

Week 1 — Dead Weight

Teaching track — Week 1: Dead Weight

Week one. Dead weight.

We're starting here because everything else in this program is easier once you've done this one, and because it's the one nobody does on their own.

...

Here's what I mean by dead weight.

There's stuff you're carrying. Everyone's got some. And I don't necessarily mean the big dramatic stuff, I mean the things that have been on your back so long you've stopped registering them as weight at all. They've just become the temperature. They've become what it feels like to be you.

...

Let me give you the picture I use.

You know when you've been carrying shopping in from the car, both hands, bags cutting into your fingers, and you get inside and put it all down on the bench?

And there's that moment. That half-second where your hands go light and you go ohhh.

...

Now here's the thing about that moment. Right up until you put the bags down, you weren't thinking "gee, these bags are heavy." You were thinking about getting the door open. The weight was just the situation.

You only find out how heavy it was after you put it down.

...

That's this week. That's the entire week.

Most of what you're carrying, you can't feel, not because it's light, but because you've been holding it so long you've got nothing to compare it to.

...

So what is it? What are we actually talking about?

I'll give you the usual suspects. See which one makes you shift in your seat, because that's yours.

...

Something you did. Something you're not proud of. Might be twenty years ago. Might be something nobody else even remembers. But you do, and every now and again at about eleven o'clock at night it turns up uninvited and you have a bad ten minutes.

Something that was done to you. Something that happened at you, that you've never really put down, and that you've built a fair bit of your personality around without ever agreeing to.

...

A version of you that didn't happen. This one's sneaky. The man you were going to be at twenty-five. The business that didn't go. The relationship that should've worked. And you're not grieving it, exactly, you're just carrying a low-level tab for the gap between that man and this one.

A thing you said you'd do and didn't. Doesn't have to be big. It compounds. Twenty of those and you've quietly built a case against yourself.

...

And something you're just plain angry about. We'll do that properly next week. Park it for now, but notice it's there.

...

Now. Here's what I actually want you to understand this week, and it's the bit that took me the longest.

Carrying that stuff is not making you a better person.

...

There's an idea a lot of us picked up, never said out loud, but definitely learned, that carrying something heavy is appropriate. That putting it down would be letting yourself off. Getting away with it.

Like the weight is the payment, and if you stop carrying it, you haven't paid.

...

I want you to look at that, because it's nonsense. Genuinely.

The weight isn't paying anything. Nobody's collecting it. The person you wronged is not being compensated by you feeling bad about it on a Tuesday night fifteen years later. The thing that happened to you is not being undone.

You're just carrying it. That's the entire transaction. You carry it, and nothing happens, and then you carry it some more.

...

And the cost is real. That's the part people miss.

Because the weight doesn't just sit there. It changes what you do.

It's why you didn't apply. It's why you snapped at someone who didn't deserve it. It's why you can't take a compliment, and why you make a joke every time someone says something nice about you. It's why you sat in the car park for ten minutes before you went in.

. . .

The weight isn't in the past. That's the illusion. The weight is in *this week's decisions*, and it's charging you rent on every single one.

. . .

Right. So what do we do about it.

This week, nothing. And I want to be clear about that, because you're going to want to jump ahead.

This week we're not fixing anything. We're not forgiving anyone. We're not resolving it. All we're doing is putting it down where you can look at it.

. . .

That's it. That's week one.

You cannot deal with something you can't see, and right now most of what you're carrying is behind you where you can't get a proper look at it. You know it's there by the weight.

So we're going to take it round the front.

. . .

The visualisation this week is called The Shed Clean-Out.

You'll go into a shed, and it's your shed, whatever that means to you, and it's full. Boxes, junk, stuff up in the rafters. And you're going to drag things out into the daylight, one at a time, and look at them.

Not throw them out. Not sort them. Just get them out where there's light on them.

. . .

Some of what you drag out is going to surprise you. That happens to nearly everyone in week one, you'll go in expecting to find the obvious thing, the one you already know about, and something completely different will turn up. Some small stupid thing from primary school.

Don't argue with it. If it turned up, it's in there for a reason. Your head handed it to you.

. . .

Do that every day for seven days. Same shed. It'll change a bit each time.

