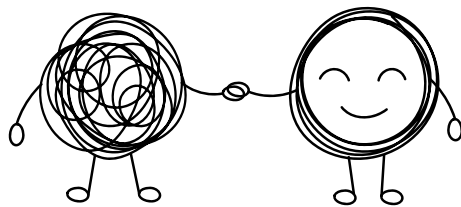


Trigger Diary



THE **NEURO**VERSE
Neurodivergent Parenting Network

Parent Trigger Diary

Understanding Your Nervous System While Supporting Your Child

Purpose:

This diary helps parents notice their own nervous system responses during challenging moments — not to assign blame, but to build awareness, choice, and regulation.

A regulated parent is the most powerful co-regulation tool a child has.

How to Use This Diary:

1. You do not need to complete every section every time.
2. Even one or two lines after an incident is enough.
3. This is about patterns over time, not perfection.
4. There are no “bad” responses — only nervous systems doing their best.

Section 1: The Moment That Activated Me

Date / Time: _____

Child's age: _____

Setting: (home, school pickup, shop, bedtime, car, public place)

What was happening with my child?

- Defiance / refusal
- Obstructive behaviour (blocking, delaying, opposing)
- High energy / hyperactivity
- Meltdown
- Shutdown / withdrawal
- Sensory overload
- Transition difficulty
- Other: _____

Brief description (facts only):

What did I see and hear, without interpretation?

Section 2: What Happened in My Body First?

Before thoughts or words, the body reacts.

Early physical signals I noticed:

- Tight chest
- Jaw clenching
- Raised voice
- Heat / Flushing
- Shallow breathing
- Heart racing
- Tension in shoulders
- Freeze / blank feeling
- Urge to escape
- Urge to control
- Other: _____

Section 3: My Nervous System State

Which state best describes me in that moment?

Ventral Vagal (Regulated / Connected)

I felt present and flexible

I could think and respond

I stayed curious about my child

- Briefly
- Mostly
- Returned to this later

Sympathetic (Fight / Flight)

I felt:

- Irritated
- Angry
- Anxious
- Urgent
- Overstimulated

My body wanted to:

- Yell
- Argue
- Fix immediately
- Leave
- Take control

Dorsal Vagal (Shutdown / Collapse)

I felt:

- Numb
- Hopeless
- Exhausted
- Detached

My body wanted to:

- Withdraw
- Give up
- Go quiet
- "Disappear"

Note: None of these states are failures. They are survival responses.

Section 4: What Was My Child's Nervous System Likely Doing?

(Guessing is okay — accuracy improves over time.)

- Seeking safety
- Seeking control
- Seeking sensory input
- Avoiding overload
- Stuck in fight/flight
- Collapsing / shutting down
- Unable to access language
- Transition stress

Important reminder: Behaviour is a signal, not a character flaw.

Section 5: My Automatic Thoughts

When I was triggered, the story in my head was:

- "They're doing this on purpose."
- "They should know better."
- "I can't cope with this again."
- "Nothing I do works."
- "Other parents don't struggle like this."
- "I need this to stop now."
- Other: _____

Section 6: What Did I Do Next?

- Raised my voice
- Gave consequences
- Threatened removal of privilege
- Walked away
- Froze
- Tried to reason
- Offered comfort
- Used humour
- Used physical grounding (hug, pressure, presence)
- Other: _____

Section 7: What Helped — Even a Little?

- Pausing before responding
- Lowering my voice
- Sitting down
- Slowing my movements
- Naming feelings (theirs or mine)
- Reducing demands
- Changing the environment
- Time passing
- Another adult stepping in

Section 8: Reflection (After the Moment Has Passed)

What was my trigger really about?

- Feeling disrespected
- Loss of control
- Fear (for their future, safety, judgment)
- Sensory overload (noise, chaos, movement)
- Fatigue / hunger / stress
- Past experiences being activated

What did this moment ask of me — not demand from my child?

Regulation? Slowing down? Support? Boundaries? Rest?

Section 9: Reframing with Compassion

Finish one sentence:

“When my child behaved this way, my nervous system responded by _____ because _____.”

“Next time, one small thing I could try for myself first is _____.”

Section 10: Patterns Over Time (Weekly Check-In)

At the end of the week:

My most common trigger situations were:

My most common nervous system state was:

- Sympathetic
- Dorsal
- Ventral
- Mixed

One thing I learned about myself:

Final Reminder for Parents: You are not failing — your nervous system is communicating.

Children borrow regulation from adults; they don't learn it from lectures.

Repair matters more than perfection.

Awareness creates choice — and choice creates safety.

A calmer parent does not mean a perfect parent.

It means a parent who understands what is happening inside themselves — and works with it, not against it.

