



BEGINNING *within*

# BEGINNING WITHIN MASTER COURSE

## 6. YOUR INFLUENTIAL POWER

*We cannot change others but we can influence them. It's our responsibility to. Only when we learn to stop judging others and begin unconditionally accepting them do we begin to have influence. By beginning within, our influence increases dramatically.*

Welcome back for Module 6! In Module 5 we discussed the journey from living an enslaved life to living a free life. Freedom must come from within. No one can be given freedom, freedom must be achieved through our own efforts of living a life beginning within. This was demonstrated outstandingly by Natan Sharansky when he was in prison. This should be the journey for every one of our lives, that as we get older we should be finding ourselves less enslaved and freer. Free people learn the power of acceptance. They accept the reality for what it is and always ask what they can do to make it better for the future. We cannot move on in our lives as long as we have not accepted what is. This is the reason why anger, judgment, and guilt are always an indication that the way we are dealing with the situation is wrong. They are an indication that we are rejecting the reality and protesting it by either getting angry or judging it. When we are angry standing in judgment or feeling guilty, we are wrong.

## Influencing Others

By now you may have wondered, “But what about the people around me? How am I supposed to respond to their unhealthy behavior, especially when I am affected by it?” Our instinct is to correct the other person and try and get them to change. In fact, most of us are quite familiar with a couple who may be married for many years and they’re still trying to change each other. Imagine, they haven’t given up even though many years have passed and they’ve made no headway! As Einstein is quoted to have said, “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” At the same time, though, am I supposed to just sit there and accept it?

So here’s what we need to know about changing others.

1. We never change others because we can’t change others. We can force others but force doesn’t create a true change. Forced change only lasts as long as the force is there. As we’ve been learning, real change only happens when it comes from within.
2. We can influence others. The difference between influence and power is the difference between beginning within and beginning without. Power gives immediate, yet very short lived results. Influence takes time, yet it offers long lasting results.
3. Influencing others begins with being an example of what we expect from the other person. It begins with changing ourselves. This is why what we’ve been doing with ourselves is the best thing we can do for others.

The more we exemplify the qualities of Beginning Within, the more developed we are to be able to discuss change with others. This is because, as we will learn in this module, we don’t speak from a place of bias and personal agenda. We speak only for the benefit of the other person. People always say, “I am only saying this for your good,” and there is a good reason why the listener feels that this isn’t true. Once we truly internalize beginning within, people can actually feel our genuine unconditional acceptance for them and then they will have no resistance to what we share. As Rabbi Tzvi Freeman writes in his book, Bringing Heaven Down

to Earth Vol. II: If you love yourself for your achievements, your current assets, the way you do things and handle the world – and despise yourself for failure in the same – it follows that your relationship with another will also be transient and superficial. To achieve deep and lasting love of another person, you need to first experience the depth within yourself – an inner core that doesn't change with time or events. If it is the true essence, it is an essence shared by the other person as well, and deep love becomes unavoidable.

In summary, the first and most important thing we can do to influence others is what we've been doing in the past 5 modules, making sure that we are healthy examples by being anchored within. Now let's discuss seeing the flaws of others and how to respond to them.

## **Why People Don't Listen**

When we take responsibility for our lives, we must also take responsibility for everything in our lives. This means that we must take responsibility when we attempt to influence others and fail. We must understand why this truly is. I will explain this by sharing a teaching from the great Jewish leader, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, which I believe is fundamental to the point at hand and to relationships in general. We're going to get biblical for just a few moments and it's the lesson that we will learn that is most important.

In the book of Leviticus there is a verse in chapter 19 verse 17 which states the following three points in this order:

Do not hate your brother in your heart;

you shall surely reprimand your fellow;

do not bear sin on him.

The first point is, "Do not hate your brother in your heart." If you want to be able to point out a flaw in someone else you must first make sure that you don't hate that person. This essentially means that you must begin within. If you unconditionally accept and love that person then you are in the position to point out a flaw within them. If there's any issue that you have with that person, even an issue so subtle that you are consciously unaware of it, it will diminish your ability to effectively reprimand them. Once you pass this first stage then the Torah makes the second point, "you shall surely reprimand your fellow." You are commanded to reprimand your fellow. This is because you are a transparent influencer who can speak to another entirely about them without bringing your own issues into the conversation. Now, if you're like me, there have been countless times where we told someone something and they haven't listened to us. Very often it has been with our spouse or our children. What do we normally say when they don't listen, "Oh, they never listen." Who do we blame for not listening? Them. Therefore the Torah concludes by making a third point, "do not bear sin on him." This means that when

someone doesn't listen to you it is not their wrong, it is yours. In the words of the rebbe, "you are certainly the one responsible, for yours were not words coming from the heart." In other words, the first indication that we still harbor some form of judgment is when they don't listen to what we say. There is one reason why we have a hard time listening to others. It is because we feel their anger or judgment or self-interest. So it is the speaker who needs to take responsibility for why others won't listen to him or her.

