

## Triggers and How They Impact Us

Our thoughts and behaviors are influenced each day by things that set us into action, or “trigger” our behavior. Most triggers fall into three categories: sensory, emotional and situational. Here are a few examples of each:

### Sensory Triggers

- Sight—movies, magazines, internet
- Smell—cologne/perfume, certain foods
- Sound—a song on the radio, crying, laughter
- Touch—a hug, a soft chair or pillow

### Emotional Triggers

- Bored
- Lonely
- Angry
- Hungry
- Stressed
- Tired

### Situational Triggers

- Holidays, birthdays, anniversaries
- Vacations
- Financial struggles
- Family struggles

Helping individuals of all ages identify their triggers is the first step in helping them deal with, and ultimately overcome, their addiction. Many triggers can be obvious, such as craving a snack after watching a food commercial, or thinking about high school when you hear an old song. Triggers, though, can also be much more subtle, and can involve emotions, senses, major events, holidays and seasons. For example, the smell of a hay barn might remind you of your

grandparents’ ranch, or other childhood memories.

Most addictive cycles, however, involve one or more triggers. Individuals dealing with an addictive cycle, such as a pornography addiction, substance abuse, eating disorders, trauma or abuse can all benefit from the following three-step process.

### Step One – Identify Personal Triggers

Make a list of your personal triggers. Just the simple act of writing them can give us power over them. Also, by listing our triggers, we’ll gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and we will be more effective in gaining power over our addictions.

Recently, a mom completed this exercise with her daughter. The mom was shocked to learn that going to the mall was a significant sexual trigger for her daughter. She had assumed that sending her daughter to a public place like the mall was fine. After completing this exercise, both mother and daughter are better equipped to deal with this trigger and now they communicate openly about avoiding the mall and doing other things during free time.

### Step Two – Make A Plan

Now that we’ve identified our triggers, the next step is to make a plan for dealing with destructive thoughts and behaviors. Write down strategies that will help in avoiding difficult situations and moments of weakness, and identify replacement activities that will strengthen and draw us closer to God. Exercise, scripture reading and spending quality time with

### In This Edition:

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- Making a Plan
- Seeking Spiritual Support

### Who is West Ridge Academy?

- Gospel Centered
- Spiritual Based
- Youth Residential Treatment
- Helped over 25,000 youth and their families
- Established in 1964



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family members are all effective replacement activities that enable us to avoid acting out and submitting to our negative thoughts and behaviors.

When working with youth, one tool that has been successful is teaching the concept of **BLAHST**. This is an acronym for the most common emotional triggers that influence our youth.



When asked why they acted out, most youth say, "I don't know... I was just bored" or "I was tired". Helping them to understand and recognize their most common triggers, and then making a plan for dealing with them can be beneficial to developing faith and overcoming addictive cycles.

### Step Three – Seek Spiritual Support

The next step is to seek spiritual support. This comes through personal righteousness and frequent reporting to priesthood leaders.

From its beginning Alcoholics Anonymous has understood the need for spiritual support in our lives. Below are a few of the original Twelve Steps published by AA.

1. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
2. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.
3. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
4. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
5. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
6. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Addictive cycles can be difficult to break. However, with the adequate tools (e.g. BLAHST), a well-documented plan and spiritual support, they can be overcome.