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MINDSET MASTERY

Do less. Achieve more.



PREFACE

WE'RE PRISONERS OF HABIT: LIFE WITHOUT MINDSET MASTERY

A review of the self-help books in any bookstore could leave you feeling despondent. With very few exceptions, these books are written from a deficit perspective. It's as though you have been born *without* something, didn't have the correct chip installed at birth, or have learned maladaptive behaviours that need to be remedied. The best way to do this, the books explain, is by observing certain people and copying what they did. This will set you free from what is holding you back.

After all, it worked for the author.

These books are mostly about habits, discipline, and different ways of thinking. They give us plans for how we should act in any given situation. They see us as victims of our lifestyle, or someone who is incomplete and needs assistance to be better. We are encouraged to understand *The Power of Habits* so we can build *High Performing Habits*. Or if we want to accelerate our success, we'll develop *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Then we can develop the habit to *Make your Bed* before we *Take the Stairs* to eventual glory.

Atomic Habits suggests we get a habit tracker app to gamify success, presumably because we won't make it without having

fun. *Tiny Habits* suggests we need to remove all friction from our tasks to make our success more likely, lest we trip up on the smallest obstacle.

Some of these books contradict each other. *The Alchemist* suggests we listen to our heart and our dreams will come true. But *Thinking, Fast and Slow* says leave your emotions at home when making decisions. Which is it? And how do we leave our emotions at home?

Robert Greene says we can achieve success by learning the *48 Laws of Power* and *The Art of Seduction*. But *How to Win Friends and Influence People* suggests that being interesting rather than powerful is more useful.

If none of this works, we should just develop some *Grit* so we can *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*, or simply have *The Courage To Be Disliked*.

As a last resort, if we are still stuck, we should just develop *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F*ck* about it all and get on with our day.

According to these books, if we develop the right habits, discipline and ways of thinking we will be able to manage that internal drive that causes us to do the things we shouldn't do, or not do the things we should do. Once contained, we should be free from these internal drives.

THE PROBLEM WITH RELYING ON HABITS AND DISCIPLINE

The books mentioned above are obviously popular, well known and impactful. They have helped countless people across the world. So what's the problem with them? There are two that I see.

The first is that they set up progress as a struggle between good and evil. We typically use habits to ensure we do the things we know we should do, but often don't want to. Examples of this

are going to the gym, making sales calls, or not saying anything if you can't say anything nice. We then use discipline to ensure we don't develop unhealthy habits around the things we like to do. We need discipline to not have that extra drink or piece of cake or binge too much Netflix.

The second problem is one of maintenance. Once you stop using these techniques to maintain habits and discipline you're usually back to square one. Take the common example of a sales rep who has strong habits around making cold calls every Monday morning. Each week she makes them without fail because that's the habit she has established. Naturally, when she goes on holidays she stops following this habit.

Upon her return to work she has to re-establish old habits, but not all are reintroduced. Disciplines need to be re-established so the habits can be supported and old behaviours can be performed. This takes effort.

It's the same with other habits too. When people go on holidays they stop their habits around fitness, diet and social media use. They then have to work hard to get back to how they were before the holidays.

These books suggest we use willpower, discipline and other mechanisms to oppress an inner force – a drive if you will – to control our behaviour and ensure we *don't do* what we shouldn't, or *do* do what we should. This force is seen as the enemy that needs to be countered, corralled and contained to keep us on the straight and narrow path we have set for ourselves. It's as though their methodology for us to improve involves suppressing part of ourselves.

When we use habits and discipline to suppress the inner force that's stopping us from making the cold calls, driving us to have that piece of cake, or calling us to watch the next episode of our current favourite TV show, we are creating a conflict. It's our

willpower and habits that keep the inner force at bay. With this strategy we've set our day up as a struggle to be endured. There's no peace in that.

