axe-con 2022

March 16
1:30 pm EST

Digital A11ies

My Trigger,
My Choice
___

UX for Trigger &
Content Warnings

Who are we?

Tori Clark, CPWA

Keli Sierra Bradley

Why are we here?

- We don't want people to trip and fall.

- Some people are more likely to fall than others.

- Exposure to triggering and/or disturbing content, regardless of intent, is an access issue.

Agenda

⚠️

Content Note

Discussion of topics that can cause triggers

No graphic images or descriptions
will be included at any point during the presentation

The Landscape

1

What are triggers?

Simple Definition

A stimulus that elicits a reaction

Source: American Psychological Association Dictionary

In-depth Definition

A system where a minor event causes a major physical reaction, but the two events are generally unrelated in nature

Source: Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary

Characteristics of Triggers

Mind & Body

Can be emotional and/or physical

Systemic

May affect the whole body

Individual

Often differs from person to person

Variable

Ranges in intensity, frequency, and duration

Mental Health Triggers

4 Main Types
- External - Impersonal
- Internal - Personal
- Trauma - Reliving Event
- Symptom - Physical Effects

Conditions
- Dissociative disorders
- Cluster B personalities
- Depression & anxiety
- Trauma

[M]y heart pounds, my body shakes, and my reality feels stretched out between then and now while the now rapidly starts to disappear. […] I could feel the storm swelling within, and my insides turned into a tornado.

————————

JD Mays

"How Trauma Can Still Shatter Me," *The Mighty*

Neurodivergent Triggers

Sensory Overload

- Neurological traffic jam
- Causes can be lights, sounds, patterns, textures, climate, etc.

Conditions

- Autism & ADHD
- GAD & PTSD
- Fibromyalgia & MS

Everything is coming at me at once,
but it seems I'm the only one noticing.
I can hear my heartbeat, I can feel
the heat of the lamps, I can't function.
I'm frozen, stuck.

———————

Meredith Lime

"21 People Describe What
Sensory Overload Looks Like," *The Mighty*

Neurological Triggers

Brain & Nerves

- Internal causes include excitable brain cells & nerve damage
- External triggers similar to sensory overload

Conditions

- Epilepsy & seizures
- Migraines & neuralgia
- Autoimmune disorders
- Vestibular disorders

If you do not have severe migraines, then you will not know why I do my best to not meet up with any triggers. Migraines are events. They cause my whole body to shut down in different ways.

———————

Nicola Lee

"What 'Triggered' Actually Means When You Live With Chronic Illness," *The Mighty*

Note vs. Warning

Content Note

Flags about sensitive topics that a user may find difficult or disturbing to engage with.

Source: Justice Everywhere

Trigger Warning

Specific statements identifying common triggers like flashing lights or discussion of traumatic materials

Source: Justice Everywhere

Where We Stand

2

Trigger Warnings in Spaces

1 **The Time**

Presenters or event hosts provide verbal and written warnings during the activity

2 **The Place**

Warning signs before entering a place where people may encounter triggers

3 **The Space as a Whole**

Systems and processes in place to provide a high-level understanding of activities that may be triggering
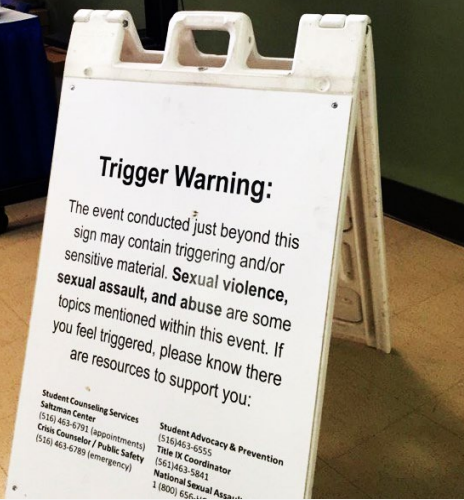
Trigger Warnings in Physical Spaces

