

December 2020 Issue: Week One

Monthly Breakdown

Week 1

The 'Where': Lead-o-meter

Week 2

The 'What' and the 'Why'

Week 3

The 'How': Building up your skill

Find Your GLIMMERS

Complete this month's lead-o-meter.

December is officially here, and the holidays are just around the corner. So, why not find our glimmers? *Well, what are glimmers?*

Essentially, glimmers are the opposite of triggers. Last month in ReCharge, we introduced the **Polyvagal Theory** which identifies the three stages of our nervous system, and reviewed the importance of identifying our triggers - events, situations or thoughts that cause stress. We also explored how these triggers may push you out of your "window of tolerance" - your safe or resting zone - into either a fight or flight, or possibly a freeze zone.

Need a refresher? Revisit these graphics from last month's ReCharge:
[Window of Tolerance](#)
[Polyvagal Theory](#)

So, if triggers send you out of your safe zone, then what helps keep you or return you to your safe zone? The answer is **glimmers**.

Deb Dana, a leader in this area, uses the term "glimmers" to describe experiences

that make you feel safe and connected, in her book *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*.

Glimmers are what give you peace and safety and help you regulate your nervous system. When we experience glimmers, we often feel a sense of being at 'home' or comfortable with ourselves and the world. Glimmers regulate our bodies, by bringing us back to the safe state where we feel safe, connected, calm and grounded. Words, music, art or connection with another living being can take us to this state.

A glimmer may also take the form of specific emotion-regulation practices, such as breathing. It may include being surrounded by nature or - more tangibly - sitting on your steps looking at your backyard.

TRIGGERS

"People, places, things or situations that create a sense of danger. These trigger nervous system defenses, responses such as fight or flight, immobilization and collapse."

GLIMMERS

"Experiences, interactions, or resources that help us feel safe and create the possibility of connection with ourselves, others, or the environment."

Glimmers activate our **ventral vagal**, the safe zone of our Parasympathetic Nervous System. *Think about what people, places, feelings, smells, and sensations make you feel safe and connected.* The brain-body communication of safety creates the possibility of relaxing into moments of connection. When we can connect to ourselves, others, and the environment, we are available and open to experiences, interactions, or resources that calm us and help us feel secure.²

Glimmers can be spontaneous but purposeful. They may happen when we are alone or when we are with others. A glimmer can be very brief, such as receiving a smile and a wave from a friendly neighbour. Recognizing these brief moments allows us to understand what personally calms and relaxes us.

When you identified your triggers last month, it may not have seemed like a very significant step. However, Deb Dana says this is a clear way to begin moving ourselves out of the *“what has happened to me”* story, and into a curiosity about *“how I respond”*. The Stress Journal we provided was to help bring attention not just to your triggers, but also your emotions, how your body responds, your physical reactions and your behaviours.³

Glimmers, on the other hand, are often a little more challenging to identify because of the subtle and unconscious nervous system responses felt during a glimmer moment. The cues of safety that allow us to perceive glimmers are often sensed in



‘micro-moments’ when the ventral vagal is activated. Conscious attention is needed to catch these moments. When we do notice these moments, we can experience feeling peaceful, having a general feeling of regulation, and a sense that *“I’m handling things well!”*⁴

Similar to the triggers, we want to bring our attention to how our body responds and take note of the physical reactions and behaviours that occur when we experience a glimmer. By bringing attention to these small moments, we can look for or create multiple micro-moments that will aid our self-regulation. It’s very important to be concrete in identifying these moments or situations.

NOTE: focusing our attention on our glimmers does not ignore, negate or block the suffering that we experience from our triggers.

Glimmers exist to help us regulate from these events and ideally return to a zone of safety. They are there to remind us that well-being is not simply the absence of problems, but the presence of strengths and the ability to return to a healthy state.

Endnotes

- ¹ Debbie Spangler, i-asc.org/when-life-throws-at-you-cover-it-in-glimmer/
^{2,3,4} *The Nervous System, Triggers & Glimmers!* (andreaglik.com)

Resources:

- jeffdwarshuis.com/polyvagal-mapping-for-complex-posttraumatic-stress-disorder
- happyuhub.com/map-your-triggers-and-glimmers/

TRY THIS! RECHARGE GLIMMERS DIARY

[Download the fillable template](#)

Over the next week, try to recognize what your glimmers are – they are unique to you! What are the micro-moments, situations, smells, or people that make you feel safe, secure, and at peace?

Write down details about the situation, how the glimmer made you feel, and your emotional and physiological response to it.

Date and Time	Glimmer Description (event, surroundings, people)	Where did you feel the emotions in your body?	Behavioural Response
EXAMPLE: Friday, Dec 4, 7:00pm	Favourite Christmas song came on the radio	Calmness and release in my shoulders	More patience and connection with my spouse



What are your glimmers?

Please take 10 seconds to complete our monthly, self-awareness questionnaire. Follow the link or scan the QR code by opening your phone camera and pointing at the code.

Complete the December Lead-o-meter!

We'll share the anonymous results at the end of the month! Please note: this month of ReCharge will only have 3 posts due to the Winter Break starting on Dec 19.



How did you like this issue of ReCharge?

We welcome and appreciate your feedback and suggestions! [Fill out our feedback form](#) or contact [Rochelle Morandini](#).



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