Nowhere in history has the oppressed ever turned to the oppressor with gratitude for having been forcefully changed. No. They continually fight back. When the oppressor is not watching, the oppressed strike back to regain their freedom. It's the same with this force. If we use habits, discipline or willpower to oppress the inner force that causes us to take action we will always be fighting against it. We have to stick to our habits or be doomed to failure. This takes away choice.

What if you're a sales rep and you *don't want to* make those cold calls on Monday, or you *do* want to have that piece of cake, or you *do* want to watch another episode after bedtime on Tuesday night? What then? Well, you'll have the thought of the calls hanging over your head all week. You'll have to deal with potential guilt (or other emotions) about having the cake, and possibly regret about staying up late and bingeing.

You're also breaking your habits. Once you've done it a few times you're back to square one.

This is another internal struggle you have to deal with. That is no fun.

This strategy means you live in a world where all your options are bad. You either have to follow your 'good' habits and do what you don't feel like doing *or* break the 'good' habits and deal with the fallout.

Perhaps that's why so many people have trouble changing their behaviour, and either give up trying or go in search of yet another book on how to do it.

WHAT ARE WE COUNTERING?

What are we countering when we use habits, discipline or will-power to keep us on track? It has to be something. If we need discipline to make cold calls on Monday there must be a force causing us to *not want to make them*.

If we pay close attention we will notice that we feel an energetic sensation causing us to like or not like something. We don't *feel* like making those sales calls, we *feel* like a piece of cake, or we *feel* like watching one more episode before bed.

If we use habits to get around this sensation, we are using habits to override the message we are receiving from our body. Why would we want to do that? There can be no evolutionary benefit in ignoring a message our body is sending us.

Perhaps the problem is not so much the sensation, but rather our understanding of the purpose of it. As we will see, the purpose of the sensation is not to stop us or keep us doing something. Rather it is to *release* programming within us that makes us conclude we either do or don't like something. When the programming is released we can move on from it and it won't bother us again. As the 19th-century psychoanalyst Carl Jung said, until we make the unconscious conscious it will dictate our life and we will call it fate. When we release the sensation we are making the unconscious conscious. It's what the Stoics meant when they said *The obstacle is the way*. Going through what we don't like is the only way to be free from it.

Unfortunately, most people think releasing means giving into it, or going through it means grinning and bearing it. It's not. As you will see, going through means *experiencing*. And, when done properly, experiencing is a lot quicker, easier and more productive than grinning and bearing. When done as outlined in this book you can be free of the things you don't like in a very short period of time.

WHAT MINDSET MASTERY IS

Mindset Mastery is the ability to maintain mental stability and equanimity, regardless of what is happening. It is the ability to stay focused and calm when external forces are pulling us in different directions while expecting contradictory things. With Mindset Mastery we can deal with what needs to be done despite the ever-changing turmoil of our world.

Mindset Mastery is not about always being happy when things go wrong or always maintaining a positive mental attitude even in the most harsh of situations. Nor is it about suppressing or avoiding what we feel so we become immune to what we don't like. Strategies of that sort simply increase the struggle against the sensations in the body. Mindset Mastery is about understanding how we are triggered by events in our environment, so we can act in a way that we *choose* as opposed to reacting out of *habit*.

Mindset Mastery is achieved by giving 100% close attention to the sensations we experience in our bodies *without reacting to them*. This non-reacting keeps our mindset stable and deactivates our habitual reactions to the sensations so we don't have to experience them again and again.

For the sales rep this means deactivating the sensations that make cold calling a chore. If the calls are no longer a chore they can be done now or later without them hanging over her head all week. Without the sensations we can see a piece of cake and not be tempted by it, or we can have it and not feel guilt. This means we can decide to act or not act, as opposed to reacting to the sensation out of habit. This prevents reactive behaviours and avoids the mess that follows.

This is a very simple process, but that does not mean it is always easy. Ironically, like going to the gym, the harder we find this, the greater the progress we are making in that moment. Finding it hard means we are actively breaking the habit of old:

reacting. When we're finding it hard, we're doing the work of undoing the programming that we've been living by.