Amusement Parks

Ride entrances

Escape Rooms

Signage in space

Conferences

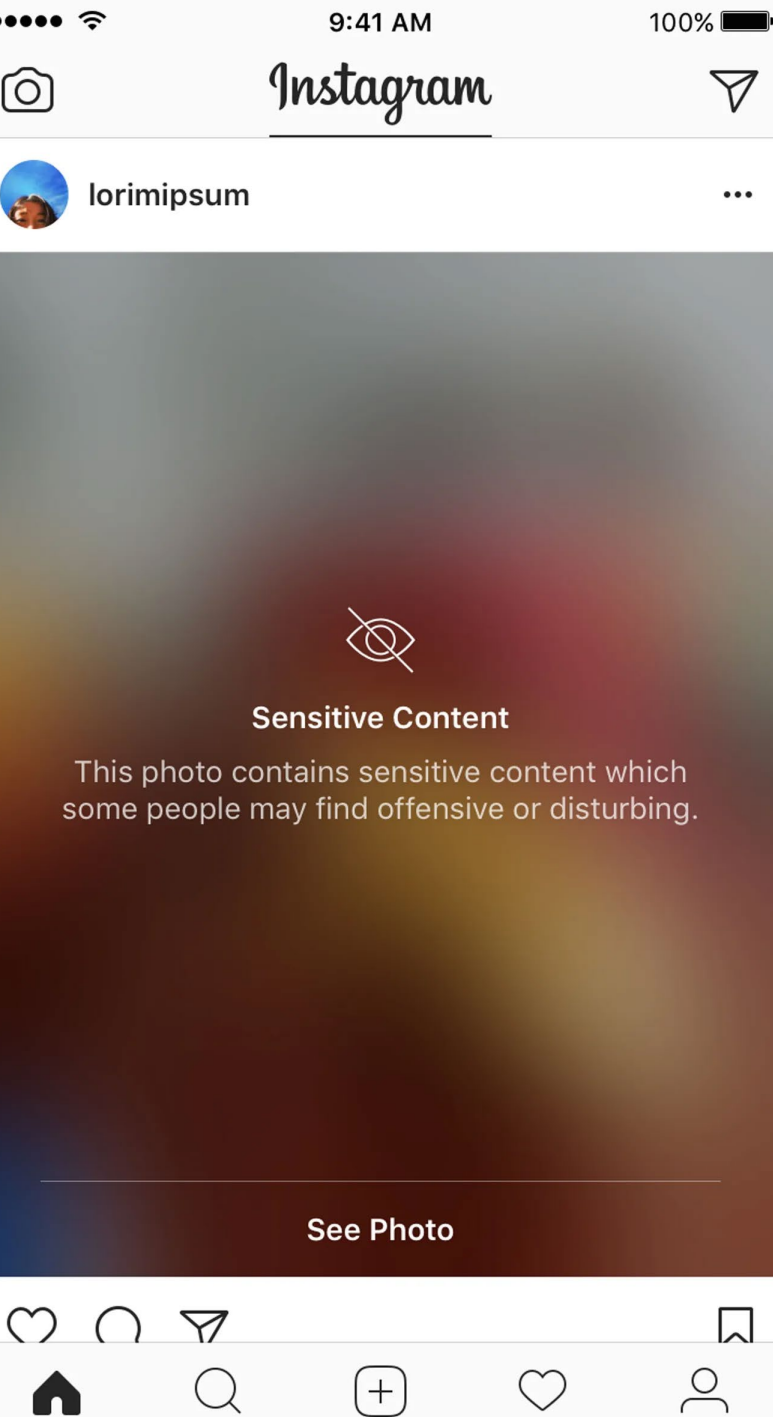A-frame signs outside meeting spaces

Paperwork

Liability waivers

Hybrid Spaces

- In higher ed, trigger warnings on syllabi and course materials have been controversial

