Understanding your triggers

A short exercise to help you notice the situations, emotions and thoughts that can come before an urge to use pornography. There are no right or wrong answers — the aim is to become curious about your patterns, not to criticise yourself.

Start here
Think about a recent time you felt an urge to watch pornography. You don't need to describe anything in detail. Focus on what was happening around you and inside you.

1. What was happening?

Where were you, what time was it, and what had been happening that day?

Was there a particular situation, person, device or online activity that played a part?

2. What were you feeling?

Tick any feelings that fit, or add your own.

■ Stressed	■ Lonely	■ Bored
■ Anxious	■ Low / flat	■ Frustrated
■ Rejected	■ Restless	■ Tired
■ Numb	■ Excited	■ Other: _____

If you had to name the strongest feeling, what would it be?

From trigger to choice

The urge is part of the picture, but it isn't the whole picture. This page helps you map the thoughts and needs that may sit between a trigger and a behaviour.

3. What was going through your mind?

What were you saying to yourself? For example: “I need to switch off”, “I deserve a break”, or “I can't be bothered dealing with this.”

4. What were you hoping pornography would do for you in that moment?

For example, help you relax, escape, feel comforted, feel stimulated, or avoid a difficult thought or feeling.

What did you want or need?

5. What happened next?

What did you do after the urge appeared? What was the short-term effect?

How did you feel afterwards — emotionally or physically?

6. One small point of choice

Next time, I could try…
Choose one realistic action you could take before deciding what to do. You might pause for ten minutes, leave the room, message someone, go for a short walk, or name the feeling you're experiencing.

My small step:

Remember: An urge is information, not an instruction. You don't need to understand every pattern immediately. Noticing one part of the cycle is a useful start.