

Trigger

This is going to be a pretty short chapter, because the trigger is honestly the easiest part of this whole system to understand.

The trigger is simply what happened that opened the wound.

The wound is the deeper thing underneath. The trigger is the situation that touches it and wakes it up.

- Financial pressure can be the trigger. Feeling like a failure can be the wound.
- You being completely wrapped up with the kids can be the trigger. Feeling unimportant or rejected can be the wound.
- Scratching the rim of the car can be the trigger. Shame can be the wound.

So do not make this more complicated than it needs to be.



*The trigger is what happened.
The wound is what it hit.*

trigger

activated wound

the cover up
what you see

patch

wound

always there, deep inside



The Trigger Can Come From You or From Somewhere Else

This is probably the most important thing to understand about triggers, because otherwise you can waste hours asking yourself, “What the hell did I do?”

Sometimes the trigger does come from you.

Maybe you criticized him. Maybe you rejected him. Maybe you were distracted and barely gave him attention. Maybe you forgot something that mattered to him. You may not have meant anything bad by it at all. It simply hit one of his wounds.

And sometimes the trigger has absolutely nothing to do with you.

His boss embarrassed him. Work is a disaster. Money is tight. A deal falls apart. His family says something. A friend makes him feel stupid. Something happens that he thought he had under control, and suddenly he realizes he does not.



*Different sources.
The same reaction inside.*

The wound can get opened somewhere completely outside your relationship, and then you are the person standing there when all the smoke starts coming out.

Sometimes the answer to “What did I do?” is: absolutely nothing.

The Trigger Is Not the Same Thing as Fault

I really want to separate these two things, because they are easy to mix up.

If you triggered a wound, that does not automatically mean you did something wrong. You are allowed to be busy. You are allowed to disagree. You are allowed to say no. You are allowed to correct something that is factually wrong. You are allowed to have a life.



A trigger tells you what touched the wound. It does not tell you who is to blame.

TRIGGER

tells you what touched the wound

- A situation
- A comment
- A look
- A tone
- A boundary
- A real or imagined threat

DIFFERENT THINGS



FAULT

is about who did something wrong

- Requires intention
- Requires responsibility
- Is a separate question
- Needs more context
- Is not automatically present

Triggers Are Very Personal

The exact same situation can mean absolutely nothing to one person and hit another person like a truck. That is because the trigger only matters because of the wound underneath it.

Someone who is very sensitive about failure may react strongly to losing money or making a mistake. Someone who is sensitive to rejection may react when you are distracted or want space. Someone carrying a lot of shame may react strongly to being corrected or embarrassed.

This is why you do not need a giant list of every possible trigger. Once you understand his wounds, his triggers usually become pretty obvious.

You start thinking, "Oh. THAT is the kind of thing that hits him."

The same situation...



...can feel completely different to each person.



Failure Wound

"I cannot believe I messed that up. I am such a failure."



Rejection Wound

"She must be annoyed with me. Maybe she wants space."



Shame Wound

"I feel so stupid. Now she thinks there is something wrong with me."



Sometimes the Trigger Is Just the Match

Also, do not assume there always has to be one giant dramatic event. Sometimes things have been building for hours or even days.

Work has been a mess. He has barely slept. He already feels ignored. Something went wrong with money. He is frustrated. Then you say one completely normal sentence and suddenly everything explodes.

That little sentence may technically be the trigger, but it did not create everything you are seeing. It was just the match that landed on something that was already dry as hell.

That matters, because otherwise you can start obsessing over one tiny thing you said and think, “If I had only said that differently, none of this would have happened.” Maybe. But maybe the house was already full of smoke.



