

TEACHING YOUR CHILDREN THE GROWTH MINDSET

I WAS BORN
TO MAKE ~~THE~~ ✓
MISTAKES,
NOT TO FAKE
PERFECTION.

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WHAT IS GROWTH MINDSET

We all have beliefs about our own abilities and potential. These beliefs are part of our mindset which is so powerful it can fuel our behavior and predict our success. Mindset shapes our everyday lives, helping us interpret our experiences and future possibilities.

In her research at Stanford University, Dr. Carol Dweck identified two different types of mindsets. **Growth Mindset** occurs when we believe our intelligence and abilities can be improved upon with effort and the right strategies.

A willingness to confront challenges, a passion for learning, and viewing failure as a springboard for growth are all characteristics associated with a **growth mindset**. Not surprisingly, this type of mindset is strongly linked to greater happiness and achievement in life.

In contrast, those with a **Fixed Mindset** believe their intelligence and abilities cannot be altered in a meaningful way. As a result, mistakes are often seen as failures rather than opportunities to grow and learn. When stuck in a fixed mindset, we may fear new experiences, avoid risks, and feel the need to repeatedly prove ourselves to others.

Discussion Questions to have with your child:

1. What does it mean to Grow?
2. What do you think Mindset means?
3. What does it mean to have a **Fixed Mindset**?

TEACHING THE GROWTH MINDSET

Week 1: Teach your child about the two types of mindsets, growth and fixed, and how they differ. This is a good time to teach how the Brain grows and strengths in response to challenges. Use language such as, "We can choose to look at the world in a way that makes us feel strong and happy, or in a way that makes us feel frustrated and weak." Make sure to share a personal story of when you were stuck to help model overcoming challenges.

Week 2: Help your child to identify growth and fixed mindsets in themselves and others. Help them practice from switching from a fixed mindset ("I am not good at this", "I can't do anything right") to growth mindset ("I'm not good at this yet").

Week 3: Your ability to model a growth mindset will make a difference between your child understanding the concept and living it. This can come from sharing your experience, discussing positive and negative feelings, setting goals, and using the power of YET (I can't do this...yet").

Week 4: Growth mindset is about effort and practice! Praise your child for perseverance in problem solving rather than being smart or talented. Connect positive results with effort rather than innate ability, and children will be more willing to take risks and value working hard. When you notice hard work or positive self-talk, make sure you tell them! In the safe environment of your home or class, give children time to think through their challenges, brainstorm solutions, and seek help if needed. Grappling with a problem builds resilience, so give kids time for reflection before jumping in to help or "save" them. Get excited when opportunities for growth occur! In a challenging moment, say things like, "This seems like an opportunity to grow our brains!" Create an environment where setbacks are expected and even celebrated.

Resources:

- BigLifeJournal.com
- "Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol Dweck
- A [TED Talk](#) by Carol Dweck "The power of believing that you can improve"

8 HELPFUL TIPS FOR TEACHING TEENS

GROWTH MINDSET

1 SHARE FACTS ABOUT THE BRAIN

- Encourage them to learn about the parts of the brain, how feelings are expressed, and new information is processed.
- Let them explore words like "neuroplasticity".
- Reinforce that their brain has the ability to learn new skills - and improve old ones - throughout their entire lifetime.



2 THIS IS AN ONGOING CONVERSATION

- Encourage teens to look for examples of growth mindset in everyday experiences (someone on TV, in the news, or at school).
- Share ways you are growing and learning even as an adult.
- Share the Famous Failures Kit with them (available on biglifejournal.com). Read the stories together as a family and share things you know about these people.



3 GOALS ARE GOOD, PRESSURE ISN'T

- Focus on the process of goal-setting rather than the goals themselves.
- Use creative options such as bucket lists or vision boards - either as a family or individually.
- In the Big Life Journal - Teen Edition, there are a lot of fun goal-setting exercises your teen can do on their own.



4 MAKE SPACE FOR FAILURE

- Rather than trying to make the path smooth for your teens or keeping them perpetually happy, focus on your role as support, or staying close at hand.
- Carol Dweck recommends "addressing the setback head-on and talking to your children about the next steps for learning."



5 WHEN THINGS DON'T GO AS PLANNED BRAINSTORM SOLUTIONS TOGETHER

- Rather than telling your child to "ask the teacher for extra credit," when they do poorly on a test, walk through what happened and explore problem-solving options with your teen.
- See what they're comfortable with rather than dictating their next move.



6 ADDRESS LACKING SKILLS

- Problem-solving together may highlight areas where your teen needs additional help.
- Some teens are impacted by mental health concerns, such as anxiety or depression. Seek outside support for your teenager as needed.



7 LISTEN MORE THAN YOU TALK

- Ask your teen for suggestions, solutions, advice, and thoughts.
- Empathize with their perspective, rather than jumping to a solution, criticizing or judging.
- Reiterate you are willing and available when they need a listening ear.



8 WATCH YOUR REACTIONS

- Encouraging your kids to adopt a flexible growth mindset might require you to work on your own mindset, too.
- If you overreact to small infractions or mistakes, your child may be cautious about pursuing goals or may shy away from sharing challenges with you.
- It's OK to struggle with growth mindset. Let your teen know you will be working on it together!

