

Fixed Mindset

Fixed mindset includes the belief that basic qualities like intelligence or talents are unchangeable traits.

Individuals with a fixed mindset believe traits are responsible for success. They possess an underlying belief that their goal in school is to show their talents and hide their weaknesses. Kids who think they're born gifted or born a slower learner, try only to show their strengths. These kids are less likely to ask questions in class or seek help from others. Willingly take guidance from a parent? Not a chance! It makes them vulnerable and provides proof of their "low" ability.

Growth Mindset

Growth mindset results in embracing problems, seeing them as opportunities for growth and setting achievable goals. Kids with growth mindset believe new abilities are developed through practice and perseverance and are likely to seek help or try a new strategy when struggling. They see effort as a pathway to getting smarter and achieving goals. They work harder when they fail because past experience has proven it pays off.



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Growth Mindset, Fixed Mindset...Is this really a thing?

Well, yes, as a matter of fact it is. Dr. Carol Dweck has researched the psychological trait of mindset for over 30 years. Her data highlights the overall life advantages that individuals with a growth mindset have over individuals with a fixed mindset. Dr. Dweck's research on mindset hit the popular press by storm and is changing the way parents parent, teachers teach, and coaches coach.

You know it's time to learn about Dr. Dweck's research if you've ever heard your kids say:

- "I saw on Instagram everyone went out for ice cream without me . . . I must be invisible."
- "Our team hasn't won any games yet this season . . . no one cares or tries."
- "I get so scared sleeping without my mom or dad . . . no way I can go to a sleepover."

Studies show a simple switch in how a person views a situation affects their neurobiology as well as the outcome due to the powerful connection between what we believe and how we perform. It might seem obvious, but adults that deal with children of all ages should strive to instill this sense of perseverance.

So are you saying everyone has the same ability?

No, not at all. Each person is born with different strengths and challenges. Not every 10-year-old boy will play basketball for the University of Kentucky and not every kid will be a National Merit Scholar. However, those with a growth mindset believe that no matter where a person is now, they can always improve with effort, good strategies, and you guessed it, the willingness to ask for help.

Bottom Line

Bottom line: Don't allow your child to avoid many challenges or succumb to defeat. As a member of our college panel from Georgetown University relayed, "Growing up, my mom would often repeat the adage 'if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.'" Send and model the message that *many obstacles are opportunities for growth and with diligence and hard work success can be achieved.*

How can parents help kids develop a growth mindset?

• Be aware of the mindset you model.

Examine how you handle employment and relationship challenges in your own life. Do you embrace opportunities for growth or model helplessness and negativity?

Watch how you tackle large tasks. Procrastinating and complaining models a fixed mindset. Instead, develop a systematic plan to tackle the task.

• Start by educating your child.

Find one of the simple on-line handouts about growth mindset and facilitate discussion with your kids. Or you can ask an adult in your child's life to go over the literature with them. (<http://visual.ly/what-growth-mindset>)

As a family, watch and discuss the movie series created for youth about growth mindset by Positive Edge.

• Examine how you treat your child when they make a mistake.

When your child lets a responsibility slide, avoid communicating fear they will never be able to function alone. Help them problem-solve how to prevent future slip ups and learn from their mistake.

See current issues as temporary setbacks while encouraging and supporting problem-solving, even when they spill that gallon of orange juice on the freshly mopped floor.

• Be mindful of the things you praise and reward in your child.

Celebrate your child's diligent efforts rather than focusing on the final product.

Avoid praising intellect, athletic gifts, and appearance.

Adopt phrases such as "I believe you can do hard things."

Instead of saying "try harder," help your child identify steps to take.