*Sometimes the trigger is just the match.
The fire was already there.*

If the Trigger Comes From You

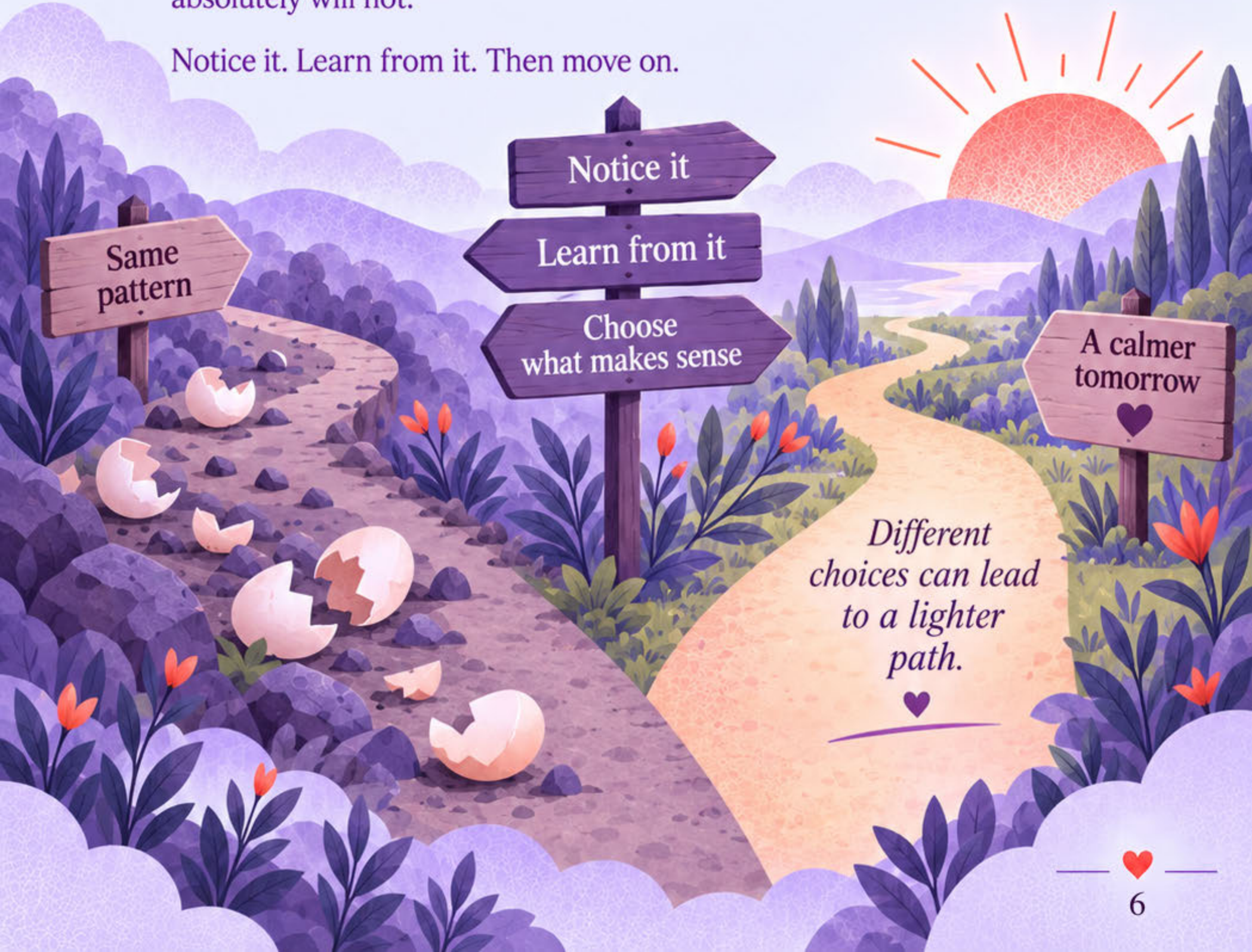
If you notice that you are repeatedly doing something that hits the same wound, then yes, learn from it. I am not going to tell you to keep stepping on the exact same land mine just to prove that you are allowed to.

That does NOT mean spending your life walking on eggshells, terrified of upsetting him. That is not what I am saying.

But if there is some tiny thing you can easily do differently and it saves both of you a ridiculous amount of stress, why would you not?

Once you know something is a trigger, you get to decide whether avoiding it next time makes sense. Sometimes it will. Sometimes it absolutely will not.

Notice it. Learn from it. Then move on.



If the Trigger Comes From Somewhere Else

This is where you have much less control, and honestly, there is no point pretending otherwise.

If his boss embarrassed him, you cannot go back in time and un-say what his boss said. If a deal died, you cannot magically bring it back. If he lost money, got rejected, felt ignored, or had a disaster with his family, that trigger already happened.

At that point, obsessing over the trigger is mostly a waste of your energy. You just need to recognize that something opened the wound and deal with what is happening now as well as you can.



