

Keva loves riding her bike. She rides with her dad most nights after he gets home from work and on the weekends. Sometimes they go for 20 miles on Saturdays. When she and her dad can't get out on their bikes, Keva rides on her trainer at home. She dreams about being a road racer and competing in the Olympics and the Tour de France someday. Her friends don't always understand why she rides so much. When she tells them stories about how she gets blisters or backaches or how she sometimes falls and gets banged up they think she is crazy. Keva doesn't care that she misses out on doing some things with her friends, or that the riding is exhausting sometimes. She figures it will be worth it in the end if she makes her dreams come true. What characteristics does Keva have that will help her succeed?

What Is Resilience?

Resilience is your ability to bounce back from a difficult or stressful situation. Resilience is like a bouncing ball: when the ball hits the ground it comes back up, sometimes higher than before. If you have resilience you are able to do the same thing. Resilience is not a trait; it is a skill. A **trait** is something you are born with, like your hair or eye color. A **skill** is something you can develop and improve with effort. People with resilience have better emotional health and higher satisfaction with their lives. This means that they are happier and are more optimistic about their present and their future.



The Seven Cs of Resilience

Researchers have identified seven characteristics of resilience: competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping, and control; they are called the Seven Cs of Resilience. Everyone can develop and improve these areas and become more resilient over time.

Competence

Competence is knowing how to handle a situation because you have done it successfully before. Develop competence by making good decisions and by learning from your mistakes. Learning from mistakes is a critical part of building your resilience.

Confidence

Confidence is when you believe in your own abilities. You develop confidence by knowing your strengths and weaknesses, using positive self-talk, learning from your mistakes, and asking for help when you need it. Having confidence helps you to believe you can get through something challenging. Confidence can help fuel resilience.

Connection

Nobody can get through the challenges of life alone. Having friends and others you can trust and reach out to is important. Spend time with the people who provide support and who challenge you to grow and be better. Connections give you the support you need to be brave and take chances in life and to keep pushing forward when things are tough.

Character

A person with strong character has a clear sense of right and wrong. Character is reflected in how you treat yourself and others. When a situation is tough, your character can act like a lighthouse to guide you forward.

Contribution

Give something back to the world by volunteering to help others. Volunteering strengthens the other Cs by connecting you to others and by building your confidence, competence, and character. Making meaningful contributions also helps build self-worth. If you see the ways you can contribute to society, you are also more likely to push yourself forward in tough times.

Coping

Everyone, regardless of wealth, popularity, beauty, or success, has to learn to cope with stressful circumstances. Part of coping is paying close attention to how you respond to stress and what you do to gain control and to feel better. Managing emotions and actions during stressful times is at the heart of building resilience.

Control

Being in control of yourself means that you learn to make your own decisions and to take responsibility for your actions. You gain control when you can set and honor boundaries, make smart decisions, and delay gratification. Sometimes things are out of our control. When you have resilience you can bounce back, partly because you can regain your self-control.

Grit

Another important aspect of good emotional health is **grit**. If you have grit you have the dedication and passion to achieve long-term goals. Like resilience, grit is a skill that can be developed and improved. Grit is also known as mental toughness. Grit and resilience are related. If you are resilient and can bounce back from difficult situations you will probably also be able to continue making progress toward a long-term goal. Imagine if you are riding your bike in a race over a very long distance. You would need resilience if you hit some loose gravel and fell off your bike. Resilience would help you to get back on the bike and keep pedaling. You need grit when you are exhausted and the road ahead of you is still long. Grit, or mental toughness, is what keeps you going toward the end even if you feel completely exhausted.

Developing Grit

Grit is linked to having courage, being conscientious, persevering, being resilient, and pursuing excellence (not perfection!). Challenge yourself to develop grit.

Courage

Stand up for what you believe in, take a chance on something or someone when others won't, show patience when others show panic, or reach out to help someone in need.

Conscientiousness

Do the right thing in the right way. Cutting corners, cheating, or giving up are not conscientious behaviors.

Perseverance

Push forward on the path toward any goal you set, regardless of the challenges you face.

Resilience

Bouncing back from difficult situations allows you to continue to move forward toward your ultimate goal.

Excellence

When you pursue excellence you seek to master what is in front of you. You want to do it to the best of your ability, and you keep working in order to keep making improvements.

