

## Mindsets – what are they?

Do you believe we are born with a certain amount of ability, be it a lot or not very much, and there is not much that can be done to change that (a fixed mindset)? Or do you believe that our abilities can change and grow through effort and learning (a growth mindset)?

These two different beliefs and the resulting behaviours are summarised in the tables below.

<b>Fixed Mindset</b>
<p><b>Beliefs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence and ability are <b>fixed</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nature</b> (how I was born) determines intelligence and ability.</li> <li>• I have an innate ability for some things and an innate disability for other things.</li> <li>• I will always be good at, for example, Maths and always be poor at, for example, Art.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Prove</b> myself.</li> <li>• To succeed, especially with little effort, as this proves that I am clever and / or able.</li> <li>• Avoid failure of any sort, as this proves I have low ability levels.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Attitude to Challenging Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge should be avoided.</li> <li>• Difficulties will mean I am not as clever as I thought.</li> <li>• <b>Failure means I'm stupid</b> or incapable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I apply myself when there is.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opportunity to <b>show off</b> my strengths.</li> <li>• A good chance of getting everything right.</li> <li>• Very little risk of failure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Response to challenge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blame myself or, to protect my ego, someone else.</li> <li>• <b>Feel inferior</b> or incapable.</li> <li>• Trying guessing the answers or copy others.</li> <li>• Seek ego-boosting distractions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mottos</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either you're good at something or you're not.</li> <li>• If you're really good at something, you shouldn't need to try.</li> <li>• <b>If you have to try, you must be stupid.</b></li> <li>• Don't try too hard; that way you've got an excuse if things go wrong.</li> <li>• No pain, no pain!</li> </ul>

Decades of research by psychologist Carol Dweck and colleagues have shown that we all have fixed and growth mindsets about different aspects of our lives (Dweck 2006). The mindset we hold in any area has a great influence on how successful we will be in pursuit of accomplishment and ultimately whether we will achieve our personal best.

<b>Growth Mindset</b>
<p><b>Beliefs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence and ability can <b>grow</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nurture</b> (life experiences) determines intelligence and ability.</li> <li>• If I apply myself more, seek help, take risks, change my strategy, then I've got a good chance of learning anything and thus growing my intelligence and talent.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve</b> myself.</li> <li>• To learn through challenge, as this will help me to grow my talents.</li> <li>• Seek interesting challenges that will stretch and help me to learn.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Attitude to Challenging Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge will help me learn.</li> <li>• Difficulties are going to happen as part of the learning process.</li> <li>• <b>Failure means I need to adapt</b> my strategies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I apply myself when there is.....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opportunity to <b>learn new</b> insights or skills.</li> <li>• Enough challenge to stretch me.</li> <li>• An opportunity to try something new.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Response to challenge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no blame – I just want to know how to do it better next time.</li> <li>• <b>Feel inspired</b> to have a go.</li> <li>• Try various problem-solving strategies.</li> <li>• Seek advice, support or new strategies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mottos</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success comes with application.</li> <li>• No matter how good you are at something, you can always improve.</li> <li>• <b>If you have to try, you must be learning.</b></li> <li>• Always try hard; that way you've more chance of more success.</li> <li>• No pain, no gain!</li> </ul>

## CHANGING MINDSETS

The good news is that mindsets can change. We can challenge our fixed mindset beliefs and we can foster growth mindsets in others as well.

1. Listen for the fixed mindset voice and if you hear yourself or someone say they can't do something, add the word..... '**YET**'.
2. Watch for fixed mindset behaviours in yourself (eg defensiveness, blaming others, fearing failure) and **challenge yourself** to respond differently.
3. Neuroscience (brain science) shows us that our **brains change** when we learn something new. Challenging ourselves, **making mistakes** and learning from them all help us to make new brain connections, literally growing our abilities.
4. Understand that challenges, **risks and failure** all lead to learning. Being in the 'pit' of learning can feel uncomfortable and frustrating (remember learning to drive?) but without this **struggle** there will be no improvement.
5. When giving praise, focus on **effort, practice** and the **process** of learning. For example, NOT "Aren't you clever!" but, "Well done, I can tell you must have practised a lot".
6. Consider how you give and receive **feedback**. Knowing what has gone well AND what needs to improve is vital in the learning process. Go out and seek feedback on how to improve. As you act on feedback, improvement will become obvious and this will challenge any fixed beliefs.
7. **Role models** remind us that success does not come from an innate gift, talent or ability. Edison, JK Rowling, Beckham and many others serve to remind us that having 'grit' and a growth mindset is what enables us to be our very best. Their learning journeys can help us to reflect on our own journeys and challenge any fixed beliefs.

### References and further reading:

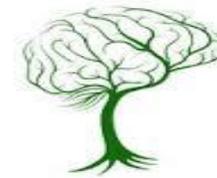
Dweck, C. *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Random House, 2006

Hyer, B. & Gershon, M. *Growth Mindset Pocketbook* 2014

TEDx talk 2014 (18 mins) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeDeOwSAoro>

TEDx talk 2012 (10 mins) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNbOKXc>

## GUERNSEY EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE



# MINDSET

# FIXED OR GROWTH MINDSET?

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