

Ways to Know We Are Being Triggered

There are many ways we can know if we are feeling triggered, or if someone else in the discussion is a result of feeling triggered. See the below typical responses to triggers:

- **Avoidance.** Avoiding future encounters and withdrawing emotionally from people or situations that trigger us.
- **Silence.** Not responding to the situation although it is upsetting, not saying or doing anything.
- **Misinterpreting.** Feeling on guard and expecting to be triggered, we misinterpret something said and are triggered by our misinterpretation, not the words.
- **Attacking.** Responding with the intent to lash back or hurt whoever has triggered us.
- **Laughing.** Being overcome by awkwardness or tension and bursting out in laughter, this can be misinterpreted.
- **Launching asides or side conversations.** Being unable to suppress commentary.
- **Internalizing.** Taking in the trigger, believing it to be true.
- **Being confused.** Feeling angry, hurt, or offended, but not sure why we feel that way or what to do about it.

It can be helpful to identify these responses to triggers for the students, and to identify these as normal responses. Some positive ways to respond to triggers are:

- **Naming.** Identifying what is upsetting us to the triggering person or organization.
- **Confronting.** Naming what is upsetting us to the triggering person or organization and demanding that the behavior or policy be changed.
- **Startling with surprise.** Responding to the trigger in an unexpected way, such as reacting with constructive humor that names the trigger and makes people laugh.
- **Using discretion.** Because of the dynamics of the situation (power imbalances, fear of physical retribution), deciding not to address the trigger at this time.

▪ **What are some other healthy responses to feeling triggered?**
