annoyed about something, pause and consider this choice: do you want to react or do you want to let it go?

A strategy to help you reframe the thoughts that are causing negative stories

By now, I'm sure you realise that your thoughts are causing your feelings. It makes sense that if you're thinking negative thoughts then you're feeling negative emotions, right? Scientific studies support this theory too.

The issue, however, is that negative thought loops create negative stories, and those are harder to break because you've been buying into them for so long!

I want to share a strategy with you to help you reframe the thoughts that are causing negative stories. It's a simple one, but one you may not've actually used on your thoughts before. Any guesses what it might be? Questioning.

I want you to ask yourself:

- What story am I attaching to this thought?
- Where did this story come from? Who modelled it?
- What's a more empowering way to reframe this story?
- What would it look like to embody this new belief? What do I need to let go of?
- What's possible for me when I embody this new belief?

The aim here is to take on a positive belief, one that's coming from a place of abundance rather than fear.

For example, you may be worried about money: "With house prices on the rise, I'll never save up enough money to get my own place. I'll be stuck living at home forever!"

Are you choosing to view things from a place of fear and scarcity or faith and abundance? I know it might seem like those statements I just read are a fact, but they're an opinion… and you can reframe them!

Instead you could think: "It's time to start a side hustle!"

If you stay aware of your thoughts, you can catch yourself before you start buying into negative stories. If you are "triggered", question what story you're attaching to your thoughts and find a more empowering way to reframe them. I encourage you to try it.

To recap:

- An emotional trigger is an emotional reaction to an uncomfortable thought, caused by an event. Emotional triggers tend to come up when we feel unsatisfied or frustrated by something in our lives.
- We may feel fear or resistance when we're "triggered". Physical clues that something is a trigger include chest tightness, a racing heart, feeling like your stomach has dropped, and feeling flushed.
- Since your thoughts are influencing your feelings, and those feelings are influencing your actions, you can work on getting past emotional triggers by reframing your negative thoughts. You can reframe your thoughts by questioning the story you're attaching to them and changing the thought into a more positive and solution-focused one.

I hope you found this episode helpful. Talk you again soon!

Enjoying the podcast? Let's make it official! Subscribe and leave a review so more people can find the show. It would mean the world to me. And if you want to read today's Show Notes, head over to empoweredmillennialgirl.com! Thanks for tuning in!