



The Yoga of Mindset Course

Section 1: The First 2 Tools and the Development of Willpower

Lesson 2

Dear Friend,

Welcome back! I am so glad that you decided to join me here for the next lesson. I find there is something magical about re-reading and listening to a lesson. Something very good is happening to our brains. And yes, I still read and listen to my lessons. There is no end to learning, and so I keep re-discovering that I love my life more each day.

It will be good to get clear on what we are sharing here. **Our main practice is to simply re-read or listen to our lessons every day**, and to use the tools and ideas as often as possible until they feel to us as natural as breathing.

Whenever I say “read” or “listen” to a lesson, please know that both work very well. Some people prefer reading and others like a different approach. Do it in whatever way connects you with your lesson the most frequently.

For example, when my new lesson arrives, I love to read all of it right away, and every day after that I usually listen to parts of it many times. For me, I enjoy listening to it at home, in my car, on my run... Sometimes I read it with another person on the same lesson, and we stop to talk if something stands out. I have

found that sharing a lesson brings me closer to that person. We are sharing a very rare thing. Most people go their whole lives without ever hearing about this stuff, never knowing [the most basic way that life works](#) (1).

Re-reading daily also serves what is probably the MOST important purpose of all. It is reorganizing the neurons of our subconscious mind so that they work FOR us instead of AGAINST us. Earlier in our life, our mind hardwired together its most repeated thoughts and strongest feelings. Since then, these automatic negative reactions have caused most of our problems.

Watch closely and you'll see that a negative reaction is not about what's *actually* happening in the present moment. Your reaction happens fast and without warning because it was *already* in your brain before then, just waiting.

Just like a mango tree will only give you mangos, in the same way, each hardwired thought and its feeling only give you their unique flavor [as that reaction](#) (2). Make a game out of noticing your thoughts so you know how to identify each different one. Basically, anything that annoys or upsets you over and over is a conditioned (or programmed) negative pattern from an earlier time in your life.

This is also why we can think of someone as being so predictable. We say, “*Oh, that’s just Gavi. She always says or does that.*” It’s funny that we think we

“know” someone, but really we are mostly seeing their programmed patterns from early in their life.

Did you know that this hardwiring of our thoughts and feelings is a totally natural and healthy brain process? Absolutely! Myelin, the white fat that coats the most frequently used neurons, causes us to learn things SO fast. With its help, we can learn to do a kickflip on our skateboard or to speak another language. It only causes us trouble when we allow it to super-charge our doubts, our worries, and our complaints.

But kind, compassionate, and cheerful thoughts hardwire just as easily as negative ones! Fill the garden of your mind with *these* kinds of thoughts, and you will love your life. Once you know the rules and work to use them in your favor, life becomes a wonderful, light-hearted game filled with happiness, laughter, and wonderful sharing. The life of our dreams is actually so close.

This may surprise you, but some people you already know may have grown up in very difficult lives and suffered a lot when they were too young to understand what was happening. Even now, some may still be going home to a terribly negative atmosphere, but we just don't know it. If we only knew what another person has lived through in their past, we might burst into tears thinking of the courage it must take for her just to get out of bed every morning.

When friends or family get overtaken by very old, automatic negative patterns, they usually don't understand what is happening. But we can offer them something rare because now we know the brain science behind their reaction. The best support we can offer is our *compassion*. This means *we hold inside us a concerned sensitivity and an [understanding of their suffering](#)* (3). We don't have to say or do anything. We can just be [a calm, safe space](#) (4) for them to be near. And if it ever feels unsafe to be around them, we can leave, giving them [the space they need](#) (5) until their programmed reaction has run through its entire cycle.

Even though their [mean words may sting](#) (6), try to remember that it is nothing compared to the pain they hold inside that makes them say and do those things. A mean dog gets that way because it is badly mistreated over a long period of time. When it is finally shown kindness, patience, and gentleness, it can become the most loving animal you ever knew.

How does a hardwired thought and feeling stay alive inside our brain? It acts very much like a seed. Each one waits for the moment it will be given its “sun and water.” Then, it springs into life. In this way, automatic reactions can survive for many years. Unfortunately, they don't just magically disappear when we get older... Have you noticed how adults can sometimes act like children?

The seeds get all of their sun and water by our thinking about them. It is quite simple. When you focus your attention on any thought, happy or sad, you are sending “sun and water” to it. So, whenever you think or speak about how mad you are, or why life is so unfair, it gets new energy and might even grow bigger. One day it may become a forest of anger, and you would never know why. Now, you know. You’ve been giving it sun and water all along, keeping it alive.

