Sheila Love IMPACT-ology Mastermind

“Sheila Love — Where Everything Is Possible”

LESSON 12

Paradigms Part 4: Where Did the Old Paradigm Go?

Position	Lesson 12 of 20
Duration	35–45 minutes
Age Group	12–18 years, Liberia, West Africa
Core Idea	Old paradigms don't disappear. They weaken as the new one grows stronger through repetition, the way any new skill is built through practice.

1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Explain that old paradigms weaken rather than vanish

2. Give a personal or local example of an old habit resurfacing under stress

3. Explain why repetition, not willpower alone, strengthens a new paradigm

4. Identify one new paradigm they are currently building

2. OPENING HOOK (5 minutes)

Ask: “Has anyone ever moved somewhere new, or changed a routine, and still caught yourself doing it the old way, months later?”

Let a few examples surface. A different route to school. A new greeting learned at church. A changed morning routine.

> “That old habit didn't vanish. Today we find out where it actually goes.”

3. CORE CONTENT

Weaker, Not Gone

Old paradigms don't die when a new one is built. They simply get weaker, pushed into the background by the new pattern taking over the foreground.

This matters, because it means slipping back once, or twice, is not failure. It's just the old paradigm, still faintly there, catching you off guard.

The Village and the City

Think of someone who grew up in one place, learning its ways completely, then moves somewhere with different customs entirely.

They can build the new way of doing things thoroughly. And they will still, occasionally, under stress or tiredness, catch themselves reverting to the first way they ever learned it.

That doesn't mean the new way failed. It means the old way was never fully erased. It was only ever going to weaken.

Built by Repetition

The new paradigm grows stronger the same way any skill grows stronger. Through repetition.

A musician does not master an instrument by understanding the theory once. An athlete does not build a new technique by trying it a single time. Repetition is what builds the new pathway strong enough to take over.

4. STORY: ‘THE HANDSHAKE’

THE HANDSHAKE

Saah moved to Monrovia from his home village at fourteen, to live with an uncle and attend a better school.

In the village, greeting an elder meant a specific handshake, a slight bow of the head, words in his mother tongue that had been the same since before he was born.

In Monrovia, his uncle's neighbors greeted differently. A shorter handshake, English words, no bow. Saah practiced the new way deliberately, in front of a small mirror in his room, until it stopped feeling foreign in his hand.

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Most days, the new greeting came naturally now. He had been in the city two years.

Then his grandmother visited from the village for a week, and something strange

happened the first morning she arrived. Saah greeted her the old way, without deciding to, bow and all, the words arriving in his mother tongue before his mind had caught up.

His uncle laughed, gently. “The village came right back out of you.”

Saah felt oddly embarrassed, as if two years of practice had failed overnight.

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That evening, his uncle found him sitting quietly on the porch, still turning the moment over.

“It didn't fail,” his uncle said, before Saah had even explained what was bothering him. “You were tired, and your grandmother was standing there, and the oldest programming in you just answered first. That's all that happened.”

“So the new way isn't really mine yet?”

“It is yours. It's just not the only voice in the room. Not yet. Maybe not ever completely. Doesn't mean it isn't the stronger one, most days.”

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The next morning, greeting his uncle's neighbor at the gate, the new handshake came out first, easily, the way it had for months.

Saah noticed it this time, on purpose, the way you notice something you'd stopped noticing.

Both greetings were still in him, he realized. One of them had just gotten a lot quieter than the other.

5. ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

Materials: any paper, any pen or pencil.

1. Write down an old habit or way of doing something that you've mostly replaced with a new one.

2. Write down whether the old way ever resurfaces, and under what conditions (tiredness, stress, a specific person or place).

3. Write down one new paradigm you are currently trying to build.

4. Write down one small way you could repeat it more deliberately this week, the way a musician or athlete practices.

6. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When has an old habit resurfaced in you, the way the village greeting resurfaced in Saah?

2. Does that resurfacing mean the new habit has failed? Why or why not?

3. What conditions make the old paradigm more likely to reappear, tiredness, stress, a specific place?

4. What is one new paradigm you're building, and how will you repeat it this week?

7. FACILITATOR NOTES

This is the fourth and final Paradigms lesson. Consider a brief recap of Parts 1 through 3 before starting, if time allows.

Reassure students explicitly that slipping back is expected, not a sign the work failed. This reassurance matters more than the theory itself for many students.

The village and city example is deliberately general. Encourage students to supply their own local version, whether a move between towns, a change in school, or a shift in family circumstances.

Keep today's named 'new paradigm' active. It connects to the habit and trigger loop work coming in Lessons 14 through 16.

8. BRIDGE TO LESSON 13

Before students leave, ask:

“If leaving everyone with a feeling of increase is good for them, what do you think it actually does for you, the one doing the giving?”

Let them guess.

“We find out next time.”