

## Triggers and feeling tones group outline

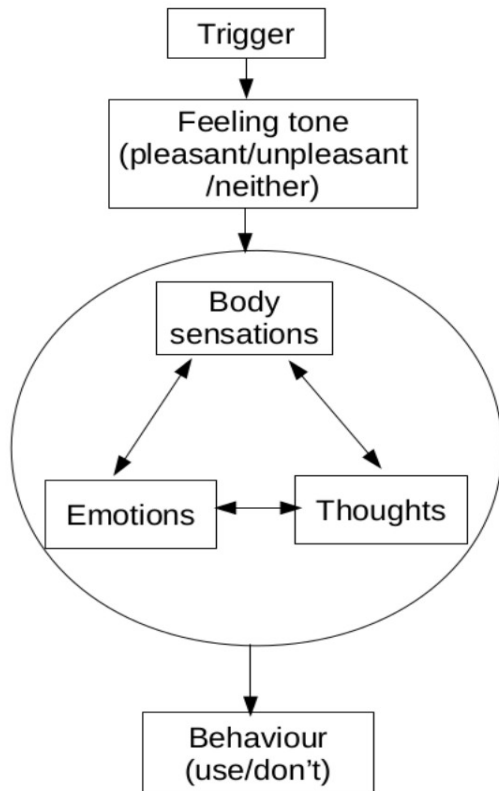
Introduction	Boundaries and safety chat.	5 mins
	SOBER Breathing space	
	What is/isn't mindfulness? Why do it for addiction?	
Suggested Practice	Body scan	15 mins
Inquiry	Inquire about today's practice; then include last week's practice too	10 mins
<i>Halfway point – gauge energy in room and move/ground as required</i>		
Exercise	<p>Put the 'Trigger' and 'Behaviour' sheets on the ground and walk through how it can feel as though a trigger (elicit examples) leads straight to a behaviour (again elicit). Can use own example to start with.</p> <p>Explain that with mindfulness we can learn to make space between the trigger and behaviour – ask group what internal processes they are aware of, and put the extra sheets down as they say, to match the layout in the handout – so if they say 'feeling angry', put down the 'Emotions' one. Put down others they haven't said and emphasise the simplicity of "feeling tone": pleasant/unpleasant/neither.</p> <p>Elicit a few example scenarios and walk through the sheets of paper eliciting and clarifying (if they are struggling start with your own example). Explain that feeling tone is simply pleasant/ unpleasant/ neither, and in this theory it comes first (is that true for them?).</p> <p>Highlight :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- don't worry too much about being right when naming the feeling tone – just doing it helps buy you some space.</li> <li>- the more we can be aware, the less we risk being carried away on a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions, and can make wiser choices.</li> <li>- so whenever they notice they have been triggered, they can ask themselves, "is it pleasant/unpleasant/neither?" and then explore in the body just like in the body scan.</li> </ul> <p>Give handouts and invite to fill in worksheet on back with their personal process. Discuss what they noticed.</p>	20 mins
Closing	Set intention for practice over coming days/week – perhaps to notice pleasant/unpleasant/neither and explore the body.	10 mins
	Go round and say one thing learned/struggled with today	
	Breathing space and thank you	



## Triggers and feeling tones handout

It's easy to think that something happens (a trigger) – and causes us to do something (a behaviour) – so you might have an argument with someone, and go and use your substance. With mindfulness we can start to slow down and see that there is more going on than this, and that (luckily!) we have more control than we think.

Here is one way of seeing what goes on internally when we are triggered – see if it rings true for you:



- First, there is a triggering event – often a person, place, thing, thought or feeling – like seeing people drinking in a pub garden, or an argument, or having nothing to do.

- It is either pleasant, unpleasant, or neither.

- This leads to an experience that can be broken down into:

- body sensations (e.g. tension/butterflies/agitation),
- emotions (e.g. anxiety/depression/sadness),
- thoughts (e.g. “it’s not fair”/”why can’t I have some?”/”I’ll show them!”/images of drinking and laughing with friends)

These three aspects of experience can seem to whirl into one big mess in the heat of the moment.

- This can lead to indulging an addictive behaviour.

So to stop this process from leading to substance use, we can:

1. name the feeling tone when it arises, labelling our experience as “pleasant”, “unpleasant” or “neither”, and then
2. get curious about how it feels in the body, learning how the body feels when triggered.

As we practise bringing our attention back to specific things when we feel ok, we strengthen the ability to do this when we’ve been triggered. What might have once seemed impossible – to be triggered, take a breath, sense into the body and let the sensations work themselves out, maybe even finding a place of calm there – can start to become a way of life. The more we do this, the wiser the decisions we start making.

**“Between stimulus and response there is a space.  
In that space is our power to choose our response.  
In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”**

*Viktor Frankl*