This all seems very counterintuitive and around the wrong way. But that is because Mindset Mastery is about letting those sensations happen without reacting to them. When we don't react we don't need to fill our day with habits, discipline or willpower to keep on track with our goals. This is how we do less and achieve more.

Mindset Mastery is the ability to maintain mental stability and equanimity, regardless of what is happening.

A WORD ABOUT THIS BOOK

If you want to know what life is like on the other side of the river, you have to go over and have a look. You can't just sit on your side and assess what life is like without visiting.

It's the same with this book. You can't know how well the technique works just by reading about it; you have to apply it. That's what I want you to do from the very beginning.

Many books in this genre will try to convince you their methodology is sound and true and based on the latest scientific research. Early versions of this manuscript had several chapters convincing you that this method is all right and correct. And it is.

But I'm not sure that it would have convinced you that it works, and it only made the book unnecessarily long. If Mindset Mastery remains an intellectual exercise for you it might be fun, but it won't produce results. You have to experience it to get results and to know that it works.

So I'm going to give you the technique at the end of chapter 1, so you can apply it to your life as you progress through the book. I want you to see how it will operate in your world. Test it,

try it, and see if it works for you. If it does, great – keep going. If it doesn't, great – keep looking.

But I know if you implement this as I present, you are bound to be successful.

PART I

HOW WE INTERACT WITH THE WORLD



CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING YOUR PROGRAMMING

David had just spent the night with Nicole, the woman of his dreams. She was smart, sexy and seemed to just get him. He wanted to spend the day in bed with her, and then the rest of his life. But there was a problem: David was married to Caroline, and they had three kids.

David didn't set out to have an affair, it sort of just happened. He'd been married to Caroline for 23 years, but over the last few years they'd grown apart – the marriage had become stale. He longed for the days when they had fun together. He'd even tried suggesting they go back to the old nightclub they used to visit, but the thought of the noise turned them both off.

He wondered how life got this way. He always thought there was no way he would have an affair – he knew the havoc it would wreak on the family. He'd seen it with colleagues and friends over the years. But here he was, faking interstate work trips so he could spend some time with a woman he met a few weeks ago. How did this happen?

When he met Caroline at the age of 25 he couldn't believe how lucky he was. Caroline was truly out of his league. There was something about her, but he couldn't quite pick it. Perhaps it was her long blonde hair, or the air of confidence she had as she walked into a room. He was attracted to her cheeky and irreverent personality, sense of humour and ability to talk to anyone. He'd never had a partner who had so many friends, admirers, who could have anyone she wanted, and she wanted him.

The first few years of their relationship were amazing. Fuelled by alcohol and sex they partied, travelled and followed their desires. They lived a care-free life of spontaneity and crazy decisions, living the stories they would tell for years. After a big trip to Europe they decided they were ready for the happy ever after.

But that all seemed like a long time ago now. All that he could remember of the last few years seemed to be kids' sport, work,

attending to their ageing parents, and the constant drudgery of suburban life. He couldn't remember the last time he'd had sex with Caroline or when they had had a good night on the booze together. He longed to have that sort of fun again.

Perhaps that is what made Nicole stand out to him. When he met her at the conference he remembers how struck by her he was – she reminded him of Caroline when they first met. Nicole too had blonde hair, an air of confidence, and a cheeky and irreverent personality. When he spoke to her, something stirred in him, something that he had felt all those years ago, but not for a long time. It made him want to get to know her more. After the drinks at the Gala awards he knew the interest was mutual. Before he knew it they were texting regularly, catching up for a drink, and then they crossed the Rubicon.

Now here he was, staring down the barrel. Did he really want to throw away the last 23 years with Caroline for someone he'd only known for a few weeks? With Emily doing year 12 and retirement on the horizon, did he really want to blow up his family, lose the house and half his retirement savings and start everything again? Had he already done that?

He was torn between two worlds and didn't know what to do. When he thought of Nicole he felt excited, energised and young again. But then his mind instantly flicked to Caroline, their shared history, the love of his family and the plans for retirement. He knew Caroline would be devastated when she eventually found out. He now realised how much he loved her. When he thought of the pain her finding out would cause her it was unbearable. How he regretted his choices. But it was too late now.

