

A Parents' Guide to Growth Mindset



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"If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. That way, their children don't have to be slaves of praise. They will have a lifelong way to build and repair their own confidence."

Carol Dweck Psychology Professor at Stanford University whose research identified the fixed and growth mindset.

What is Mindset?

It's a set of beliefs, a way of thinking that determines your behaviour, outlook, and mental attitude.

Carol Dweck and her colleagues have studied mindsets over that last two decades and have determined that mindsets can be categorised as fixed or growth.

What's the difference?

People with a fixed mindset believe that:

- Challenges are uncomfortable and should be avoided.
- It's better to stay in their comfort zone. Making mistakes is bad.
- Talents and abilities are set in stone, they either have them or they don't.
- It's important to look good so they do easy things to appear competent.

People with a growth mindset believe that:

- Talents and abilities can develop like a muscle.
- Mistakes and set backs are opportunities to develop.
- Making an effort creates success.
- It's important to move out of comfort zone and challenge themselves.
- Learning is more important than looking good.
- GRIT is important –Passion, Perseverance, Resilience

Research shows that parents can have a powerful impact on the mindset of their children. The language you use and the actions you take show your children what you expect. Giving process praise, talking about the brain, accepting mistakes as learning.

Develop Resilience

Resilience is the ability to steer through life challenges and find ways to bounce back and to thrive. We are all born with the capacity for resilience and need to work on it throughout our lives, and we need to start as early as possible. You are the most important people to help build your children's resilience. Children learn a lot by watching their parents. When you cope well with everyday stress, you are showing your children how to do the same.

Allow children the opportunity to make mistakes and allow them to pick themselves up – bounce back without your support. Allow them to fail and to work out for themselves how to overcome whatever that failure may be.

Useful books / Websites

Mindset: How You Can Fulfil Your Potential' by Carol Dweck
'Growth Mindset Pocket Book' by Hymer and Gershon

The Effect of Praise on Mindsets (Carol Dweck)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=TTXrV0_3UjY

Growth Mindset (Carol Dweck's website)

www.mindsetonline.com/abouttheauthor/

<https://selfsufficientkids.com/growth-mindset-childrens-books>

Help Children Learn to Hear Their Own Fixed Mindset “Voice”.

Listen to your children talking and when they use fixed mindset phrases, let them know. Discuss how to reframe more positively. Most children are unaware of their fixed mindset talk because it is what they are in the habit of using. E.g. That guy is brilliant; he never tries and he gets it. She should give up she’ll never be able to do it.

Help Children Talk Back to Negative Self-Talk with a Growth Mindset Voice

A small and empowering word.... YET...shifts thinking from a fixed to a growth state instantly, use it in conversation with your children. When you hear...

- “I can’t do it” rephrase and add ‘Yet’. “You can’t do it yet.
- “I’m rubbish at this” rephrase and add ‘Yet’. “You haven’t found the best way to learn this yet. What could you do next?”

Use Mistakes as Learning Opportunities

One of the best ways you can model a growth mindset is to speak openly about the mistakes you’ve made, and what you’ve learned from them. Speak positively about your mistakes and struggles, and this will show your children that taking risks and making mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. Explain to your children that challenges, are what helps them grow. Remember how they learnt to walk – mistake after mistake, each mistake enabling them to learn, to master the skill of walking.

The Effect of Praise on Mindset

The way you praise your children can have a profound impact on their mindset. Research on praise and mindsets shows that when you praise children for being smart, it promotes a fixed mindset. It sends a message that their accomplishments are trait-based, and tied to something innate. In contrast, praising children for working hard promotes a growth mindset. It sends a message that the child’s **effort** is what leads them to success.

Make sure that you have reasonable expectations for your children and use praise carefully.

Expectations that are too low can be harmful to motivation and self-esteem. Too high, can also damage your children’s expectation and also damages motivation, as they feel an overriding, unnecessary pressure to achieve.

Praise the Process, Perseverance, Curiosity, Resilience, Effort

- “You’ve worked so hard on this!”
- “You’ve used some lovely colours in that picture – Well done”
- “Do you think you need to try a different way to solve this problem?”
- “You are putting in a lot of effort doing this. How does it feel?”
- “It looks like that was too easy for you. Let’s find you something challenging so your brain can grow.”
- “That’s not right. You don’t understand this **yet**. What strategies can you try to understand it better?”
- “That was really hard. Your effort has paid off! Next time you’ll be ready for this kind of challenge!”
- “You’ve found learning these spellings easy tonight, let’s find some tricky words to challenge you.”
- “You kept going even when you fell off. Keep practising.”

Make it sincere

Children know the difference between sincere & insincere praise. Research has found that when children think your praise is insincere, they assume you feel sorry for them, or don't understand them. They ignore this praise.

When children are praised after they haven't really achieved anything, they can think that you are making up the praise because you feel sorry for them. Insincere praise also sends the children know that limiting future effort doesn't matter because they will be praised no matter what.

Praise should only be given when it is **earned**.

The right amount

Too much praise creates praise junkies! Children do what they know will be praised. They look to you to praise everything they do, often expecting some sort of reward. Children need to develop their own intrinsic motivation – they need to want to achieve for their own purpose not to please someone you or anyone else.

Children who have too much praise are less likely to be creative. They stay in their comfort zone waiting for the praise that they know they will receive regardless of what they achieve.

Praise individual achievement not comparison

Avoid making comparisons with other children or with positions in the class. "You're one of the best at maths in the class." What happens when they go to a new class where they are not one of the best? Does that make them any less good at maths? You want to encourage them to be the best that they can be.

Develop Growth Mindset Language

Have Daily Learning Discussions -Talk About the Brain. Foster curiosity.

The brain is far more malleable than we once thought. Teaching children that they actually have control over growing their brains through the actions they take is empowering!

Tell your children that when they work hard, that's the feeling of their neurons connecting. The dendrites are reaching out to other dendrites, trying to connect to make a stronger brain. What strengthens those connections is practice, asking questions, and actively participating in learning.

Neurons that wire together fire together.

Ask children:

- What did you learn today?
- What did you find challenging today?
- Is there anything that you learnt in school that you are curious to find out more?
- What are you proud of today?
- Tell me how you persevered today?
- How many neurons did you fire today?
- What's another way you could have done that?
- What was challenging and how did you figure it out?
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