Hopefully, you are starting to understand why it is that only you can do this for yourself. Your thoughts are always going to be *your* thoughts. They’re *your* responsibility because no one else can ever think a thought for you. **Everyone has the free will to think what they choose at all times.**

That is why our first tool is “Delete.” Isn’t deleting unwanted thoughts being a wise gardener of your own mind? If we want life to be different, if we truly want the life of our dreams, the [old gardener needs new training](#) (7).

In later lessons we will learn to work with feelings. First, however, we must understand that our thoughts and reactions are not caused by the outside world as we have always imagined they were. We can’t make any real progress until we see this. For example, that’s why two people in the exact same situation can react completely differently! Their own seeds were already there, waiting.

So, let's start by understanding how we stop giving energy to an unwanted thought. Step 1 is: "Delete the unwanted thought and forget about it completely." That's it! There is no step 2 if you are really clear about what you want and don't want growing in your mind. And, if it returns, you can always delete it again.

If it is so simple, why don't more people do it? Most people don't understand that their thoughts are the *real* source of why they're feeling what they feel, and not others. They prefer to blame the outside world for their anger, worries, and unhappiness. Why? Because it is SO MUCH easier! More than anything, they want to think and act in any way they choose whenever they want (8). But this is also why they struggle (9) to create or hold onto the life they dream about.

So, let's begin to grow your power to choose what and what not to think about. **When we think in new ways, we become a new person.** So choose your thoughts like you are choosing new best friends, and they will be. Get the hang of deleting unwanted thoughts so it feels *as natural as breathing*.

For the next two weeks, please do two things every single day: 1) Listen to one part or all of your lesson. This is SO important for the reorganizing of your old, patterned neurons. 2) Practice deleting more and more thoughts. Before bed,

ask yourself, “How many did I get today?” Most people cannot remember to delete even one or two of their thoughts every day for a week. Can you do better?

Can you hear it, yet? The life of your dreams is calling you.

Your Friend,

Mr. Steffen

Additional Comments

1) *Most people go their whole lives without ever hearing about this stuff, never knowing the most basic way that life works. ([1-Return to text](#))*

- By now, I bet some of you could even put this into your own words. Try, and see how close you come without looking at the lesson. ***The most basic way that life works is _____ .***

How did you do? If you said something like, “Well, the most basic way life works is that whatever I'm thinking, I will also be feeling and experiencing as my own personal, private little world,” you’d be right!

If instead, you had a hard time coming up with words for it, you’re more like me when I first began my own training. It made so much sense whenever I read about it or heard it, but it took much longer before I could remember it.

This is because it is radically new knowledge. This new understanding that our thoughts are real and can affect us is likely not something we have ever thought before, and it needs to sink in. Encourage it.

2) *Just like a mango tree will only give you mangos, in the same way, each hardwired thought and its feeling only give you their unique flavor as that reaction. ([2-Return to text](#))*

- For example, I know a girl who normally thinks her school sports practices are really fun, but one day she felt sad for no reason throughout the entire practice. If she had watched her thoughts closely, she'd likely have heard the voice in her head saying things to her that were sad.

This is because in the past some of her thoughts got hardwired with feelings of sadness, probably during a particularly difficult or challenging time in her life. Most people won't initially remember the moment, for it was too long

ago. She doesn't know what triggered these sad feelings, and so they will show up in the future, too, in different times and places.

Most people have no idea that anything can be done about these sudden mood shifts. So, they just go along for the ride and wait until it is done. Those negative reactions are part of a repeating cycle, and because they never understood it before, they just accept it as the way things are.

To begin to shift, set a clear intention to start immediately using your tool to delete the sad words of those thoughts. It's simple. You simply *do not believe them* when they come up. Don't even consider them. You can silently say, *Delete, Trash, or I don't choose to have such thoughts*. If they are from a hardwired reaction with its recurring cycle, once seen without reacting, they will begin to fade away. Of course, if you feel like it's something more serious, tell someone.

3) *This means we hold inside us a concerned sensitivity and an understanding of their suffering.* ([3-Return to text](#))

- Remember that when someone is caught up in an automatic negative reaction, she is not herself. She will think, say, and even do things that she would normally never wish to say, think, or do.