So he was left with a decision: should he follow his heart and chase Nicole and become the embodiment of a midlife crisis? Or should he come to his senses and stay with Caroline? All his days seemed to be spent flicking between the two options, riding both

the highs and lows of each. It was exhausting and mentally draining. But he couldn't get Nicole out of his head. She was his first and last thought every day. Every time the phone beeped with a text message his heart skipped a beat. They just got each other. He felt happy for the first time in years. Surely this means something? Spoiler alert: it doesn't.

EQUANIMITY: THE SECRET TO MINDSET MASTERY

Have you ever had the experience of waking up in the morning and for a moment not remembering what's happening in your life? It's calm, peaceful and relaxing as you lie there. Thoughts of any kind are yet to enter your mind, and for the briefest of moments you get to experience the equanimity of your mind at peace. The pure bliss is intoxicating.

Then reality slams in. All the memories, thoughts and feelings that make up your life come flooding back and the peace is gone. You start planning out your day and judging what it will be like. You're looking forward to *this*, but not *that*. You're excited about this opportunity, but annoyed about that chore. You'll be seeing that person which will be good, unless you have to see that other person too in which case it won't be.

Before you know it you're caught up in your life and the equanimity you felt for that brief moment is gone.

The equanimity killer

It's not your thoughts per se that take away your mental peace and equanimity. You have to think to get through the day. Without thoughts you couldn't get out of bed, get the kids to school or manage a large team. Thinking is not the problem.

Nor is it the type of thoughts you think. Despite what most people believe, you are not your thoughts. Sometimes thoughts just happen. You didn't want to have that thought about that

person doing that thing, but somehow it popped into your head. It's common for completely random things to just pop into your head – whether you want them to or not.

If you pay close attention, you'll notice that every thought – even random ones – generates an energetic sensation in your body. It's easy to spot the large ones – such as love, fear, anger or pride – but they are there for everything else as well.

It's not these sensations that take your peace and equanimity either.

Rather, your peace and equanimity are taken by how you react to these sensations. As you are constantly thinking you are constantly having these sensations. If your body likes the sensation it will crave more of it. If it doesn't like the sensation it will want to avoid it.

It is the craving to either have more or less of these sensations that takes your peace and equanimity.

UNDERSTANDING AND MASTERING OUR REACTIONS

Our peace and equanimity are taken by the body's constant desire for thoughts on how to experience or avoid sensations. It has spent its whole life believing reacting is the only way to respond to the sensations. The body has developed strong habits around reacting, which drives predictable patterns of behaviour. This constant drive to change what it is feeling to satisfy its cravings and aversions is what takes our equanimity. When we can tame the body to not react to cravings and aversions we are mastering our mindset. We can then encounter the world as it is and we can act from choice instead of reacting from habit.

Our peace and equanimity are taken by the body's constant desire for thoughts on how to experience or avoid sensations.

The sensory–body feedback loop

At the risk of oversimplifying my psychology degree, the way we interact with the world is a very straightforward process. Everything we encounter goes through the four steps of the sensory–body feedback loop (SBFL) before potentially starting again. The sensations we experience from thoughts are created in the third step and our reaction happens at the fourth. It is only at the final step that the loop can be broken. The first three steps are automated and any attempt to change or stop the loop in these steps is doomed.

The steps in the sensory–body feedback loop are:

1. **Cognising.** For us to become aware of anything in our environment, one of our seven sense organs must first register it. We need to see it, hear it, touch it, taste it, smell it, detect the movement of it or think it. If our sense organs can't detect it we won't know it is there.

Cognising is an automated process. We cannot stop our senses from operating. Sure, we can close our eyes and not see something, but we are still seeing, it is just the inside of our eyelids that we are looking at. It's the same for sound. A hearing person cannot be in the room with music and not hear it. We cannot think a thought and be unaware of it. It's the same for all senses.