I do want to be clear that when I say listen, I don't mean that they do what you tell them to. I mean that they listen to what you're telling them with an open mind. They may still choose not to follow what you say but as long as you truly don't have any issue with them as a person and you know their worthiness, they will be open to you.

As we refine ourselves and we live our lives much more from within, we will suddenly discover that people listen to us far more. We will suddenly discover that we have much greater influence with other people. We become a greater example for others who will then want to model what they see within us.

Yes, we have an obligation to point out the wrongdoings of others. But we have an earlier obligation. First, we must make sure that we have done our own work so that we are in the position to in fact be able to effectively help the other person. If not, then our reprimand backfires and is not only not productive, it becomes counterproductive.

Now that we've begun owning our role in our relationships with others, let's develop a healthy perspective about others flaws.

## **Flaws in Others**

Firstly, very often the only way we can recognize our own unhealthiness is when we see it being acted out by another. I have often had the experience where I said to myself, "Wow! So that is what I look like when I do the very same thing." In other words, when we see unhealthy behavior in others it very often helps us get in touch with our own unhealthiness. This is a huge blessing. A simple example of this is when we see politicians who always act out of their own self-interest and say or do whatever will serve them best. This infuriates any decent person. Instead of it infuriating us we can look at it and ask ourselves, "Am I any better? How much of my life is run by self-interest? Perhaps the way for me to respond to seeing this ugliness is to remove as much of it from my own life as possible. Perhaps this is the way I can begin fixing the world of this problem." We can, as most people do, continue to point fingers at the politicians. From my observation, it does not seem to have helped much. The proper response is beginning within, focusing on what I have influence over and that, of course, is myself.

Secondly, we do have an obligation to help the other person. Let's return to our earlier analogy of someone who is drowning. Until now we've been discussing ourselves as the one who is

drowning. Hopefully, at this point in the course, we are not as desperate for our oxygen, our worthiness, as we were at the beginning of the course. When we see another acting in an unhealthy manner it simply tells us one thing about them. They are drowning and are desperate for oxygen. They will say and do some very mean things to the people around them, not because they really want to hurt those people but, because they themselves are hurting. They are in a state of desperation. They are lacking oxygen. They are drowning. When someone hurls an insult at us and we can remain focused on what's going on with them as opposed to focusing on ourselves, we should remind ourselves that they are drowning. What are they drowning from? A lack of worthiness. What do they need? An indication that they are worthy. It is at such a moment that it is so vitally important and it would be such a special gift if we were to find a way to show them that we accept them and love them even in the face of what they've just told us. In fact, it's an enormous opportunity to take our relationship with them to another level. This is because the only time that we can truly demonstrate to someone that we unconditionally love them is when they have just done something which violates our relationship and we still show them that we will permit nothing to break our relationship because our acceptance of them is unconditional.

In other words, when we clear ourselves of personalizing an event and can look at a situation objectively and with clarity, it frees us to be present for what's going on with the other person. We become so powerful that we can be focused on them while they're insulting us. This gives us the ability to heal their true hurt, that they are drowning and are in need of worthiness. Then, instead of the insult turning into a fight that can last days or weeks, we can resolve it right then.

Additionally, whenever we see a person in their moment of weakness or when they show a flaw, it offers us an enormous opportunity. In times like these, we have to show them unconditional love. When they behave as we would like, it is understandable that we love them. Unconditional love is only demonstrated when they don't behave as we'd like. This is a very powerful opportunity. The moment my child breaks the china dish is the exact moment that I can show them I love them and that they're far more important to me than a china dish. Tomorrow I can speak to them about carrying china. Now I can just hug them and say I love you and you're just as wonderful as before you dropped the dish.

I'm not saying that we should overlook the wrongs of others. I am saying that when we are healthy, we can hear them from a place of acceptance. At the same time, they must be held fully accountable for any wrongdoing. What we need to learn, though, is that holding someone accountable is not synonymous with judging their self-worth and being angry at them. Let's use an example of my child talking disrespectfully to me. He's probably frustrated or angry which is an indication he's drowning. His disrespectful behavior is unacceptable. However, if I only deal with the disrespect and not with his core issue, I will not solve my son's problem. If I hug him and tell him I love him, yes, while he's disrespecting me, and then I tell him, without any anger,

that he will need to stay in his room for 15 minutes as a consequence of his disrespectful talk, I have been an exemplary parent.

