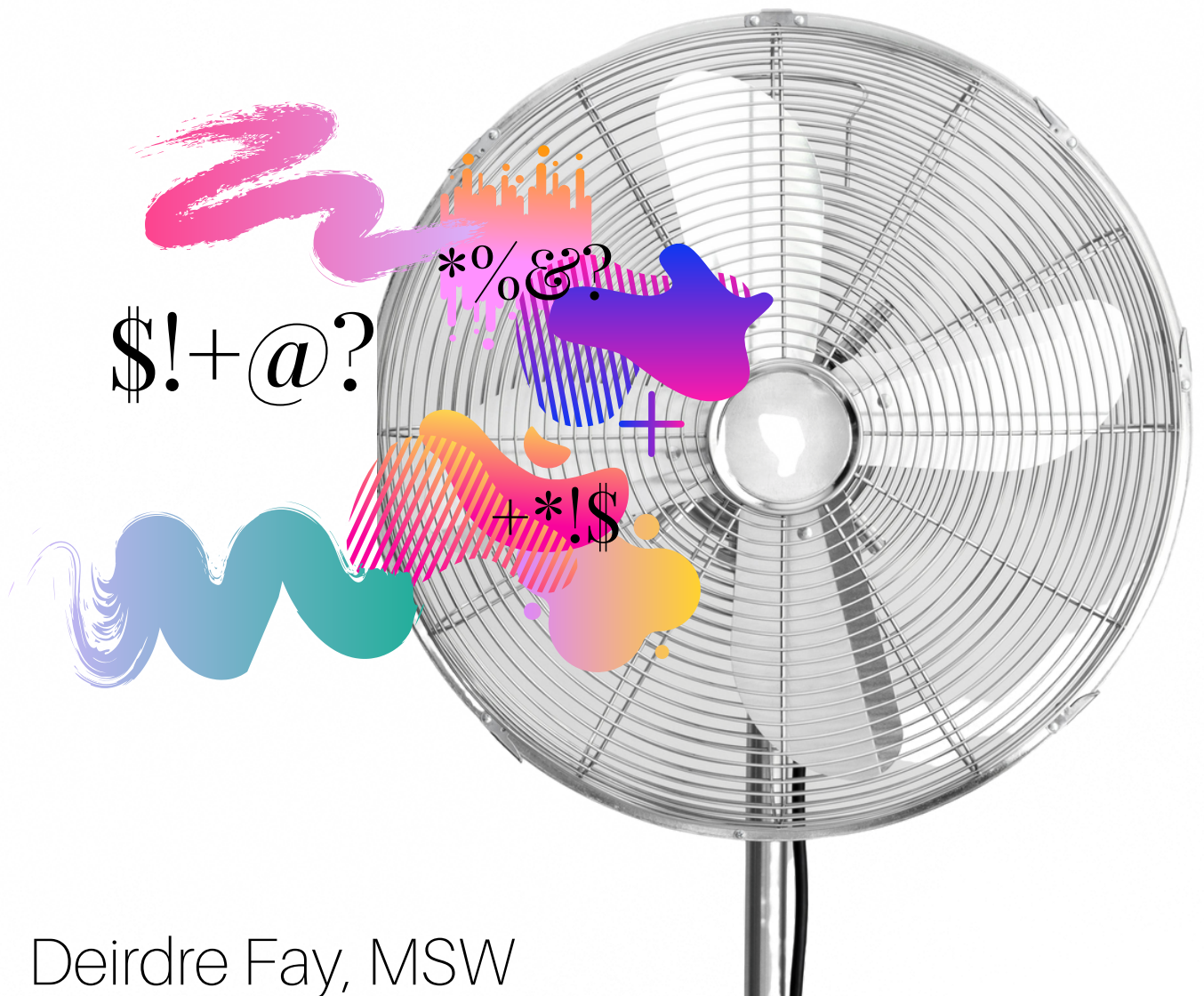
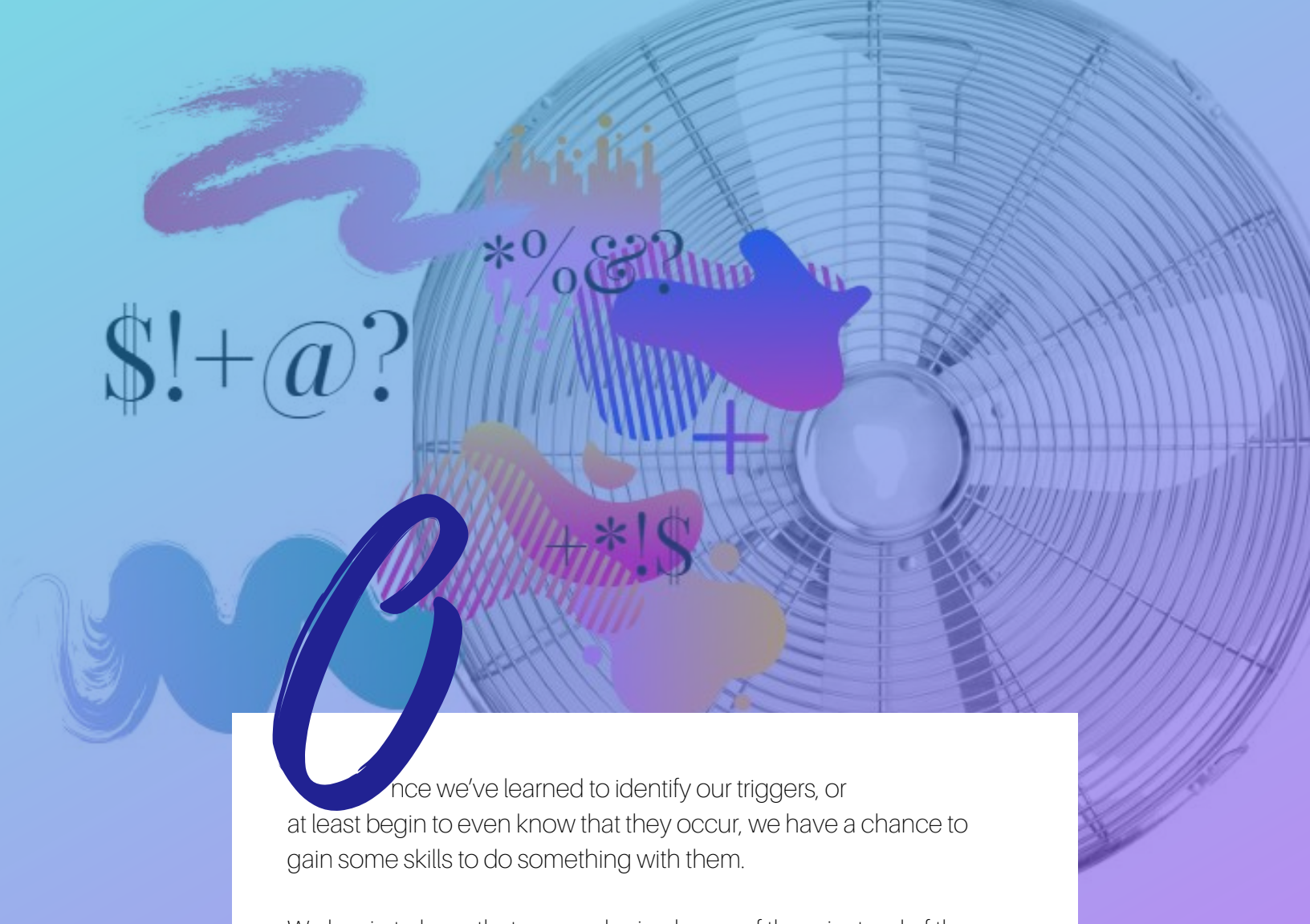


WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE TRIGGERED



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Once we've learned to identify our triggers, or at least begin to even know that they occur, we have a chance to gain some skills to do something with them.

We begin to learn that we can be in charge of them instead of them controlling us. For many years we have probably been under their dominance: panicking and running out of the room, reacting and saying mean things that we later can't believe we've said, freezing up in social settings when we wish we could enjoy time with others.

I'm sure you have your own versions.....

Managing the triggers

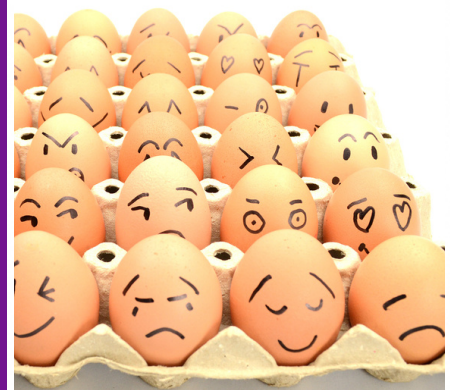
There are many ways to manage these triggers. Broadly speaking, you want to be able to intervene with the three different components of any triggered response:

- cognitively
- emotionally
- and in the body



**COGNITIVELY:
NAME OR LABEL
THE TRIGGER**

**EMOTIONALLY:
SOOTHE THE
TRIGGERED PART**



**BODY:
CENTERING &
GROUNDING**



Cognitively: Name or Label the Trigger

The shorthand version to this is “Oh no!!! I’m triggered!”

Naming the trigger, catching it in the process, allows us to be able to be with what’s going on instead of being hijacked by the internal experience.

Simple ways to do that are to name it (I’m feeling triggered!), or label it (I’m feeling angry), describe it (This feels horrible)... this can be a gentle way to take a step back from it and make it other than “who I am.”