2. **Recognising.** Once the brain has detected a sensory input, it starts interpreting it. This is an automated process and can't be stopped. If you hear someone speaking in your native tongue, you cannot *not* understand it. This is the same for every sense. You cannot see a yellow car and not know it is a yellow car. You cannot touch something hot and not recognise that it is hot.

Once recognition has been processed, the brain automatically evaluates the cognition. Using memories of previous encounters with the same or similar cognitions, it forms an evaluation and determines if and to what level it likes or does not like what it has encountered. Once again this is an automated process we cannot stop, even if we've had years of therapy telling us the way we see a situation can change if we just try hard enough.

3. **Sensation.** As soon as the brain has evaluated the sensory input, it generates a sensation in the body to tell it what it has encountered. Without these sensations the body has no way of knowing what is happening and what is required of it. Without these sensations, systems such as the flight, fight or freeze response wouldn't have evolved. Once again, this is an automated process that no amount of affirmations, journaling or speaking with a therapist will change. It just won't.
4. **Reaction.** This is the first and only point where we can stop the feedback loop. There are three ways the body can react to these sensations.

If the body likes them it will want to experience them more. Left to its own devices, it will chase these sensations to the point that it develops an addiction to them.

If it doesn't like the sensations, it will want to avoid them. Once again, if it is left to its own devices it will develop aversions to them to the point where it will do all it can to avoid them.

The body then sets about identifying ways it can act in the world to satisfy these cravings or aversions. This is done by the mind generating thoughts on how to achieve this. These thoughts then restart the feedback loop and the whole process starts again. It snowballs over time.

The third way to react is to *not* react. Don't judge the sensations as either desirable or undesirable – just experience them for what they are: sensations in the body. When we do this the mind does not create thoughts that restart the feedback loop. When we don't react we are taming the body to stop the cravings or aversions that take our mental peace and equanimity.

When we just experience sensations without reaction we are 100% present to what is happening in our body. The mere act of experiencing them deactivates the programming that caused the sensation. This weakens its hold over us. If we perform this non-reaction a few times, that sensation will no longer be triggered within us.

The refractory period

The time it takes the mind to stop generating thoughts about sensations within the body is called the 'refractory period'. If an event happens and you react it will extend the length of this time.

There is no set timeframe within which the refractory period should resolve itself, but generally speaking, the shorter the better – even for desirable sensations. A mastered mindset can resolve it quickly. A non-mastered mindset could continue the refractory period for days, weeks, months and years. Even decades! Theoretically, once the event has passed, if you are not reacting you won't extend the refractory period. This will enable you to be 100% focused on what you are doing next.

People who experience an event – either desirable or not – who keep generating thoughts about the event once it has passed are extending the refractory period.

When we extend the refractory period beyond the duration of the triggering event we are projecting our imagined reality into

the world. This imagined reality is generated from the thoughts the mind generates to help resolve the cravings or aversions. When this happens we have moved from reacting to the event to reacting to our memories and thoughts of the event. This causes untold suffering. The event is over, yet with continual reaction to the sensations we are locked into the SBFL and cannot stop the thoughts that generate more sensations. This drives more cravings and aversions that need to be resolved. This constant extension of the refractory period is what drives very real traumas such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

When we do this we are causing ourselves lots of suffering by reacting to the thoughts in our head. If we stop reacting to the sensations in our bodies we will stop the thoughts that drive suffering.

ALL LIFE IS SUFFERING

It was the Buddha who said that all life is suffering. For a chap who was supposed to be enlightened this seems pretty down.

But when you consider the constant struggle we experience chasing cravings and battling aversions, you can see how right he was. It was for this reason that he suggested we should avoid cravings and aversions all together by not reacting – having no judgement. Don't be attached to wanting or not wanting anything. Experience whatever happens for what it is, but don't let it take your equanimity. Be with it 100% and observe the message coming from the body. Then when it's gone, experience the next thing that comes along.