The only way any parent will have the presence of mind to do this when being disrespected is when they have internalized a life beginning within. Then we won't personalize our child's comment. This gives us the presence of mind to be there for him in his need to know he is worthy. This also gives us the presence of mind to educate him with discipline without getting angry.

Have you ever seen a parent respond to their child yelling at them by going over to them in the midst of their child's fit of anger and giving them a big hug and repeatedly telling them how much they love them? It's rare to see a parent respond so brilliantly. When someone is in a state of anger, judgment or any other form of unhealthiness they are announcing to the world one thing. I am insecure, I feel unworthy and unaccepted. We need to learn to see past their actions and their words to the core of what they are really saying.

Here's a simple visualization that can transform the way you respond to negativity being spewed by someone around you. Visualize the person who is acting out in an unhealthy way as literally drowning in a pool of water. This will help you remain focused on their desperation and act immediately and accordingly.

You see, as long as we get caught up in their craziness and we begin defending ourselves from what they have said, we are not seeing clearly. We are letting our own bias and defensiveness create a false version of what is going on. We are unable to be there for them and to demonstrate healthy behavior to them because we got lost in our own fear of unworthiness which we begin desperately defending.

My good friend, Dr. Richard Leedes, once explained this to me as a whirlwind. Many unhealthy people thrive by creating whirlwinds with the attempt to draw everyone around them into it. This is very common amongst people who are addicted to drama. Drama is essentially a whirlwind. The key to always remember when someone creates a whirlwind is not to get caught up in it. That would be similar to the rescuer being drowned by the very person he is trying to save.

To summarize, the only way we can possibly help others with their unhealthiness is if we have first helped ourselves with our own unhealthiness. Once we are healthier, we can respond to an unhealthy situation with a clear mind set and be available to provide the other person with what they're really seeking. This is the reason why beginning within not only helps you but helps every relationship that you have. This is very powerful!

## Space for Others

One of the hardest things for us to do is make space for another person. Making space for another essentially means letting the “conversation” be about them. The only way we can make space for another is when we are secure, we feel worthy and we are not dependent on another to feel good about ourselves. The greatest gift that we can give to any other human being is space for them to be themselves without any judgment. In order to do this, we need to learn how to listen. Not just listen with our ears but listen with our heart. I often have large gatherings around my Shabbat table, usually 40+ people. I typically pose a question and we go around the table and everyone is asked to share their answer to that question. It is quite common that someone will give a truthful answer which is not conventional or in alignment with the values of other people around the table. On occasion, another guest will question how they can say or believe that. I always remind them that we are not here to determine whether anyone is stating the truth. We are here to give people the space to discover where they are at. In other words, we are here as a group to unconditionally accept whatever another person shares no matter how we personally feel about it.

The reality is that most people don't have a single person in the world who makes space for them as they are at any given moment. This is because most people live from without and therefore feel too insecure to create space for another person. Someone may have parents, a spouse, siblings and good friends and yet none of them are healthy enough to be there for them. When I say be there for them I mean making space for them. So what do we do about this? You probably figured it out. We begin within. We stop insisting that they change. We cannot change them. We become the change we want to see in the world around us. We implement everything we have learned until we become healthy enough to make space for others. As we do that we model healthier behavior which brings others closer to healthy behavior.

Someone once asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe,

"Rebbe, what exactly do you do? And why are you admired by so many?"

"I try to be a good friend," the Rebbe replied.

Incredulous, the man blurted out, "A friend? That's all you do?!"

Unfazed, the Rebbe responded with a question of his own: "How many friends do you have?"

"I have many."

"Let me define a friend for you, and then tell me how many friends you have."

"A friend is someone in whose presence you can think aloud without worrying about being taken advantage of. A friend is someone who suffers with you when you are in pain and rejoices in your joy. A friend is someone who looks out for you, and always has your best interests in mind. In fact, a true friend is like an extension of yourself."

The Rebbe then asked with a smile, "Now, how many friends like that do you have?"

Simple yet profound.

## **To Love As Yourself**

When we have internalized all of the above we will see an enormous advancement in our ability to "Love another as ourselves." Going back to what I mentioned earlier, the more we accept and love ourselves, the more we can accept and love others. This is because we cannot reach deeper within another than we can reach in our own self.

When we begin witnessing in our very own life being fully present for others even in their moments of weakness and fault we will realize the power that we've attained. We will realize the power that we can bring to others. And we will realize that we are truly making this world a much better place.