Mindset
The New Psychology of Success

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Developing Mindsets that Promote Growth
Our Discussion Goals

- Discuss the difference between *fixed* and *growth* mindsets.
- Learn how and why mindsets influence student achievement.
- Understand why self-efficacy is more important than self-esteem, and how praise can hurt student achievement.
- Learn how to respond to your child’s successes and failures in a way that promotes growth.
What do we mean by “mindset”?  

Mindsets are the assumptions and expectations we have for ourselves and others. These attitudes guide our behavior and influence our responses to daily events.

Dr. Robert Brooks
What’s your mindset?

Take a few minutes to respond to this mindset quiz.

Try not to over analyze the questions – just respond quickly and honestly.

Quiz adapted from “The Curse of the ‘Smart’ Student” at extremebiology.net.
1. My intelligence is something very basic about me that I can’t really change.
2. When I don’t understand something I like to slow down and try to figure it out.
3. I am intimidated by academic challenges.
4. I have been told by others that I am smart.
5. Learning is fun.
6. I often feel unmotivated to learn.
7. When I don’t do well in a subject I think that I must not be very good at that particular subject.
8. When I perform poorly academically I do not get discouraged.
9. When I don’t understand something, I get very frustrated and want to give up.
10. I shouldn’t have to work as hard in subjects that I am naturally good at.
Give yourself 4 points each time you answered AGREE to these questions: 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10

Subtract two points for each time you answered AGREE to these questions: 2, 5, 8
If you scored:
- less than 5, you have a growth mindset.
- between 5-10, you have a growth mindset with some fixed ideas.
- between 11-15, you have a mostly fixed mindset.
- above 15, you have a solidly fixed mindset.
According to Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck, success is not determined by innate talents and intellect. Rather, success depends upon mindset – the degree to which we believe we have the capacity to cultivate our intelligence and grow our abilities.
People embrace fixed or growth mindsets about all of their qualities, not just intelligence. Many people believe that our other qualities – creativity, artistic ability, athleticism, personality traits – are qualities with which we are born ... or not. However, Carol Dweck asserts that any and all of these qualities can be cultivated.
When do you feel smart?

**Fixed mindset:**
- “When I don’t make any mistakes.”
- “It’s when I finish first and it’s perfect.”
- “When something is easy for me and others can’t do it.”

**Growth mindset:**
- “When it’s really hard, and I try hard, and I can do something I couldn’t before.”
- “When I work on something a long time and finally figure it out.”
Fixed-mindset thinking results in:

- a false sense of superiority, undermined by a deep sense of self-doubt.
- a fear of failure; refusal to take risks.
- a feeling that failure permanently defines you as a loser.
- a need to prove yourself again and again.
Fixed-mindset thinking results in:

- the belief that only untalented, ungifted people have to work for success; effort somehow reduces you.
- a need for validation and reassurance in labels ("smart," "jock") – whether earned or not.
- a desire to blame others or outside circumstances when things don’t go your way.
The Fixed Mindset

How do Calvin and Hobbes demonstrate the fixed and growth mindsets?
Growth-mindset thinking results in:

- a love for learning and self-improvement.
- a desire to be challenged.
- a willingness to work for positive results.
- a belief that you can control the outcomes in your life with effort and practice.
- the ability to learn from mistakes and failures.
- emotional resilience.
How do you respond when your child succeeds?
How do you define failure?
If we want our children to believe in their potential, how can we encourage them? How can we build their confidence and self-esteem?

In one study, 80% of parents said it is necessary to praise a child’s ability in order to foster confidence.
Self-efficacy is the belief that you are capable of accomplishing the things you set out to do.

A healthy self-esteem results when a child has a strong sense of self-efficacy. This comes from actual earned accomplishments, not piled-on praise.
10 Parenting Tips for Fostering the Growth Mindset

What can I do?
1. Practice what you preach.

- Model growth-mindset thinking with your child.
- Explain how you deal with challenges and how you continue to learn.
- Don’t label yourself in ways that demonstrate a fixed mindset:
  - “I’m a terrible cook.”
  - “I always had trouble in math too.”
2. Emphasize the joy of learning for learning’s sake.

- Talk about your child’s interests and how he or she is responding to the curriculum – not just, “How did you do on that test?”
- When discussing school, talk about learning as a means for personal reward, growth, intellectual challenge, and opportunity – not as a means to earn a grade or get into a great college.
3. Set appropriately high expectations and provide support.

- Lowering standards does not raise self-esteem.
- Expectations should focus on habits, effort, and growth, not grades.
- Provide students with needed supports (extra help, additional resources). Don’t assume that “you could do it easily if you just tried harder.”
Work with your child to set goals that are reasonable and desirable for both of you.

All goals should emphasize **growth** – the development of a skill or the expanding of knowledge. Having innate talent is not a goal your child can work toward.
When your child succeeds, talk about the work that went into the success. Praise **persistence** and **perseverance**. Focus on the positive habits your child practiced and the choices she made which led up to the success.
6. Use failures as an opportunity for reflection and growth.

- Don’t use labels, and don’t let your child use them.
- Don’t shelter your child from the realities of failure by placing blame on others.
- Ask: “What can you learn from this experience? What could you try differently the next time?”
7. Provide honest, constructive criticism that emphasizes growth.

- Don’t harp on your child’s shortcomings or past mistakes.
- Work with your child to identify strategies for improvement.
- Involve your child in the problem-solving process, rather than meting out punishments.

- If your child identifies an area of weakness or is struggling, help your child establish a concrete plan for improvement.
- Avoid vague solutions:
  - Ineffective: “I’ll study more.”
  - Better: “I’ll review my class notes nightly and make flash cards for the difficult concepts.”
- Follow up with your child, and help him evaluate the process and refine the solution if necessary.
Discuss what habits (focus, goal-setting, daily practice, commitment) enabled the athlete to be so successful.

Avoid referring to a star athlete’s “natural” talent or “effortless” ability.

Talk about famous people who failed in their early efforts.
The growth mindset is about being a lifelong learner. Accepting risk and a certain amount of failure is part of that process.

Is there something you always wanted to try but were afraid you’d fail? Make a plan to do it. Allow your child to do the same.
Nine-year old Elizabeth was on her way to her first gymnastics meet. Lanky, flexible, and energetic, she was just right for gymnastics, and she loved it. She was a little nervous about competing, but felt confident she’d do well. She already knew where she’d hang her ribbons.

Elizabeth went first in the floor exercises. Although she did a nice job, the results changed after the first few girls, and she lost. She did okay in the other events too, but not well enough to win. By the end of the evening, she had received no ribbons and was devastated.
What would you do if you were Elizabeth’s parents?

- Tell Elizabeth you thought she was the best.
- Tell her she was robbed of a win that was rightfully hers.
- Reassure her that gymnastics is not that important in the grand scheme of things.
- Tell her she is good and will surely win next time.
- **Tell her she didn’t earn the win.**
Keep in mind...

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts."

-Winston Churchill