4) *We can just be a calm, safe space.* ([4-Return to text](#))

- Usually an automatic negative reaction will try to catch everyone up in its emotional whirlwind so it can have the sun and water of their attention, too. But when hardwired patterns are "watched and seen" without reacting or allowing any judgments, *and* without getting caught up in believing them as being *true*, they lose their power and eventually will disappear forever. Depending on how deep they are, it can take many repeated efforts.

This is also one way to support someone else who is stuck in a negative cycle. We hold inside us the understanding that they are simply experiencing

a temporary negative cycle from the past that is running through its pattern. It masquerades as them, temporarily. Eventually, it will lose its energy, provided we pay it no attention.

5) *And if it ever feels unsafe to be around them, we can leave, giving them the space they need until their programmed reaction has run through its entire cycle.*

[\(5-Return to text\)](#)

- This is also important—keeping your own body, thoughts, and feelings safe and protected when another is caught up in a reaction. Sometimes, it is better to just leave them alone until it's over, especially if it gets too negative.

Definitely do NOT tell someone who is in the middle of experiencing an automatic negative reaction that it is "*just a negative pattern looking for food and water.*" When someone is caught up in one of these, saying this will only enrage them. It's never our place to try to make anyone else learn, or adopt our perspective. Allow them to learn their own personal lessons at their own pace, because they will anyway, no matter what we say or do, and that's the only way they actually stick.

6) *Even though their mean words may sting (6), try to remember that it is nothing compared to the pain they hold inside that makes them say and do those things.*

[\(6-Return to text\)](#)

- When we get really good at deleting our thoughts, we begin to realize that no one can actually hurt us unless we allow it with our mind. This is big news.

For example, if we know someone is overcome with a terrible fever, we also know that they're not themselves. They're less likely to say kind words to anyone in that state. So, we don't hold it against them, because we understand they're not well.

We can intentionally see the same thing to be true every time someone speaks to us hurtfully. With practice, we can train ourselves to "hear them"

with the understanding that an automatic negative reaction has temporarily taken over their body and mind. It's not them. Relax and relate to it like dogs barking or waves crashing. No blame. They're just stuck awhile. This can make it easier to stay in a relationship with them without feeling so hurt or saying things you will later regret. It also makes it much easier to not be in negative relationships that are unhealthy.

7) *If we want life to be different, if we truly want the life of our dreams, the old gardener needs new training.* ([7-Return to text](#))

- Hopefully, you have been doing your part to have the life you dream about living. If you are not listening or re-reading to at least part of your lesson every day, it is very unlikely that you will notice much of a change from your life before.

This is because your neurons WANT to stay in their hardwired channels. It's strange, but for some reason human beings usually prefer to stay with what is most familiar, even if it perpetuates something negative in their lives. What is familiar can often feel safer to us, even when it's not.

Unfortunately, most people simply won't make the effort needed to work with their thoughts, even when they feel stressed, depressed, or angry. They prefer to ride it out ... until the next time. In this way, their lives become recurring cycles of predictable outbursts and outcomes.

But if we are reading this lesson right now, we are different. Really! The results of our daily efforts WILL begin to show for us. Just like after you plant a seed in the soil and remember to water and give it sunlight every single day, a new little green bud will pop up and eventually grow into a tree.

So, let's focus on what we CAN do, right now. The present moment is the point of power—always. We can remind ourselves many times a day to stop

creating NEW hardwired paths of unwanted thoughts, new experiences of sorrow and suffering. We delete them as soon as they arise.

By deleting certain thought-streams, we are sending crystal clear instructions to our brain that there is a new gardener in charge, and the garden of our mind is going to start to look differently from now on. And *that's* the beginning of real, lasting change :)

8) *More than anything, they want to think and act in any way they choose whenever they want.* ([8-Return to text](#))

- People give themselves permission to have unexpected, automatic reactions, and even justify their negative reactions, blaming others. They prefer to not understand how the game of life works, because if they did, they might have to do something about their thoughts and feelings other than blame the outside world.

This truly scares them because they're afraid that they won't be able to change their reactions. That outlook and attitude simply comes from never understanding exactly what we are learning here in this course. It also comes from not having strengthened their willpower that is SO necessary to mastering the game of life. One of the *main* purposes of connecting with our lesson every day is to grow the muscle of our willpower. And when it comes to hardwired negative reactions, this is just as true for adults as for children as are all things in this course.

9) *But this is also why they struggle (9) to create or hold onto the life they dream about.* ([9-Return to text](#))

- We don't know that we are the cause of all our own suffering. Knowing this, we can have compassion for ourselves and all others, too.