



Triggered by the Market

This Isn't About Money It's About Manipulation

by

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Introduction

“The stock market is a device for transferring money from the impatient to the patient.”

-- Warren Buffett

I’m currently writing a larger book about startups specifically, why so much of the advice out there is either misleading, manipulative, or just designed to keep you hooked on the next big promise. Most of these books don’t actually want to help you win; they want to keep you hoping. Most are flawed and half-baked, but feel good!

The recent market turmoil in April 2025 really brought some of my core ideas into sharp focus especially how easily emotion overpowers logic in today’s world. That’s what this short piece is about: a quick look at how we’re all being triggered, and what that means for your decisions, your money, and your mindset. I hope it resonates and if you’re thinking about starting a business anytime soon, keep an eye out for my full book “7-Figure BULLSH*T”, coming December 2025.

Just to be clear I’m not a financial planner, and I’m definitely not here to give stock tips. I don’t know much about trading, and outside of a few index funds, I mostly just stick with the S&P 500 like a lot of people. This isn’t about investing advice. What this is about is how easily we’re all triggered especially when moneys involved. The stock market just happens to be a perfect example of how our emotions get hijacked, often without us even noticing.

Meet Thomas, He’s You!

We like to think we’re rational. That we make decisions based on logic, facts, and clear thinking. But most of what drives our behavior especially when it comes to money isn’t rational at all. It’s emotional. Subconscious. Habitual. In many cases, it’s the result of behavioral loops built into the systems we use every day. The truth is that emotion runs more of your life than you'd like to admit.

Take Thomas, for example. Thomas’s not a gambler or a get-rich-quick guy. He’s cautious, methodical, and has done everything by the book. He’s been saving and investing for years, steadily building his portfolio over time. A few months ago, he hit a personal milestone: \$200,000. That number gave him a quiet sense of pride. It meant progress, safety, and a future that was taking shape.

But then the market dipped. Slowly at first, then with more speed. Thomas didn’t make any big moves; he didn’t sell off or panic. But the value of his portfolio started to slip. \$198K.

\$192K. Then \$185K. Now it's sitting at \$180K, and even though nothing has fundamentally changed about his investments, it feels like he lost twenty grand. That number, \$200K, had become an anchor in his mind (see *Anchoring Effect*). Everything below it now feels like failure.

He starts checking his portfolio every day from his app. Then multiple times a day. Headlines start creeping in. Talk of a correction from news headlines. Warnings of recession by notable CEOs. Red arrows and urgent push notifications. He scrolls through it all, not to take action, but to soothe the uncertainty, to find some sense of control. But it doesn't help. He's caught in what we call the *fear loop*: a state of high alert, driven by the idea that he might lose even more...

Then, without warning, the market shifts again, a mid-day run, the market goes from heavy RED to +4% GREEN and suddenly his portfolio is climbing. \$185K. \$190K. Thomas starts feeling hopeful. He's still checking just as much, but now it's about anticipation. Maybe it'll hit \$220K. Maybe this is the big run he's been waiting for.

Same habit. Different emotion. That's the *aspiration-fantasy loop*.

Thomas hasn't changed but the environment around him: the headlines, the apps, the nudges has flipped his internal state from anxiety to desire. And like most people, he still believes he's in control. He isn't. He's reacting to a system that was built to manipulate him.

Designed To Keep You Hooked

I'm going to reference two books that changed the way I see behavior:

- *Nudge* by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein, and
- *Hooked* by Nir Eyal.

Nudge is about how small changes in how choices are presented can dramatically influence what people do often without them realizing it. It's the reason why 401(k) auto-enrollment works, why people eat more off bigger plates, and why default settings quietly guide billions of decisions every day. It's not about forcing you to do anything. It's about steering you toward an outcome through subtle design.

Hooked, on the other hand, explains how products especially digital ones are built to create habits. Nir Eyal describes what he calls the "Hooked Model," which follows a predictable loop: **Trigger** → **Action** → **Variable Reward** → **Investment**. Each time you engage with the product, it pulls you deeper into a cycle, forming a habit without you even noticing.

Now combine the ideas from both books: subtle behavioral nudges + habit-forming feedback loops. What do you get? Most of the digital experience today. Especially in finance.

Your portfolio app isn't neutral. It's designed to nudge you through color, layout, push notifications, and emotional triggers toward checking more, reacting more, and feeling more. When your account drops, you get red. When it rises, you get green. That's not for clarity it's for effect. Every visual cue is optimized to trigger something inside you: fear, hope, anxiety, hope, even greed.

The news media does it too. Every headline is a trigger. Every "market panic" or "boom ahead" story is designed to provoke an emotion strong enough that you'll click, watch, and come back for more. It's not information. It's bait.

And this is where most people get stuck. They're not just inside a loop they're inside a system built from loops. Nudges, triggers, and rewards surround them, guiding their behavior without ever asking for permission. Like Thomas, they think they're making choices. But really, they're being played by a machine built to exploit very old instincts.

Loop 1 – The Fear-Avoidance-Loop

Let's talk about the first loop: **fear**.

Not the kind of fear that makes you scream or run for your life. This is quieter. More persistent. It whispers instead of shouts, and it guides more of your behavior than you probably realize.

In behavioral psychology, this is often tied to *loss aversion*. Humans are wired to avoid loss more intensely than we seek gain. In fact, studies show that losing \$100 feels about twice as painful as gaining \$100 feels good. It's a survival instinct millions of years old and it's still steering us today.

