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# Foster a Growth Mindset

— Why It Matters and How To Do It —

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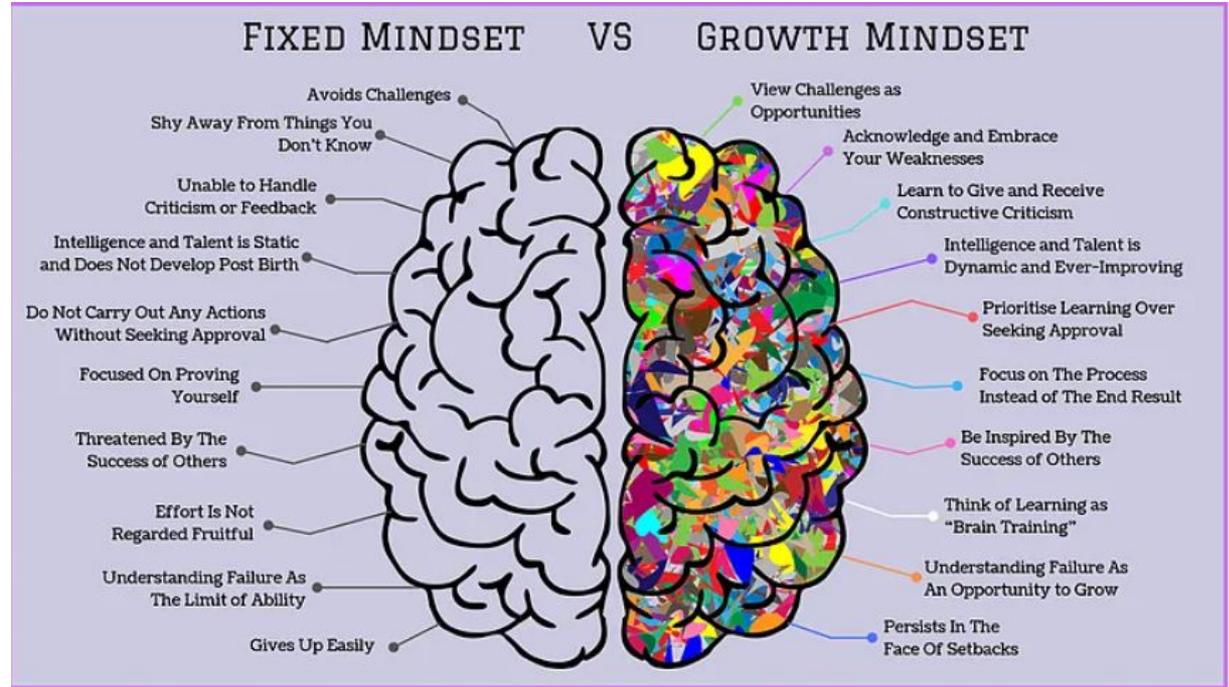
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# Growth Mindset - What is it?

Growth mindset is a way of thinking that enables a person to continually grow, learn, and progress and can lead to higher self-esteem, creativity, and success

Fixed mindset is a way of thinking that inhibits a person's progress, growth, learning and often leads to feeling unable, "stuck", frustrated, and down



# Benefits of a Growth Mindset

Individuals taught to have a growth mindset:

- Keep trying until they succeed
- Put forth more effort
- Set goals and work toward them
- Value hard work and persistence
- Have a higher tolerance for frustration and challenge
- Do not get “stuck” when they fail or make a mistake
- Learn from feedback and handle criticism better
- Believe that through practice, effort, and experience they can gain talent and intelligence
- Focus on things they can control and take ownership of progress



# Fixed Mindset



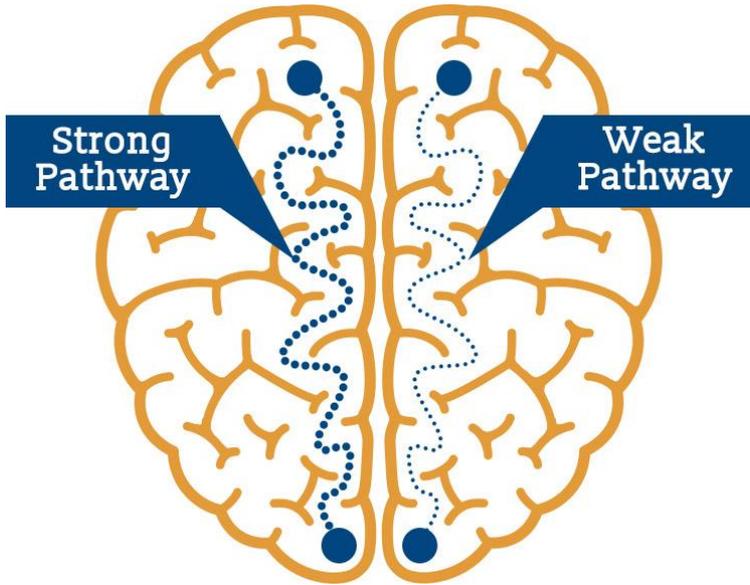
Individuals taught to have a fixed mindset:

- Believe abilities are innate and cannot be gained
- Tend to shy away from challenge and avoid risk
- Tend to fear mistakes, poor performance, or get “stuck”
- Get more frustrated and give up more easily
- Have a lower sense of self-esteem and abilities
- Don’t handle feedback or criticism or coaching well
- Blame others or focus on things outside their control, which inhibits progress
- Believe that qualities like intelligence and talent are fixed, unchangeable traits

# How to start

1. Talk to them about their brain
  - a. Provide a basic explanation of neurons and pathways and the importance of practice, effort, and continual learning
2. Talk to them about mistakes
  - a. Explain that mistakes make the brain grow. The brain does not grow by only doing things that are easy or correct. To keep strengthening the brain, we must continue to face challenge
  - b. Celebrate mistakes as your child trying, learning, and growing
3. Demonstrate ways they have already grown
  - a. Discuss activities that used to be difficult that are now much easier / skills they once did not have that they are now good at
  - b. Remind them when they feel that something is “too hard” of things that were once “too hard” that are now easy because they didn’t give up

# The Amazing Brain



Neurons - You were born with neurons (a type of tiny cell in your brain)

Signals - When you learn, your brain sends signals (like messages) from one neuron to another

Pathways - These messages travel from neuron to neuron using pathways

Practice - If you do the same thing enough times, your brain eventually makes a connection (a clear pathway) between neurons. This makes activities easier and easier and you can do them better and better.

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# In Your Home

- Create a growth-focused family motto
- Put up growth minded statements and visuals
- Listen to growth mindset podcasts / TedTalks
- Read growth minded books yourself and to your children
- Model a growth minded attitude and acceptance of mistakes
- Ask growth minded questions



# What are growth minded questions?

What did you work hard at today?

What challenge or struggle made you stronger today?

Is there a different way you might do the problem if this way isn't working?

Can you think of something new you tried today?

How can you use this mistake to do better next time?

Who can you ask for some feedback that could help?

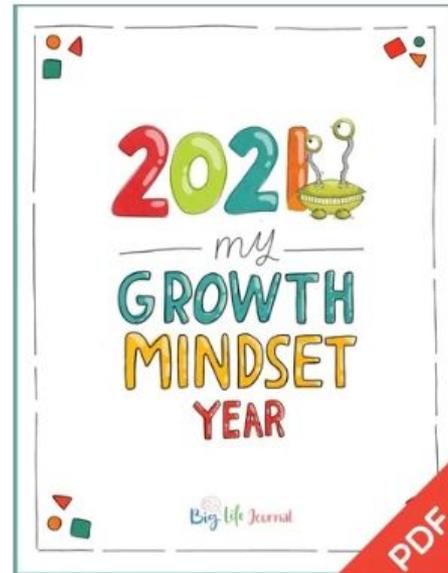
Now that this is easy for you, how can you challenge yourself in this area?

# A Growth Mindset Family

1. Supportive language
2. Positive attitude
3. Mistakes help us grow
4. We can do hard things
5. We can work through discomfort
6. We can keep trying
7. We cheer each other on
8. We don't compare to others
9. Every day is a new chance



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# Teaching something that you may still be learning



Be transparent. When you feel “stuck”, point that out and describe your moments of difficulty. Talk about how you might work through it.

Talk openly about how you are working to change / challenge your fixed mindset ways of thinking.

Make mistakes and discuss openly what you are learning from them.

Connect value and praise to effort, practice, and persistence, rather than with outcomes and results (i.e. grades, performance, win/lose, ability).

# Change the way you praise



- **Don't** compare to others  
("You are the best on the team", "You played better than...")
- **Don't** praise person  
("You are very good at...", "You are smart")
- **Praise** the process ("You used great problem solving skills!", "You worked really hard and didn't give up!", "You tried several ways until you found one that worked!")
- **Praise** individual performance ("You played the song beautifully!", "You listened and focused and did so well on the test!", "You are gaining a great understanding of these math concepts!")