It dawned on him that this was the right thing to do when he realised that everything in the universe is impermanent. Even if you get what you want, it will eventually leave, so don't be attached to it. Thankfully, this is true for aversions too. If you get what you don't want, just experience it knowing that it will eventually pass.

The law of impermanence

Everything in the universe is impermanent and is in a constant state of change. We all grow old and then we die – that's the biggest change we can get. Everything else changes too. The days change, the weather changes, the sun changes, the seasons change, our bodies change, our politics changes, the environment changes, our family changes, what we like changes, what we want changes. Everything changes. Nothing stays the same. The realisation of this was the Buddha's moment of enlightenment.

The Buddha realised that the sensations we experience in our body are also subject to change. They will not last for ever. If we crave certain sensations we will be disappointed if we can't access them, or if we do, when they fade. And if we have an aversion to experiencing some sensations we will be upset when we eventually experience them. All sensations – even undesirable ones – will eventually move on. So why get attached to them and let them take your peace and equanimity?

The term he used to describe this was 'anicca' (ah-nit-cha) – the law of impermanence. Physicists call it the law of entropy. Over time everything moves from order to disorder. To want something to not change is setting yourself up to be unhappy because it *will* change, leaving you with exactly what you don't want. This will take your mental peace.

Everything in the universe is impermanent.

When the Buddha came to realise the impermanent nature of everything in the universe, he realised that if you attach your peace and equanimity to *anything* you are basing your happiness on something that will change. That would then change your happiness. So he hypothesised that cravings and aversions would always lead to unhappiness. The simple act of not creating

cravings and aversions would lead to mental inner peace and equanimity. He suggested non-attachment to the sensations in your body and just experiencing them for what they are.

It's pretty hard logic to argue with.

Screw the Buddha - I want stuff!

At first glance, that's a fair attitude to have, but it might be a bit shortsighted. The Buddha didn't say don't work towards goals, nor that we should sit at home all day doing nothing. In fact, the Buddha said you should work very hard and diligently towards what you want to achieve. What he said was we should not attach our equanimity to whether we get it or not. If you want a promotion, develop the skills necessary, apply for the role and go to the interview and give it your best shot. But if you don't get it, don't let that take your equanimity. The decision is made by people other than you, and you cannot control what they do. If you can't control what others do, why base your happiness on their decision?

It's the same for landing that sale or recruiting staff. Do what you need to do achieve the goal, but don't let the decisions of others that you don't control influence your equanimity and mental peace.

Go for what you want, but don't let the outcome determine your happiness.

So ... should you be apathetic?

No.

There is a difference between apathy and non-attachment.

Apathy is when you don't care. Those who express that they don't care often care very deeply but are usually suppressing any sensations related to the situation so they can avoid the suffering of not getting what they want.

Non-attachment means you fully experience any sensations that arise in the moment and observe them as they are. It means

completely experiencing them without letting them disturb your peace. Be 100% focused on what you are feeling – either desirable or undesirable – and experiencing it for what it is. Just don't become caught up in it.

Think of non-attachment as acceptance. Acceptance is about engaging with life without having it need to conform to the way you think it should be. You accept others have made a decision that is best for them, even if it generates an undesirable sensation within you. They have the right and agency to do that. Acceptance will allow you to see things as they really are and move on.

Accepting means you don't label the sensations, own them, judge them, fight them, justify or explain them. You just experience them.

Acceptance is what this whole book is about.

Does that mean you need to sit back and let people walk all over you?

Once again, no.

Non-attachment does not mean becoming a doormat and letting others walk all over you. It means not letting the world around you take your equanimity. If you miss out on a promotion, but feel there are legitimate grounds to appeal missing out on the promotion, go for it. Just don't go for it out of anger or spite.

Accepting means you don't label the sensations, own them, judge them, fight them, justify or explain them. You just experience them.

HOW TO BECOME NON-ATTACHED

Being non-attached or non-judgemental about sensations sounds all well and good, but how do you do it? You can't stop thoughts once they've started, so what can be done?