- Many worry it reduces academic freedom, but just as many believe informed decisions are key to learning
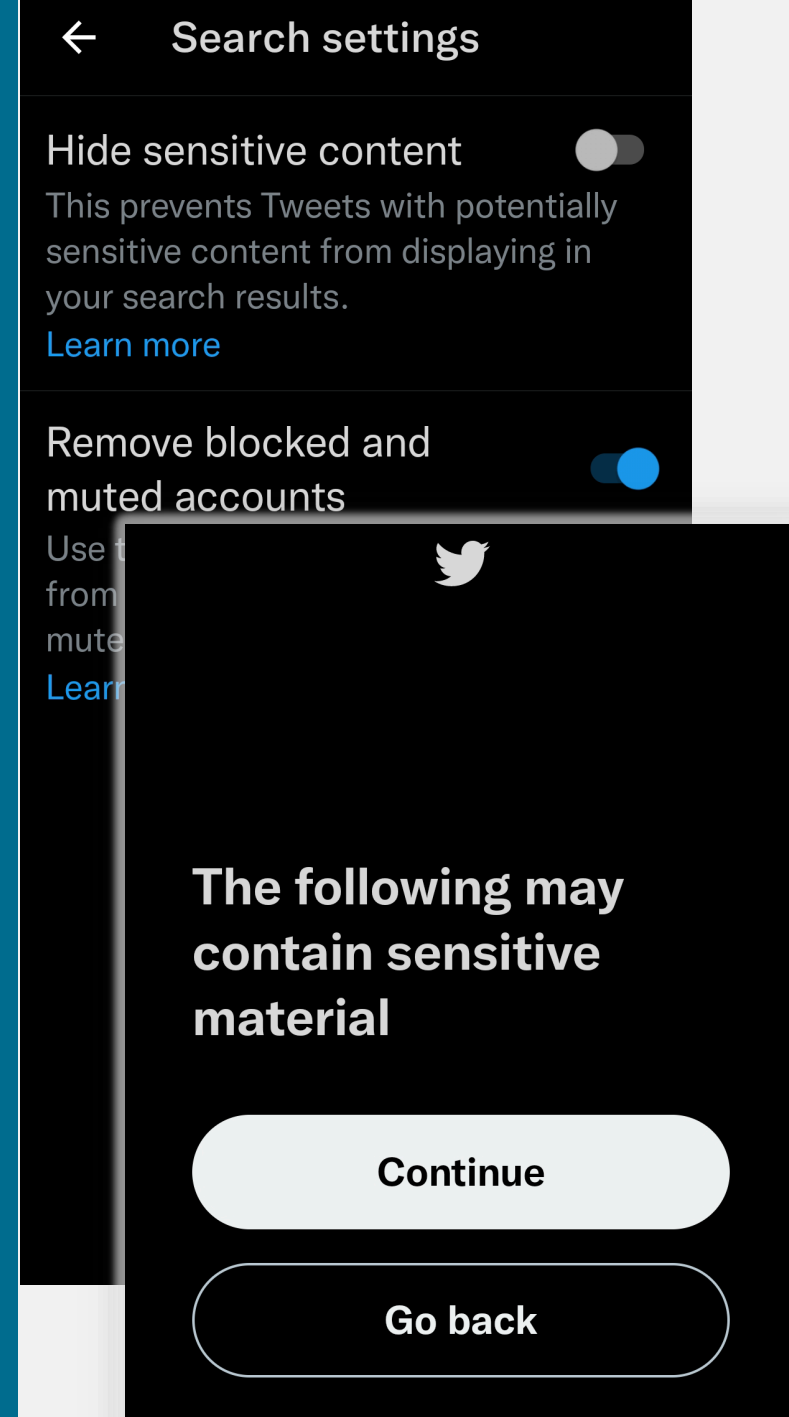
Source: NCAC Report

Trigger Warnings in Digital Spaces

- <u>Blurred overlay</u> on sensitive images & videos
- Settings media to hide sensitive content or even <u>mute words or phrases</u>
- Explicit alert dialog before accessing sensitive material

---

lorimipsum

Sensitive Content

This photo contains sensitive content which some people may find offensive or disturbing.