This is where the **Fear-Avoidance Loop** begins.

A drop in your portfolio **triggers** discomfort. That discomfort is emotional, not logical. You didn't actually *lose* anything (assuming you haven't sold), but it *feels* like you did. That feeling is the trigger.

The **action**? You seek safety. You start checking your accounts more frequently. You watch financial news. You read Reddit threads and scan for reassurance or red flags. You want certainty, but everything you consume just amplifies the fear.

Then comes the **variable reward** sometimes, the market rebounds, and you feel relief. Other times, it drops further, and your anxiety deepens. Either way, you're in the loop now, cycling through fear and reaction, driven not by strategy but by the need to avoid pain.

This loop is especially hard to break because it *feels* responsible. Fear wears a mask it looks like caution, diligence, awareness. But most of the time, it's just paralysis dressed up as prudence. The system loves that!

Apps feed it. Every downward tick flashes in red. Push alerts tell you about dips, crashes, volatility. News headlines pile on: "Dow Plummets," "Investor Panic," "Is This the Next 2008?" These aren't just updates they're designed nudges, engineered to trigger you and keep you coming back. That's the investment part of the "hooked cycle".

If you've ever frozen during a downturn, convinced it was the wrong time to sell *and* the wrong time to buy, you've felt this loop firsthand. It keeps you locked in place watching, worrying, waiting but never moving forward.

The irony? Most long-term success requires moving *through* the fear. But the loop convinces you to wait it out, hoping the feeling will fade. It doesn't. It just recycles.

Unless you notice it. Unless you name it.

Loop 2 – The Aspiration-Fantasy Loop

If fear traps you in place, aspiration pulls you forward but not always in the right direction.

After a market dip, when things start to recover, there's a shift. That anxious checking of your portfolio doesn't stop it just changes flavor. The tension fades and is replaced by something more seductive: the dream of a comeback. A breakout. A big win.

This is the **Aspiration-Fantasy Loop**.

It starts with a trigger maybe your account balance climbing, or a news story forecasting a bull market. Suddenly you're picturing a future version of yourself: richer, freer, vindicated for holding steady. The numbers on the screen aren't just numbers anymore they're proof that you're close to something big.

So you keep checking. You watch that \$180K portfolio climb to \$190K and start imagining it at \$250K. You feel pulled toward that vision. You don't take profits, because this time it could really run. You double down, not based on fundamentals, but on hope.

That's the loop. You chase a fantasy an aspirational future and the very act of imagining it delivers a tiny reward. It feels good to believe. And the system knows this. Apps, alerts, and headlines feed you possibility: "Breakout stock!" "Crypto rebound!" "Next big thing!"

But just like fear, this loop hijacks logic. It replaces grounded decision-making with emotional momentum. You're not investing anymore you're envisioning. Dreaming. Wishing. And the system is happy to keep feeding that loop, because every fantasy you chase keeps you engaged, clicking, and hoping.

The fantasy isn't the problem. The loop is.

Because when you start making real decisions based on imagined outcomes, you're no longer in control.

You're being led.

From Loops to Logic

Thomas didn't know he was stuck in a pattern.

When his portfolio dropped, he thought he was just "being cautious." When it started climbing again, he thought he was "riding the wave." But all along, he was ping-ponging between fear and fantasy checking, scrolling, second-guessing not investing, just reacting.

And it wore him out.

Eventually, Thomas started asking better questions. What if this gut-level panic wasn't a signal, but a trap? What if the hope he felt when things rebounded wasn't insight, but emotional bait?

So, he took a step back. He stopped refreshing the app every day. He stopped reading market headlines designed to provoke. He asked himself a simple question: *What would this stock be worth if I couldn't look at the price for a year?*

That's when things started to shift.

Instead of chasing highs or dodging lows, Thomas started thinking in years not weeks. He stopped listening to noise and started studying history. He looked at how real investors people like Warren Buffett approached the market. Not as a game, but as a business. Not as a thrill, but as a discipline.

He realized Buffett doesn't check his net worth when he's nervous. He doesn't panic-sell because a headline told him to. He makes a decision, based on value, and he waits.

Thomas started doing the same. And the irony? It felt boring. No rush. No dread. Just decisions made with clear eyes and a longer timeline.

Some days, Thomas still gets the itch to look. To check. To feel something. But now he knows the difference between investing and being emotionally baited.

And that difference small as it may seem is everything.

In the end, investing isn't supposed to be exciting. It's not entertainment. It's not therapy. It's not a test of how well you can stomach pain or chase highs. It's about making money.

Thomas finally saw that. He stopped treating his portfolio like a slot machine and started treating it like a business. He created rules. He stuck to them. He chose **LOGIC** over **LOOPS**. And once he did, he had time to focus on other things real hobbies, real progress not just the emotional circus of checking his net worth five times a day.

This is where my new book comes in.

It's not about hot tips or market predictions. It's about showing you the difference between **bait** and a **process**. Between emotional traps and systems, you can trust!

If any part of Thomas's story felt familiar, or if you've caught yourself in one of those loops fear, fantasy, or something in between this book will help.

You'll get a sneak peek of the book and be the first to know when it drops. No spam, just clarity. Get out of the loop. Get back to thinking clearly!

So, if you're thinking about starting a business, treat it like an investment learn how to spot the fake advice and base it on a real system!

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