# Praise more than achievements / grades

Praise and value:

Generosity, forgiveness, patience, persistence, compassion, kindness, courage, being a good friend/sibling, focus and listening, working at something difficult, trying something new, being flexible about something being different/unexpected, handling change

Examples: "You didn't give up when it was hard!", "That was not how it usually is and you stayed calm!", "You practiced a lot and it shows!", "You must have worked really hard to get to this point!", "You cheered on your teammate even though you were disappointed.", "You followed through on your commitment even though you didn't want to go."

# Encourage self-reflection

How do you feel you did on that?

Do you feel that is really your best work?

Did you put in your full effort?

Are you showing committed focus?

Is any part of it getting easier?

Do you see improvement in the process?

What can you learn from that feedback/criticism?



# When a child gets “stuck” or fears failure

- Encourage and celebrate mistakes as learning experiences and brain growth
- Emphasize effort, not ability
- Demonstrate unconditional love (make it clear that you love your child even when they make mistakes or use poor judgement)
- Explore the “worst-case scenario” and how they can handle it
- Help them focus on solutions (not “sink into” problems)
- Discuss success as a journey (how they got there, what came before the success, rejection, grit, discipline, persistence)

# Change Misconceptions

## MISCONCEPTION - YOU EITHER HAVE IT OR YOU DON'T

- Your brain is amazing and can grow and develop new talents and abilities
- Every learning experience is beneficial to your brain
- “Hard work beats talent when talent doesn't work hard,” as quoted by Tim Notke, a high school basketball coach.
- Talents are skills and skills can be gained
- Losing is not failure. Losing teaches great lessons. Mistakes are important learning tools.
- We are working on daily perfecting of processes or skills. Not on being perfect.

# Change Mindset by Changing Words

## Instead of:

I am not good at this.

This is too hard.

I can't do this.

I am not as smart as my friend.

I am great at this.

## I can say:

I am not good at this YET, but I will learn.

This will take effort and time, but I can work at it.

I may need help to do this.

I am in charge of how smart I am because...

I practiced and have become very skilled at this.



# Books Encouraging a Growth Mindset

## Ages 1-4

Llama Llama Red Pajama by A. Dewdney

The Little Engine That Could by W. Piper

The Wonderful Things You Will Be by E. Winefield Martin

Giraffes Can't Dance by G. Andrea and G. Parker-Rees

## Ages 4-8

After the Fall by D. Santat

Your Fantastic Elastic Brain by J. Deak

The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes by M. Pett

Mindset Matters by B. Smith

I Can't Do That, Yet: Growth Mindset by E. Cordova

## Ages 12+

The Grit Guide for Teens by C. Baruch-O'Brien

Stone Fox by J.R.Gardiner

Hatchet by G. Paulsen

Maniac Magee by J. Spinelli



# Parents / Caregivers / Adults

*Mindset* by C. Dweck

*Grit* by A. Duckworth

*How Children Succeed* by P. Tough

*Mindsets for Parents* by M.C. Ricci

*The Growth Mindset Coach* by A. Brock

*Grit for Kids* by L. Daniels

*The Yes Brain: How to Cultivate Courage, Curiosity, and Resilience in Your Child* by D. Siegel

## Podcasts

The Mindful Kind

The Balanced Educator

Dream Big Podcast

TedTalks Kids and Family

What If World

Unstoppable Teen

Mentor 4 Teens



## Videos and Movies

### ONLINE VIDEOS

Grit: The Key to Success by Florida Virtual School  
You Can Learn Anything by Khan Academy  
Pathway Transformation Initiative - Growth  
Mindset by Fullerton College

### MOVIES

Hidden Figures (2016) PG  
Wild Hearts Can't Be Broken (1991) G  
Rudy (1993) PG  
Wonder (2017) PG  
The Greatest Showman (2017) PG  
Charlotte's Web (2006) G  
Cars 3 (2017) PG  
Brave (2012) PG  
Zootopia (2016) PG

# MAIN TAKEAWAYS

GROWTH MINDSET



FIXED MINDSET



Learn and model a growth mindset

Ask different questions

Praise differently

Talk about the brain

Focus on effort

Celebrate mistakes

Encourage self-reflection

Fill your home/media with growth  
mindset messages