And on day seven, sit down with the three questions on the page and write out the answers.

. . .

One more thing before I let you go.

Some of you are going to do this week and feel worse before you feel better. That's normal, and it's not the program going wrong. If you've had a lid on something for fifteen years and you take the lid off, the first thing that happens is you can smell it.

Sit with it. It settles. And it settles a lot faster once it's out where you can see it than it ever did in the dark.

...

Right. Go and open the shed.

I'll see you next week.

Visualisation — The Shed Clean-Out

The daily one. Seven days, eyes shut. The gaps are deliberate.

Alright. Get comfortable.

Feet on the floor if you're sitting. Hands wherever they want to be.

And when you're ready, let your eyes close.

...

Just breathe normally for a moment. Don't do anything clever with it. Don't count anything. Just notice that you're breathing, and that you have been all day without any help from you.

... (8 seconds)

Good.

Now let your shoulders drop. They're higher than you think.

...

And your jaw. Let that go too.

... (8 seconds)

Now I want you to picture a shed.

...

It's your shed. Might be one you've actually had. Might be your father's. Might be one you've never seen before.

Whatever turns up, that's the one. Don't go looking for a better one.

... (8 seconds)

You're standing outside it. It's late afternoon. That gold light you get about an hour before the sun goes.

It's warm. There's no one else around. Nobody's coming.

... (8 seconds)

Have a look at the door.

Corrugated iron, maybe. Or timber, or a roller door that sticks.

Notice how long it's been since it was opened. Have a look at the ground in front of it, the grass, the dirt, whatever's grown up against it while you weren't looking.

... (10 seconds)

Now. Put your hand on it.

...

Feel the temperature of it. Sheds hold the heat of the day.

...

And when you're ready, open it.

... (10 seconds)

Let your eyes adjust.

... (8 seconds)

It's full. Of course it's full.

Boxes stacked up. Things under sheets. Stuff shoved in the rafters. That corner you can't get to.

The dust hanging in the light coming through the door.

... (10 seconds)

Have a look around. You don't have to go in yet. Just stand in the doorway and look at how much is in there.

... (15 seconds)

Now walk in.

...

And I want you to find one thing.

Not the biggest thing. Not the thing you came in here expecting to find.

The first thing that catches your eye.

... (10 seconds)

Have you got it?

...

Good. Pick it up.

...

Feel the weight of it. Notice how heavy it actually is, now it's in your hands.

... (8 seconds)

Now carry it outside, into the light.

... (8 seconds)

Set it down on the ground in front of the shed, where the sun's on it.

...

And step back. Have a look at it.

... (10 seconds)

You're not doing anything with it. You're not opening it, you're not throwing it out, you're not fixing it.

You're just looking at it, in daylight, for the first time in a very long while.

... (15 seconds)

Now notice how it looks different out here.

Things always do. Whatever it is, it was bigger in the dark.

... (10 seconds)

And notice something else, your hands are empty now.

... (8 seconds)

You put it down. It's on the ground. It's still yours, it's still there, you can see it, but you're not holding it.

Feel that.

... (15 seconds)

Now go back in and get another one.

... (10 seconds)

Bring it out. Set it down next to the first.

... (10 seconds)

And again.

... (15 seconds)

Keep going. Take as long as you want. There's no hurry and nobody's waiting.

... (20 seconds)

Now stop, and stand back, and look at what you've brought out.

... (10 seconds)

That's what you've been carrying.

... (10 seconds)

All of it, out in the open, in the last of the afternoon light.

... (10 seconds)

You don't have to do anything about it. Not today. Today the job was just to get it where you can see it, and you've done that.

... (10 seconds)

Now have a look at yourself standing there.

Hands empty. Shoulders down.

... (8 seconds)

Notice how you're standing. Notice how much taller you are without it.

... (15 seconds)

Alright. It'll keep. It's not going anywhere and neither are you.

Leave it where it is, out in the light. You'll be back tomorrow.

... (8 seconds)

Start to come back to the room.

Feel the chair underneath you.

...

Feel your feet on the floor.

...

Have a listen for whatever sounds are around you.

... (8 seconds)

And when you're ready, no rush, open your eyes.

...

Well done. Same time tomorrow.