See Photo

← Search settings

Hide sensitive content

This prevents Tweets with potentially sensitive content from displaying in your search results.
Learn more

Remove blocked and muted accounts

Use t
from
mute
Lear

The following may contain sensitive material

Continue

Go back

The Obstacles

3

People weren't ready

- In-person services didn't translate easily from physical to virtual, including the "zones"

- Amid the crisis of the pandemic, large companies rushed and small companies fell behind

Technology wasn't ready

- Common video streaming tools don't have features like blurs for sensitive content

- The UX for virtual conferences was ill-defined – "Build the bridge when we get there"

More Reach = More Needs

- First opportunity for some people with sensitivities to attend these spaces

- New access needs had to be navigated in a new space

How We Change

4

Playbook

1 Reduce the severity of triggers, or avoid triggers altogether

2 Create (reasonable) barriers to prevent unintentional triggers

3 Warn early and often, as well as across multiple zones

4 Make sure all warnings are fully accessible or provide alternatives

5 Provide mechanisms to control or decrease sensory load
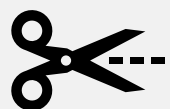
Reduce or Avoid Triggers

- Avoid triggering content if it isn't essential to the activity

- Reduce severity of content by removing certain graphic elements

Create Barriers to Triggers

- Remove auto-play or add a blur overlay on multimedia

- Add opt-out settings, alerts, or put triggering content within disclosures

**People's Image Descriptions**

· Jan 24, 2020 ·

Hi loves, quick check in to say: Images which depict violence towards and the pain of marginalized populations should be nested in a comment with a TW/ CW in the post asking for a description.
Let's help marginalized people, specifically people of color, to not have to be re-traumatized by these images. [OBJ]

