

# Understanding Borderline Personality Disorder Triggers

By

[Kristalyn Salters-Pedneault, PhD](#)

Medically reviewed by

[Daniel B. Block, MD](#)

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Verywell / Catherine Song

Most people with [borderline personality disorder](#) (BPD) have triggers, that is, particular events or situations that exacerbate or intensify their symptoms. BPD triggers can vary from person to person, but there are some types of triggers that are very common in BPD.

## Defining a Trigger

You may have heard the term "[trigger](#)" but are not sure what it means. Usually, a trigger refers to some event that brings on a major exacerbation of BPD symptoms. The event can be external (something that happens outside of yourself), or internal, (something that happens in your mind, like a thought or memory).

Triggers are events that make you feel as though your BPD symptoms are "off the charts." Immediately following a trigger, one or more of your BPD symptoms may intensify significantly.

## Relationship Triggers

The most common BPD triggers are related to interpersonal distress, especially relationships. People with BPD often experience intense fear, [anger](#), [impulsive behavior](#), [self-harm](#), and even [suicidality](#) when events in a relationship make them feel rejected, criticized, or abandoned (what's known as abandonment or [rejection sensitivity](#)).<sup>1</sup>

For example, you may feel triggered when you leave a message for a friend and do not receive a call back. Perhaps after placing the call, you wait a few hours but then begin to have thoughts such as, "She's not calling back, she must be mad at me."

These thoughts may spiral into thought patterns like, "She probably hates me," or "I'll never have a friend who sticks by my side." With these spiraling thoughts come spiraling symptoms, such as intense emotions, anger, and urges to self-harm.

If you are having suicidal thoughts, contact the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at **1-800-273-8255** for support and assistance from a trained counselor. If you or a loved one are in immediate danger, call 911.

For more mental health resources, see our [National Helpline Database](#).

## Cognitive Triggers

Sometimes, you might be triggered by internal events, such as thoughts that seem to come out of the blue. This is particularly true for people who have BPD related to traumatic events like [child abuse](#).

For example, a memory or image of a past experience (like a traumatic event or a loss) can trigger intense emotions and other BPD symptoms. However, a memory does not need to be distressing to trigger symptoms. Some people are triggered by memories of happier times, which may remind them that things are not as good in the present.<sup>2</sup>

## How to Manage BPD Triggers

Triggers are highly individual. The first step in managing your triggers is to know the events, situations, thoughts, or memories that trigger BPD symptoms such as anger or impulsiveness. There are exercises you can use to [figure out what your triggers are](#).

Once you've identified your triggers, you can figure out how to cope with them. You can start by determining whether a particular trigger can be avoided. For example, if you know that watching a specific movie is triggering, you can choose to not watch that movie.

Many triggers, however, can't be avoided so easily. If you find that some triggers cannot be avoided, you can learn to [cope](#) with them by developing an action plan, seeing a therapist, and working on approaching your triggers gradually.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/bpd-triggers-425475#:~:text=The%20first%20step%20in%20managing,how%20to%20cope%20with%20the m.>