

## INTENSITY EXERCISE WITH A PRACTICE PARTNER

*Practicing with the intensity of a triggering situation in order to respond with empathy and compassion*

This exercise is meant to be an emotionally safe and satisfying learning and practice experience. Go at whatever level or pace is right for you and your partner, and do only as much as you feel willing and desiring to do. As practice partners you are there to help and support each other. Please ask each other for what you'd like and be sensitive and responsive to anything that is not working or helpful to each other.

1. **Come up with a trigger.** Person A tells practice partner (Person B) a phrase, a line, or a behavior of a “trigger” for you. A trigger is something that triggers the Fight-Flight-Freeze (FFF) reaction and stress/survival response of fear/anger in the reptilian part of the brain (the amygdala).
  - A trigger could be something someone in your life says or does, or perhaps a self-judgment you say to yourself when you're feeling anger, fear, shame, guilt, depression, etc.
  - An example of a trigger statement could be, “You're always late.” An example of a trigger behavior could be rolling of the eyes.
  - Need to do SCP? Person A, check to see if just by thinking of and telling your trigger, you are experiencing the FFF reaction already. If so, do the Self-Connection Practice (SCP -- breath, body, need) until you feel the reaction subside or diminish in intensity and a sense of peace and calm around the trigger sensations. [If the intensity doesn't subside, go to Step 4.]
2. **Person B delivers trigger, starting with low intensity and gradually raising it.** Person B, start at as low a level of intensity as possible (e.g. volume of voice, softness of tone, facial expression, etc.). Repeat and continue, gradually raising the intensity until Person A says stop. Ask Person B to stop the first moment you notice any FFF reaction, even a subtle flicker of it.
3. **Person A does SCP** until they feel the FFF reaction subside or diminish in intensity and there is a sense of peace and calm around the trigger sensations. *Person B may need to do SCP as well if triggered by delivering the trigger!*
4. **Person A then asks themselves “Can I hear a “please?”** What this means is can you shift your listening perspective to hear behind the message an expression of OFNR, hearing the person saying they have unmet needs and are asking for them to be met, rather than hearing blame, judgment, etc.?
5. **Person A then does out loud Self-Empathy** — OFNR language to empathize first with yourself, and then imagining/guessing for the other. Do this out loud so Person B can help or give input, if you'd like.
6. **Repeat** from the beginning if you'd like to experience deeper change and practice.
7. **Debrief and switch.** How was this exercise for each of you? Any positive feedback? Now Person B, it's your turn to start with step 1 if you want.

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