

Sheila Love IMPACT-ology Mastermind

“Sheila Love — Where Everything Is Possible”

LESSON 4

Paradigms Part 1: What Is a Paradigm?

Position	Lesson 4 of 20
Duration	40–50 minutes
Age Group	12–18 years, Liberia, West Africa
Core Idea	A paradigm is the program running in your subconscious mind, built from birth and from everything since. It shapes your results, and it can be changed.

1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define what a paradigm is, in their own words
2. Explain why culture counts as a paradigm
3. Explain why the cause of a recurring negative result is never the circumstance itself
4. Name one paradigm they suspect is running in their own life

2. OPENING HOOK (5 minutes)

Ask the class: “Who taught you how to greet an elder?”

Hands will go up. Nobody remembers being taught, exactly. It was just always done that way.

“Now. Who decided that was the right way to do it?”

Let the silence sit. Nobody has an answer. That is the lesson.

3. CORE CONTENT

The Program Underneath

A paradigm is a mass of information programmed into your subconscious mind. Some of it arrived at conception, genetically. Most of it arrived after, from your environment, your family, your culture.

You did not choose most of it. It was installed before you were old enough to object.

That program is what produces the results you get in your life, whether you like the results or not.

Culture Is a Paradigm

Zoom out far enough, and culture itself is a paradigm. A shared habit, expressed as a whole way of life.

That is not a criticism of culture. It is just the truth of how it works.

And like any paradigm, some of it serves you, and some of it quietly holds you back, without you ever questioning it.

The Cause Is Never Outside You

Here is the part people resist the hardest.

If you keep getting the same negative result, over and over, the cause is not the circumstance. The cause is your paradigm.

That is not the same as saying the circumstance is fair, or easy, or your fault. It is saying the paradigm attracted the conditions around it, and the paradigm can be changed. The circumstance, on its own, usually cannot.

Knowing Is Not Enough Yet

Becoming aware that paradigms exist will not change your life by itself.

You also need to learn how to alter them. That is not this lesson's job. That is the rest of this course.

For today, just get comfortable naming the program. You cannot change what you refuse to see.

4. STORY: 'THE WAY MY FATHER DID IT'

THE WAY MY FATHER DID IT

Varney had been apprenticed to a tailor since he was thirteen, and the tailor was his own father.

Every stitch, every measurement, every way of folding a finished shirt, Varney learned by watching his father's hands, then copying them exactly. His father was proud of this. "The way I do it is the way it's done," he said often, not unkindly, just certain.

By sixteen, Varney could sew as well as his father. Sometimes, quietly, a little better.

...

A customer came in one afternoon wanting a design Varney had seen in a photograph a cousin sent from abroad. A different collar. A different way of setting the sleeve.

"We don't do it that way," his father said, without even looking closely at the photograph.

Varney didn't argue. He never argued with his father. But that night, alone in the shop after closing, he took a scrap of cloth and tried the collar anyway, just to see if his hands could do it.

They could.

...

He didn't show his father. He folded the scrap and put it under the counter, half proud, half ashamed of being proud.

The next week, the same customer came back, this time with a friend who wanted the same design. Varney's father was out collecting fabric from the market.

Varney looked at the customer for a long moment.

...

"I can do it," he said, before he had fully decided to say it.

He sewed the collar the new way, hands moving slower than usual, checking every seam twice.

When his father came back and saw the finished shirt hanging on the rail, he stood in front of it for a while, not saying anything.

"Who did this," he finally asked. It wasn't really a question.

"I did."

His father touched the collar, turned the shirt over, looked at the stitching from the inside the way he checked all of Varney's work.

"It's good," he said. Then, after a pause that felt longer than it was: "We don't do it that way. Yet."

5. ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

Materials: any paper, any pen or pencil.

1. Write down one thing you do a certain way simply because that's how you were shown, without ever questioning it.
2. Write down who showed you, and whether they questioned it either, or were also just repeating what they were shown.
3. Write down one negative result that keeps repeating in some part of your life.
4. Instead of blaming the circumstance, write one sentence guessing at the paradigm underneath it.
5. You don't have to fix it today. Just name it.

6. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is a habit or belief you inherited without ever being asked if you wanted it?
2. Where have you seen 'that's just how it's done' used to close down a better idea?
3. Think of a negative result that keeps repeating for you. What paradigm might actually be causing it?
4. What is one paradigm you'd be willing to question, starting this week?

7. FACILITATOR NOTES

This lesson can feel like an attack on culture or family if introduced carelessly. Be clear: naming a paradigm is not condemning it. Some paradigms serve us well.

Expect resistance to “the cause is never outside you.” Do not argue the point. Ask instead: “what would be different if that were true?”

Varney's story deliberately leaves the ending open. His father says “yet,” not “never.” Don't let students demand a tidier resolution.

This is the first of four Paradigms lessons across the course. Tell students so, briefly, so they know more is coming rather than assuming this is the whole topic.

Try this live in the room: have students write their goal, or even just their name, using their opposite hand for ten seconds. It feels clumsy and wrong immediately — that discomfort is

the paradigm resisting. Point out that it only gets easier with practice, exactly like building a new paradigm does.

8. BRIDGE TO LESSON 5

Before students leave, ask:

“If a paradigm was built using your five senses, your imagination, and your other mental tools, which of those tools do you think is the most powerful one?”

Let them guess.

“We look at all six of them next time.”