But, if we are identified with “it” (as in “I am overwhelmed” or “I can’t cope” or “There’s something wrong with me”), then we have just given more power to the trigger.

Not only have we been triggered, but on top of that, it is “us,” and if it is “us,” then it will always be this way and we are pretty hopeless cases.

When we name and label it as a triggered response, we instead make it separate from us: we dis-identify from it.



Emotionally: Soothing the Triggered Part

Most survivors of trauma and attachment-wounding live as if "I" = "what I feel." That generally means: flooded, overwhelmed, lost, numb, shut down, anxious, panicked.

This skill of soothing or calming emotions starts with being able to a) name or label the emotion ("I'm feeling flooded!") and then b) separate and dis-identify from it by attributing to a part of us ("A part of me is flooded").

In every situation we can find another part of us that doesn't feel the same way or can step back from the situation, as well as a part that is overwhelmed, hurt to the core, ready to sob.

Once I identify the feeling as belonging to a part of me, then I can have another part of me available to interact with that part in just the way that part needs: soothing it, reassuring it, calming it, caring for it, nurturing it, all the things I would do with people I like or who need support for their feelings.



Body: Centering & Grounding

Centering: When we are triggered, it is our bodies that sound the alarm: our hearts start racing; we can't breathe; our muscles start twitching.

Here is a simple and effective way to decrease the bodily activation: place one hand on your belly, one hand on your heart. Focus on the weight and warmth of your hands.

Notice what happens to the activation: don't judge it or have expectations for it. Just notice it. Breathe in gentleness, breathe out whatever is stuck. Focus on that for a few minutes.

Grounding: If centering is not enough to calm the activation, try the same exercise on your feet instead of sitting down. Let your feet feel the pull of gravity as they settle into the floor. Notice what happens when your legs and feet feel that gravitational pull.



Simple Tools

If it's too much: Slow down & Externalize

When it's too much, that's a big clue to slow down. It's always easier to be with something in micro-doses.

Helpful ways to do that are to externalize the intensity. That basically means to take this internal experience and make it external. For example:

If you were to draw it, what would it look like?

How about if you were to write to it, how would it respond?

Interact with it

Instead of trying to get away from whatever is there, what is it like if you find the exact right distance to connect to it?

How does it respond if you move closer to it? Or draw further away?

Develop curiosity about it

See if you can find some authentic curiosity about what ever is activating you. This isn't to get rid of it but to hold the stance that you're curious to see how this thing in front of you is shaped, how it sounds, feels, and even tastes! Curiosity is about letting what's there unfold instead of trying to keep it tightly contained.

If you were to let this activation know you are interested in it, what happens to it? Can it tell you more about it?

Managing Triggers

CHECKLIST

Cognitively

- How would you name this?
- What label would you give it?
- What words would you use to describe it?

Emotionally

- Can you name the emotion you are feeling?
- Even though it might feel like "all of me is feeling this!" what happens when you take the big feeling and separate it out: "A part of me is feeling _____?"
- Do you have a tiny bit more space now? With this little distance what compassion or kindness can you offer it?

Body

- Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your heart.
- Focus on the weight and warmth of your hands.
- Without judging...what happens inside?

Try one of these....

CALMING TRIGGERS CHECKLIST

- Instead of running away from "it" - what happens when you turn toward it?
- Try relaxing as you explore it.
- What happens if you open to it instead of being afraid of it?
- After externalizing it - what happens in your body?
- Become aware of the internal pressures to DO SOMETHING!
- Can you extend the exhalation of your breath? What happens?
- Practice not doing anything when you're reactive. Practice patience.
- Develop your ability to notice instead of reacting.
- Sit with any franticness. Slow down. What happens if you take a tiny sip of it?
- If it's too much, give yourself permission to do something different.
- Practice self-compassion with a hand on your heart. "I'm sorry this is so intense."
- Explore what you might need underneath the activation.
- What thoughts are driving you to DO something?
- Is there some internal feeling you want to get away from?
- Can you let that inner experience expand and fill your skin?
- Where is the upset? Inside your body? Around your body? What does it look like?
- Gently massage the edges of your skin. Invite your body to hold the upset.

Here's to resolving triggers



You inspire me to look for new, practical, readily accessible ways to Becoming Safely Embodied.

Your commitment to yourself gives me the courage to find ways for all of us to become more solid, more steady, more secure in our body, mind, and hearts.

Your heart brings goodness and radiates throughout the world.

Sending goodness, Deirdre

If you're interested in more resources to support yourself, I've created a variety of products and courses for that very purpose! Use this link to explore more:

www.dfay.com/products

To access my Safe Guide and get on my mailing list: www.dfay.com/safeguide