

Appendix B

Steps for Managing Trauma Triggers

- **Recognize the Trigger:** Try to understand the source of the trigger. Recognizing the trigger will help us not to react so strongly moving forward. Plus, it reminds us that this is only a memory, not something happening now.
- **Stop and Breathe:** Stop and breathe. Take a moment and try one of the breathing exercises. Deep breathing helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which calms the body's fight-or-flight, freeze-or-fawn response.
- **Get Grounded:** Use Grounding Techniques that help bring us back to the here and now. The common one is the five things we can see, four things we can touch, three things we can hear, two things we can smell, and one thing we can taste. This interrupts the trigger.
- **Feel the Moment:** Allow yourself to feel valid emotions. This helps us reassure ourselves that we are not going crazy but only having a memory crop up—a painful memory, for sure, but not anything in the present.
- **Reframe the Moment:** We must remind ourselves this is not a current event. That allows us to separate the painful past from the present.
- **Calm the Waters:** Try soothing instruments like aromas or music. This creates a sense of comfort and safety as we are brought to a calm place.
- **Practice Meditation:** Use meditation to allow yourself to stay in the present. Focus on your breathing and allow the intensity of the trigger to pass by.
- **Reach out for Support:** In the moment, reach out to a trusted family member or friend as a supporter. Try to talk through the feelings. Being isolated is the worst thing we can do in those moments.
- **Challenge Negative Thoughts:** Resist negative self-talk. Identify negative thoughts and challenge them with affirmations or reframed ideas.
- **Exercise:** Work out. Try to get out and walk or do other exercises to release those pent-up emotions. Physical activity releases endorphins, which improve our mood.
- **Find a Safe Place:** Create a safe place at home, a retreat if you will, where you can go and feel safe and comfortable. This could be a favorite place to sit, a quiet room that allows you to be at ease.
- **Reflect and Process:** Finally, after the storm of the trigger has passed, try to reflect on what happened, how you felt, and what you tried to do in the moment to ease the burden. Learn from what just happened.