Sheila Love IMPACT-ology Mastermind

“Sheila Love — Where Everything Is Possible”

LESSON 14

Trigger Loops 1: Find the Trigger

Position	Lesson 14 of 20
Duration	40–50 minutes
Age Group	12–18 years, Liberia, West Africa
Core Idea	Every unwanted result starts with a trigger, often one you're not even aware of. Find it by working backward from the result you don't want.

1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Explain what a trigger is in their own words
2. Practice tracing a result backward to find its trigger
3. Recognize a paradigm may be at work without their awareness
4. Name their own natural, automatic reaction to a specific trigger

2. OPENING HOOK (5 minutes)

Ask: “Is there something you keep doing that you wish you didn't, but it just seems to happen?”

Let a few honest answers surface. Snapping at a sibling. Avoiding homework. Losing your temper over something small.

> “Something sets that off, every time. Today we go looking for it.”

3. CORE CONTENT

The Result Comes First

Every unwanted result starts with a trigger, something that sets off a habit or negative reaction that produces the outward result you didn't want.

The trigger usually happens fast, and quietly, which is exactly why it's so easy to miss.

A Paradigm You Don't See

Often, a paradigm you're not even aware of is doing the work underneath the trigger. That's what makes it feel automatic, like it's simply 'who you are' rather than a pattern that was built.

Working Backward

To find the trigger, start with the result you don't want, and trace it back, step by step, to whatever set it off.

Then notice your natural, automatic reaction to that trigger. That reaction is the loop you're actually trying to change, and you can't replace what you haven't first found.

4. STORY: ‘THE SLAMMED BOOK’

THE SLAMMED BOOK

Zeon noticed it first because his younger sister told him about it, flatly, the way younger sisters do.

“You always get angry right before you study,” she said. “Every single evening.”

Zeon wanted to argue, but when he actually thought back over the past two weeks, she wasn't wrong. Almost every evening, sometime around the moment he sat down with his exercise book, something small would set him off. A noise. A question from her. The candle burning low.

He always assumed the small thing was the real problem.

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That evening, determined to catch it in the act, Zeon paid attention instead of reacting.

He sat down to study. His sister asked an ordinary question about the radio. He felt the familiar flash of irritation rising, and this time, instead of snapping, he asked himself where exactly it had started.

Not the question. Before that.

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He worked it back, the way you'd work back along a path you'd walked without noticing. Before the question, there was the moment he'd opened his exercise book and seen how much material was left before the exam. Before that, there was the walk home from school, tired, hungry, the smell of his neighbor's dinner cooking as he passed.

He hadn't eaten anything since morning.

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It wasn't his sister. It wasn't the exercise book. It was hunger, arriving quietly an hour before he ever sat down, dressed up by the time it reached the surface as irritation at whatever happened to be nearby.

He told his sister what he'd found, half expecting her to laugh.

She didn't. She just said, “So eat something before you sit down, next time,” as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

It was. Zeon just hadn't traced it back far enough to see it before.

5. ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

Materials: any paper, any pen or pencil.

1. Write down a result you keep getting that you don't want.

2. Work backward, step by step, the way Zeon did: what happened right before it? And before that?

3. Keep going until you find something that looks like a real trigger, not just the last thing before the reaction.

4. Write down your natural, automatic reaction to that trigger, honestly.

5. Don't fix it yet. Just name it clearly on paper.

6. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What unwanted result did you trace backward today?

2. How far back did you have to go before you found the real trigger?

3. Were you surprised by what you found, the way Zeon was surprised it was hunger, not his sister?

4. What is your natural, automatic reaction once that trigger fires?

7. FACILITATOR NOTES

This is the first of three connected Trigger Loops lessons. Tell students clearly that today is only about finding the trigger, not fixing it yet.

Some students may trace a trigger back to something serious (family conflict, hunger, exhaustion from work). Treat these findings with care and without judgment.

Resist the urge to solve anyone's trigger for them today. The skill being built is tracing, not fixing.

Keep today's written trigger and reaction. It is used directly in Lessons 15 and 16.

8. BRIDGE TO LESSON 15

Before students leave, ask:

“Once you know your trigger, why do you think just deciding, with willpower, to react differently usually doesn't work?”

Let them guess.

“We find out next time.”