Growth Mindset

Resilience and grit are also related to something called your mindset. If you believe that you can develop your talents and skills, that you can learn and grow through any situation, then you have a **growth mindset**. For example, if you don't do well on a math test, do you tell yourself that you are stupid

and will never learn math? Or do you say, “If I keep studying and learning, I will eventually be good at math”? If you have a growth mindset, you believe you can become better at math if you study more. If you give up because you assume you are just never going to be smart enough to learn math, you have a **fixed mindset**. If you believe you were either born good at math or you weren't, you have a fixed mindset about math. This mindset causes you to give up or to lose confidence in situations. Students who have a growth mindset do better in school and also develop more resilience (figure 6.9).

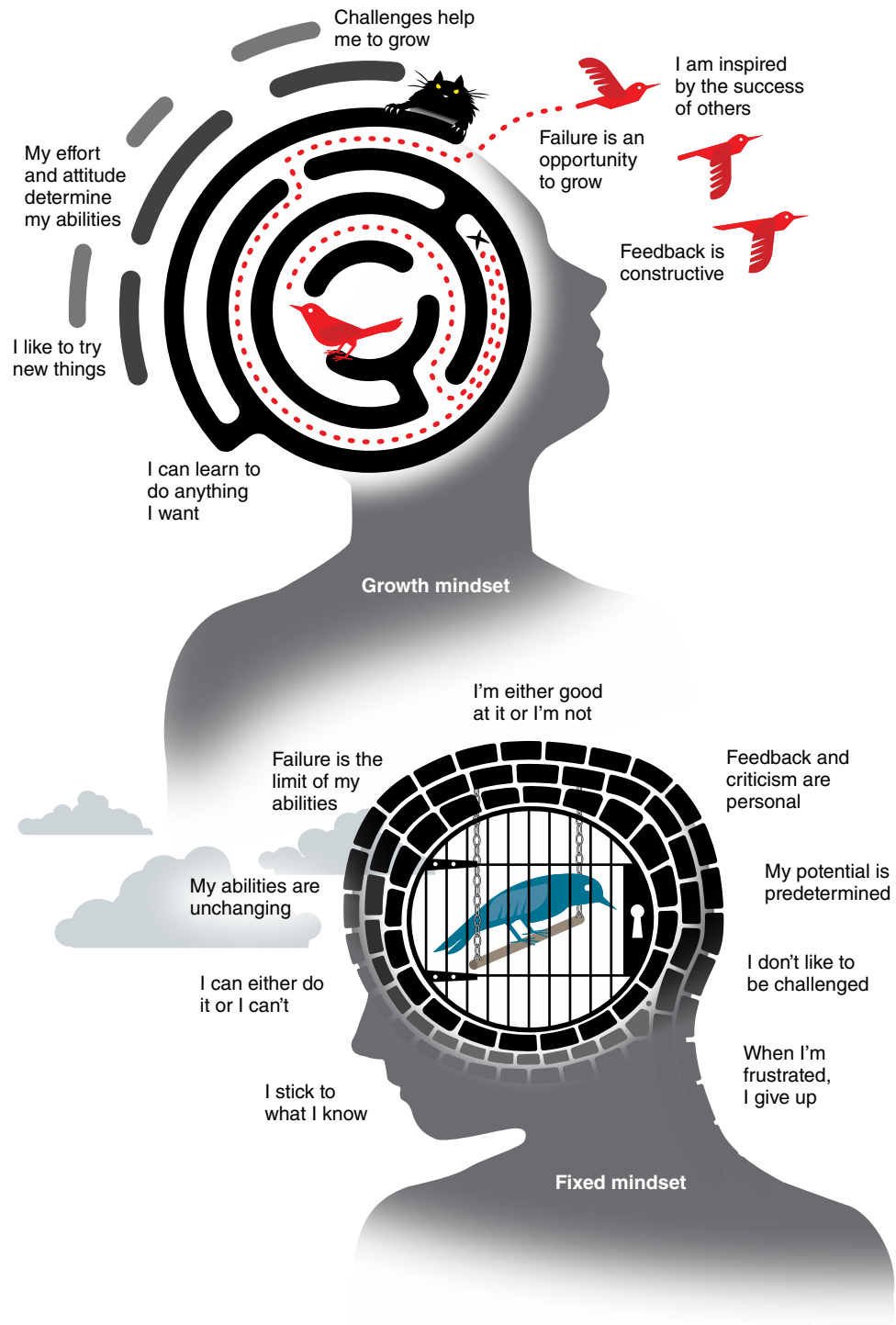


Figure 6.9 Growth mindset versus fixed mindset.