

Character Development: Growth Mindset

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Everyone has experienced the child who shows you that A+ paper and you respond with “Great job! You’re so smart!” Young people look for praise from the adults in their lives whether it is a parent, teacher, coach, or other supportive adult, however this type of intelligence praising may actually be detrimental to their motivation and resiliency.

Dr. Carol Dweck has spent the last 30 years researching the idea of fixed vs. growth mindsets of young persons, especially during the tough middle school years. This is a summary of her findings.

WHAT ARE FIXED AND GROWTH MINDSETS?

Those who continue to excel in the classroom, in spite of setbacks, are those who believe their abilities can be developed through learning and effort. They believe everyone can change and grow by putting forth effort to enhance basic qualities. Those students who believe they have an innate or fixed intelligence fair worse in the classroom. They typically have less motivation, resiliency, and lower grades. They believe everyone has a certain amount of intelligence, and this cannot be changed or enhanced no matter what.

Bottom line: It matters how students view their intelligence.

MINDSET RULES

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Cardinal Rule: <i>Look smart at all costs</i> - they don't want to be in situations where they could potentially look dumb.	Cardinal Rule: <i>Learn!</i>
1. <i>Don't make mistakes</i> - one poor grade means they aren't good at that subject and never will	1. <i>Take on challenges</i> - they want tasks that stretch their abilities and teach new things.

<p>be.</p> <p>2. <i>Don't work hard</i>- having to work hard means they are not intelligent.</p> <p>3. <i>If you make mistakes, don't try to repair them</i>- mistakes mean they don't have the ability and that inability is permanent.</p> <p>High effort = low ability is one of the worst beliefs a student can have</p>	<p>2. <i>Work hard</i>- they believe effort increases ability.</p> <p>3. <i>Confront your deficiencies and correct them</i>- they study harder and try new strategies.</p>
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TYPICAL MINDSET THINKING

	Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Achievement...	means proving you're smart.	means that you're learning and stretching.
Being smart...	means that you're making no mistakes.	means that you're confronting a challenge and making progress.
A setback or mistake...	leads to loss of confidence.	indicates an area of growth.
Failure...	leads to humiliation.	means that you're not yet fulfilling potential.
Effort...	shouldn't be required if you're smart and takes away excuses for failure.	is the path to mastery that makes you smarter. You get out what you put in.
Success...	is defined as being the best and is based on talent.	is defined as working hard to become your best and is based on motivation.
A bad grade...	means it's time to give up.	means it's time to work harder.
Feedback...	is threatening, as it provides good or bad news about precious traits.	is welcomed, as it provides useful direction toward areas to work on.
The need to ask for help...	indicates a weakness or deficiency that should not be admitted.	is a useful strategy for growth.
Stereotype threat...	is high due to fears of confirming negative stereotype.	is low; a stereotype is simply someone else's inaccurate view of their abilities.

Talented peers...	become grounds for feeling threatened and jealous.	are a source of inspiration.
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HOW TO PROMOTE GROWTH MINDSET

1. Teach youth that the brain has plasticity. When confronted with new, harder material the brain creates new connections between neurons. It's up to the young person to create those new connections by learning new material and essentially expanding and strengthening their intelligence.
2. Don't praise intelligence. This creates a fixed mindset. Youth become worried about hard tasks and don't gain resilience. Instead, praise the persistence and effort put into a task.

This helps create a growth mindset.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Online Videos

Exploring a Growth Mindset

Professor Carol Dweck explains her recent research on the growth mindset and reducing aggression.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9hC1DwZS8tI&noredirect=1>

True Grit, Can You Teach Children Character?

Presented by NBC News' Education Nation, this interactive presentation and panel discussion shares the recent research on mindset by Carol Dweck and grit by Angela Lee Duckworth.

<http://www.educationnation.com/index.cfm?objectid=D8F266A4-0693-11E2-BC7C000C296BA163>

Books

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

Written by Carol Dweck, this book gives information on how children can be taught to have a growth mindset through a variety of tools focused on motivation, challenges, and resiliency.

How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character

Paul Tough argues in this book that the key ingredients for success are found in character, not intelligence and test scores, and provides recent research on how to change how we raise children.

Resources

Damour, L. (2011). Teaching girls to adopt a growth mindset. Retrieved from

<http://www.laurelschool.org/about/Research2.cfm>

Dweck, C.S. (2007). Boosting achievement with messages that motivate. *Education Canada*,

47(2), 6-10.

Yeager, D.S. & Dweck, C.S. Dweck (2012). Mindsets that promote resilience: When students

believe that personal characteristics can be developed. *Educational Psychologist*, 47(4),

302-314.