Warn Early & Often

- Consider how you warn across the time, the place, and the space as a whole

- Provide features for people to pre-select or opt-out
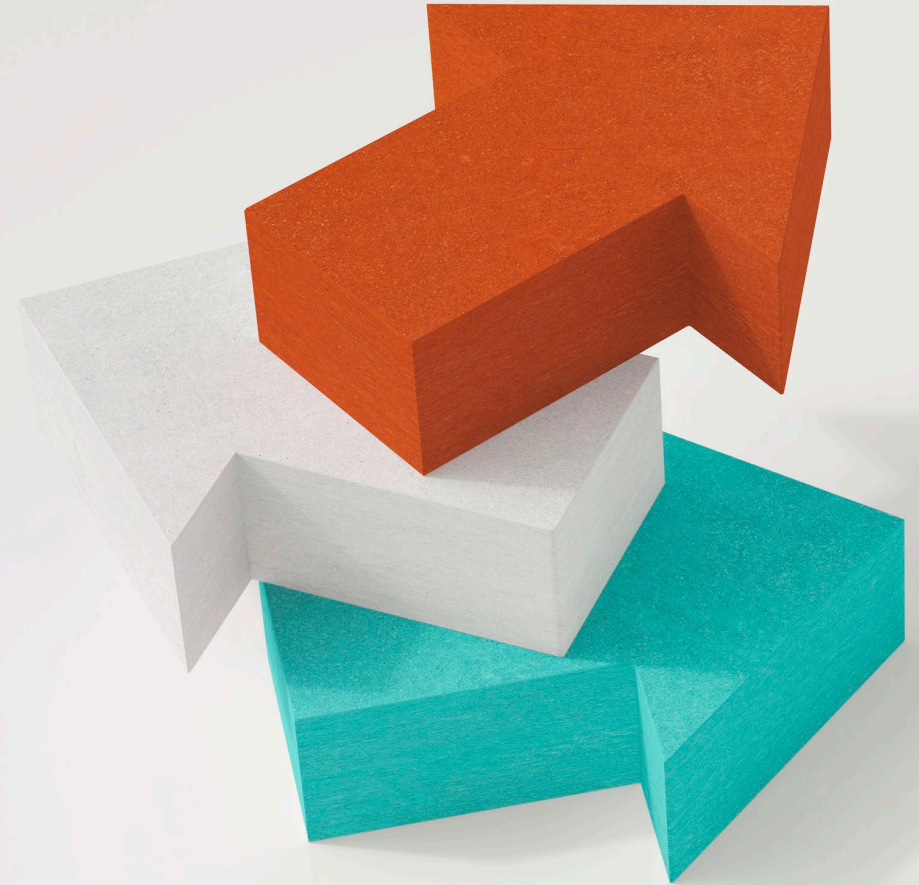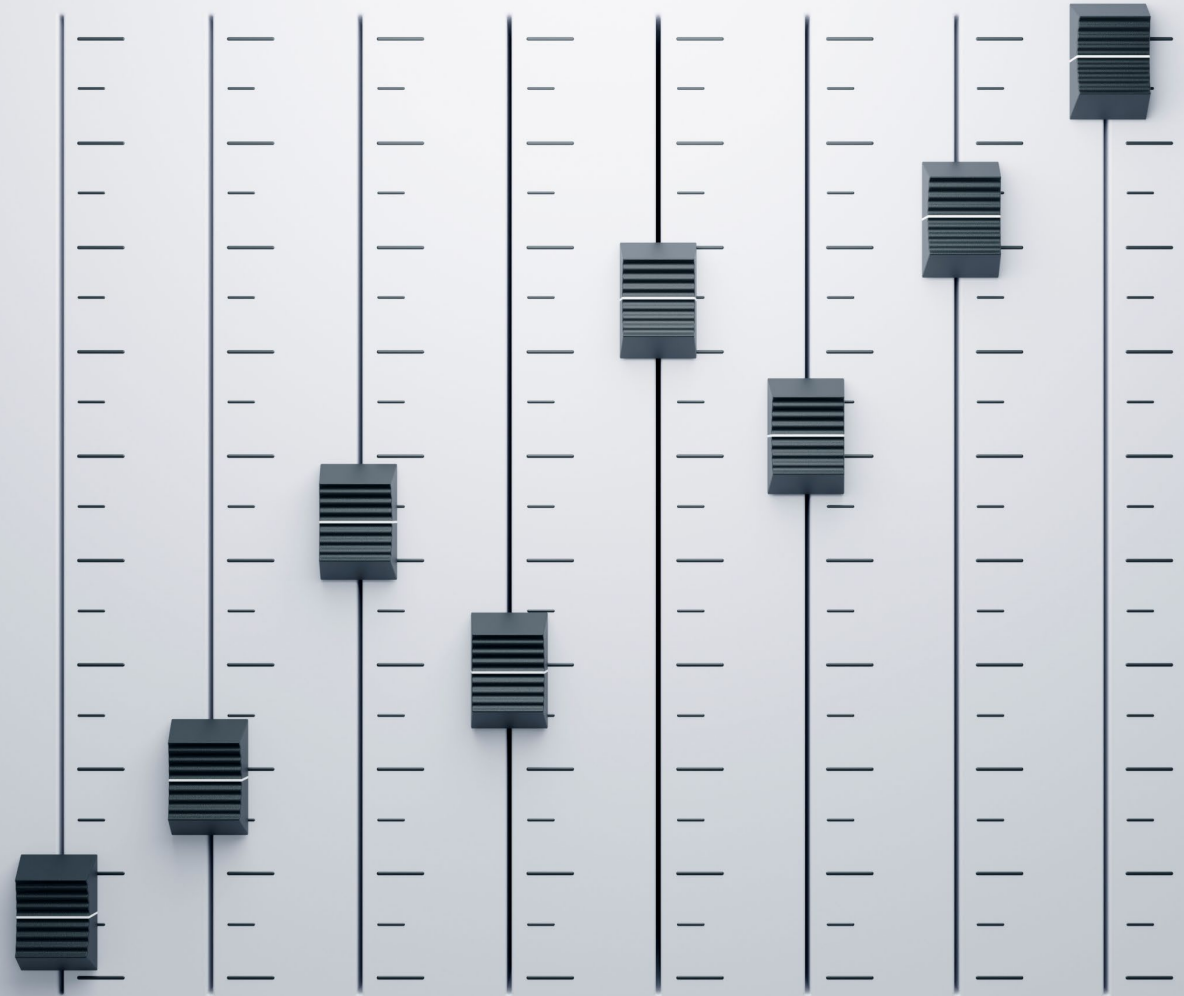
Ensure Access to Warnings

Trigger warnings need to be for everyone.

Account for how disabled users navigate and interact with the web.

Decrease Sensory Load

- Captions, captions, captions

- Control background and external sources of audio

- Provide breaks between activities and async options

Further Down the Road

5

The Playbook will need to change.

This is OK – accessibility is a moving target.

Laws and Policies

We can't rely on kindness.

Accessibility laws and standards exist for a reason.

Innovation in Tech

Features like blur overlays, opt-out settings, and other forms of filtering will be the rule – not the exception.

Thank you!

digitala11ies.org