

21 Identifying triggers for dissociation

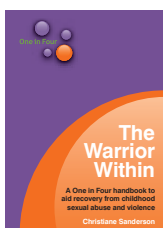


If you are working through *The Warrior Within*, this exercise and further useful information to help you in your recovery can be found on pages 77-78. This exercise assumes you have completed exercise sheet 1 **Starting an activity journal**.

Dissociation is an adaptive part of your emotional immune system to protect you from traumatic experiences. When traumatic experiences, or memories of them, threaten to overpower you, dissociating or 'tuning out' is a way to avoid being overwhelmed. To aid survival, dissociation also anaesthetises the intensity of both physical and emotional pain. While not all survivors of CSA dissociate, many do and yet are not always aware that they do. To check whether you dissociate and how it impacts on you, write the answers to the following questions in your journal:

- Do you find yourself detaching?
- How frequently and when does this happen?
- Does dissociating concern you or cause you problems?
- Are you extra sensitive to certain topics or abuse related cues?
- What particularly upsets you?
- What are the triggers?

You might also consider keeping a diary of dissociation to record the frequency, triggers and duration. To help manage dissociation, see **Grounding strategies** on page 78 of *The Warrior Within*.



The content of this exercise sheet is based on *The Warrior Within: A One in Four handbook to aid recovery from childhood sexual abuse and violence* by Christiane Sanderson

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