Being non-attached is about being aware of what you are thinking and what is driving it. It's about getting out of your head and into your body.

Below are the *Six Don'ts* of Mindset Mastery you can apply as you read the rest of the book. Every time you come across something that you either agree with, disagree with, think is funny or have some other reaction to, detect what you can sense in your body. When you do detect a sensation, apply the *Six Don'ts*:

- Don't label it (agree, disagree, that's good or bad, and so on).
- Don't own it (this is just how I feel about this sort of content).
- Don't judge it (make it right or wrong).
- Don't fight it (suppress the sensation).
- Don't justify it (I've got a right to feel this way).
- Don't explain it (I feel this way because I read elsewhere ...).

Just observe and experience sensations as they exist in your body.

Making the unconscious conscious

The steps above can be difficult. The easiest way to do them is when a thought related to a sensation comes up, ignore the *thought* by placing all your attention on the *sensation*. The thoughts will continue in the background as you do this. Let them continue – don't try to stop them. Just focus on the sensations in your body.

When we apply the *Six Don'ts* we are enabling the unconscious to become conscious. When we experience sensations without reacting we are no longer being driven by the unconscious programming in our body. We are letting it come to the surface where we can become conscious of it. When this happens its influence on our life will be greatly reduced.

There are multiple reasons why this is often harder than it sounds. The main reason is we've spent our whole life training ourselves to do the exact opposite. The rest of the book unpacks

what those reasons are and steps you through in detail how to stop the sensory–body feedback loop by not reacting to sensations.

How do I enjoy life without reacting?

Not reacting is not about killing all emotions and maintaining a stony cold disposition lest you trigger the SBFL. That would be a depressing way to live.

Experiencing the sensations in your body means being 100% present to them and the ‘message’ they are sending you. If the message you are receiving is causing you to smile and express happiness, then do that. If the sensations are causing you to cry and express sadness, then do that. Focusing on the sensations means you don’t reactivate the SBFL by generating new thoughts and meanings about the sensations. Experience them without creating stories about them.

HOW THIS AFFECTS US DAY TO DAY

Thinking back to David, it’s easy to see how his mental peace and equanimity would have been smashed by his affair. Craving the excitement of his next encounter with Nicole would have been almost unbearable. But this would have been instantly countered by the aversion to what he was doing to Caroline, his family and himself. He would have spent most of every day bouncing between the two. This would have taken up all his mental real estate and been emotionally exhausting. If you’ve ever been torn between two important and conflicting ideas you know what it’s like.

If David had understood the SBFL he could have been in a very different place if he wanted to. When he met Nicole he could have simply experienced and enjoyed the sensations she triggered in his body. If he’d simply experienced them they would have dissipated without him needing to react. Then he would

not have craved them more and the relationship would not have progressed based on the sensations.

It's the same for you and me. We may not be dealing with cravings and aversions as big as an affair and blowing up our family, but when we chase certain sensations and not others we experience the same cravings and aversions that drive the SBFL. When we think of the week ahead and see that it's full of kids' sport, work and attending to ageing parents we will experience a sensation from those thoughts. If we react with aversion to the sensations of those parts of our lives and want to avoid them, it drives us to sit on our phone at the kids' sport, daydream while at work and not enjoy the remaining time we have with our ageing parents. We miss our life as it happens in front of us, all because we have attached a craving or aversion to sensations we have experienced in our body.

It's the constant reacting to the cravings and aversions that takes our mental peace and equanimity. When we are caught in this constant feedback loop we have to continually recalibrate our reactions to bodily sensations in an effort to change our thoughts and the eventual sensations we experience. When we are feeling something we have an aversion to we will try to find a craving to replace it with a desirable thought. We will then fight the impermanence of the resulting sensation. This process goes on all day every day, causing us to be constantly vigilant. This is exhausting.

To establish Mindset Mastery so we can do less and achieve more, we need to stop reacting to the sensations in the body. Stopping the way we react to the sensations in our body relies on us understanding how energy drives the mind. That is what the next chapter is about.