Sheila Love IMPACT-ology Mastermind

“Sheila Love — Where Everything Is Possible”

LESSON 16

Trigger Loops 3: Find Your Intervention

Position	Lesson 16 of 20
Duration	40–50 minutes
Age Group	12–18 years, Liberia, West Africa
Core Idea	An intervention is a new, deliberate 'if-then' response placed where the old automatic reaction used to be. It only works with practice.

1. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Design an 'if-then' intervention for a personal trigger
2. Explain why an intervention must be practiced, not just decided upon
3. Distinguish an intervention from a vague intention
4. Commit to practicing their intervention this week

2. OPENING HOOK (5 minutes)

Ask: “Remember the trigger you found two lessons ago? Who still remembers exactly what it was?”

Let a few students recall theirs out loud, briefly.

> “Today, you finally get to do something about it.”

3. CORE CONTENT

A New Response, on Purpose

Once you know your trigger, you need an intervention, a new, deliberate 'if-then' response to put in its place.

Not a vague intention like 'I'll try to stay calm.' A specific plan: if this trigger happens, then I will do this exact thing instead.

Practiced, Not Just Decided

An intervention only works if you practice it, the same way a new positive habit needs repetition before it becomes automatic.

Deciding on an intervention once, in a calm moment, is not the same as having it ready when the trigger actually fires.

Small and Practiced Beats Willpower

Small, practiced 'if-then' interventions are what actually break an old trigger loop. Not willpower alone, and not a single good decision made far from the moment it's needed.

4. STORY: ‘IF THE BOOK SLAMS’

IF THE BOOK SLAMS

Zeon remembered exactly what he'd found two lessons earlier. Hunger, arriving quietly an hour before he sat to study, dressed up as irritation by the time it reached the surface.

Knowing the trigger hadn't fixed anything by itself. He'd still snapped at his sister twice more since then, out of old habit, before catching himself.

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His sister, who had noticed the whole investigation with some amusement, suggested something simple one evening. “Why don't you just eat before you open the book? You said that's the real problem.”

“I know that's the problem. Knowing it hasn't stopped it happening.”

“That's because knowing isn't doing,” she said, with the easy confidence of someone quoting something she'd heard rather than something she'd struggled to learn herself.

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Zeon decided to try something specific instead of a vague resolution. If I sit down to study and I feel that flash of irritation rising, then I will get up and eat something first,

before responding to anyone.

He wrote it on a scrap of paper and put it inside the cover of his exercise book, where he'd see it every evening.

The first evening, the irritation rose exactly as expected, aimed at nothing in particular, and he almost snapped at his sister out of pure habit before he caught the note out of the corner of his eye.

He got up. Ate a small piece of bread. Sat back down.

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It didn't work perfectly every evening. Some evenings he forgot to check the note until after he'd already snapped once. But by the end of the week, more evenings had gone quietly than hadn't, and his sister, without being told anything, had stopped bracing herself when he opened his exercise book.

“You eat first now,” she observed one evening, not as a question.

“I'm practicing it,” Zeon said. “It's not automatic yet.”

“It's getting there,” she said, and went back to her own homework.

5. ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

Materials: any paper, any pen or pencil.

1. Write down the trigger and automatic reaction you found in Lesson 14.

2. Design a specific 'if-then' intervention: if this trigger happens, then I will do this exact thing instead.

3. Make sure the intervention is small enough to actually do in the heat of the moment, not something that requires a calm mind you won't have.

4. Write down where you'll keep the reminder, so it's visible right when you need it, the way Zeon used the exercise book cover.

5. Commit, on paper, to practicing it at least once before the next lesson.

6. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What 'if-then' intervention did you design today?

2. Why do you think writing it down and keeping it visible matters, rather than just remembering it?

3. Where do you expect your intervention to be hardest to actually use?

4. How will you know, honestly, whether it's starting to work?

7. FACILITATOR NOTES

This closes the three-part Trigger Loops sequence. Consider a brief recap: find the trigger, understand why willpower alone fails, then build the intervention.

Push students toward specificity. “I'll try to calm down” is not an intervention. “If X happens, then I will do Y” is.

Follow up in a later lesson, briefly, on who tried their intervention and what happened. This accountability matters more than any new content.

Some interventions will fail on the first attempt. Normalize this. The habit of practicing the intervention matters more than immediate success.

8. BRIDGE TO LESSON 17

Before students leave, ask:

“A good leader today looks different than a good leader one generation ago. What do you think actually changed?”

Let them guess.

“We look at that next time.”