Do Not Get Stuck on the Trigger

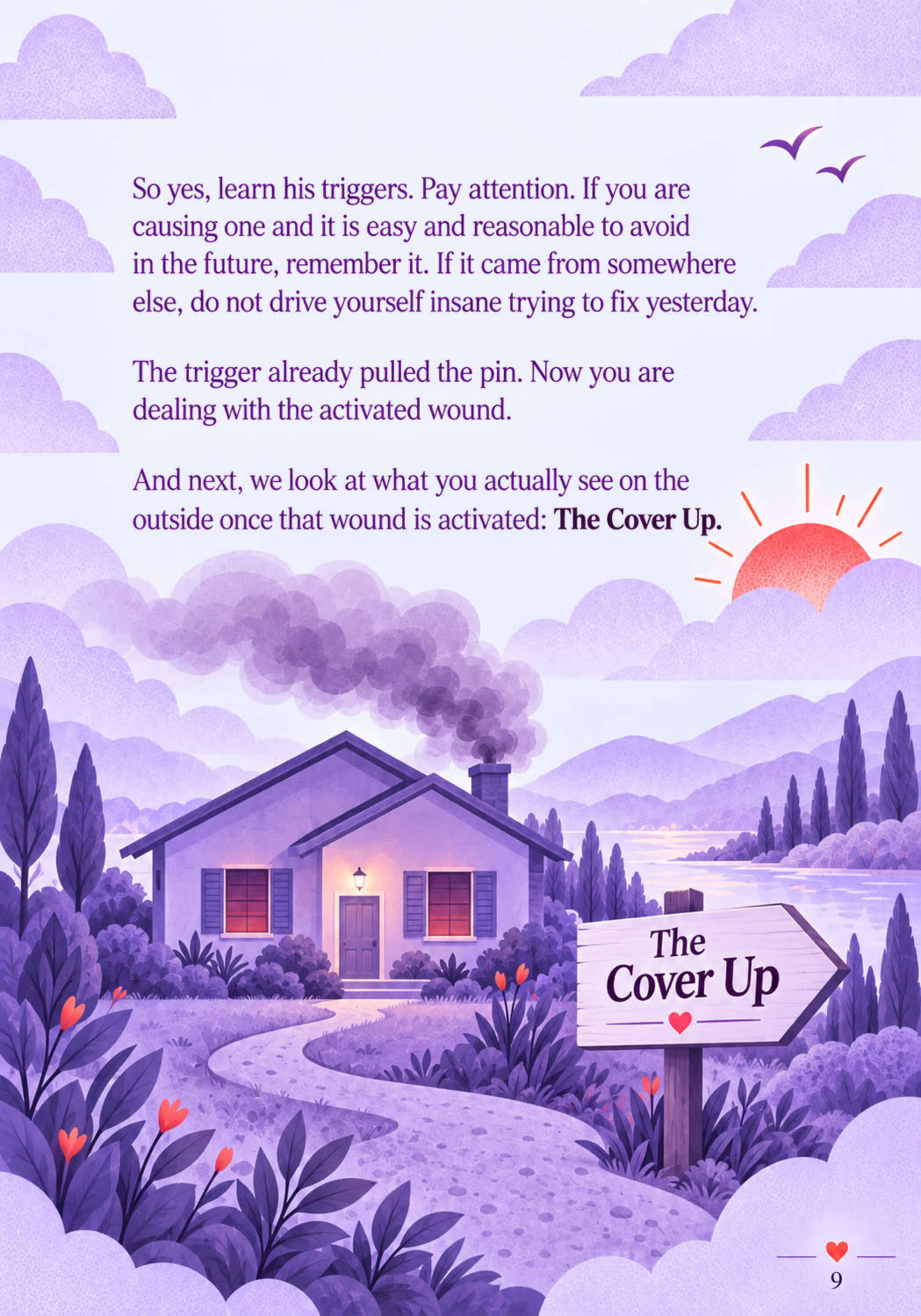
This is exactly why I do not want you spending too much time on this chapter. The trigger explains why the wound opened. That is useful. But once the wound is open, staring at the trigger for another two hours does not close it.

The more important questions become:

- What wound did this hit?
- What is happening now?
- And what do I do next?

That is where the real work starts.



The background of the page is a soft, painterly illustration. In the foreground, a winding path leads towards a small, light-colored house with a dark roof and a chimney. The house has two windows with dark shutters and a small porch light. A signpost with a wooden sign points towards the house; the sign reads 'The Cover Up' with a small red heart below it. To the right, a large, bright orange sun is setting behind a range of purple mountains. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and two birds are flying in the upper right. The overall color palette is warm and inviting, with a focus on oranges, yellows, and soft blues.

So yes, learn his triggers. Pay attention. If you are causing one and it is easy and reasonable to avoid in the future, remember it. If it came from somewhere else, do not drive yourself insane trying to fix yesterday.

The trigger already pulled the pin. Now you are dealing with the activated wound.

And next, we look at what you actually see on the outside once that wound is activated: **The Cover Up.**