

# Growth Mindsets

## A guide for parents

Research by American psychologist Professor Carol Dweck, of Stanford University, has shown that how we view ourselves as learners has a huge impact on what we are able to achieve. She suggests that people broadly fall into one of two categories: those with a fixed mindset and those with a growth mindset.

Those of us with a fixed mindset believe that we have a predetermined amount of intelligence, skills or talents which cannot be changed, whereas those of us with growth mindset believe that we can develop our abilities, intelligence or talents with persistence, effort and a focus on learning.

Fixed mindset thinking can result in

- a fear of failure and therefore a refusal to take risks
- the belief that if you have to work for success you are not clever
- a desire to blame others or outside circumstances when things don't go your way
- being motivated by reward and praise from others

Growth mindset thinking can result in

- a love for learning and self-improvement
- a desire to be challenged
- a willingness to work for positive results
- a belief that you can control the outcomes in your life with effort and practice
- the ability to learn from mistakes and failures
- emotional resilience
- being self-motivated

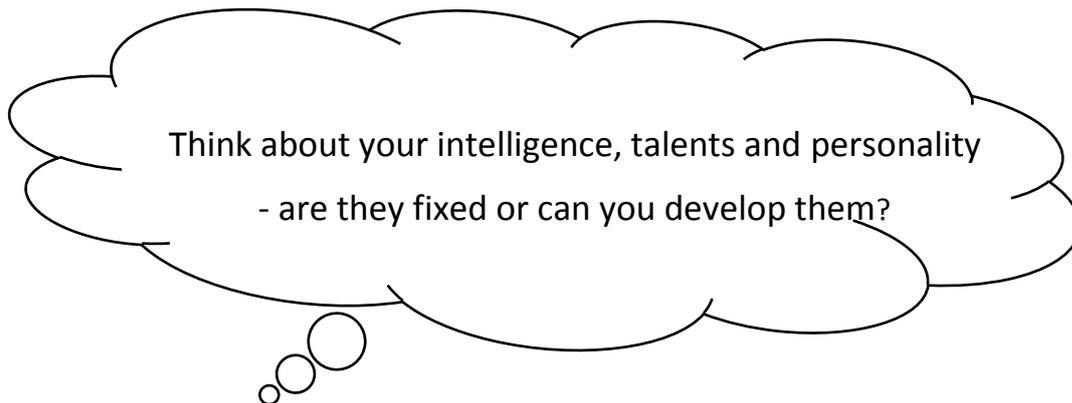
# How can we help our children develop a growth mindset?

## Key points for parents

- Praise carefully – not for intelligence but for effort (process not outcome)

Try to focus on the processes they used; their strategies, effort, or choices.

- What did you learn today?
- What did you try hard at today?
- What mistake did you make that taught you something?
- What was a challenge today?
- What did you practice today?
  
- Encourage deliberate practice and targeted effort
- Encourage the children to stretch themselves with challenging tasks
- Discuss errors and mistakes and help your child to see them as opportunities to learn and improve
- Have family discussions about mindset and which mindset they (and you?) are choosing to use
- Teach the children to think positively and to believe in themselves
- Redefine the meaning of a few ordinary words:
  - Effort is... the secret to getting smarter
  - Difficult is... *challenging* – an exciting opportunity for risk taking and having a go
  - Mistakes are ... *learning opportunities*
- Start using the word YET to shift thinking from being in a fixed mindset to being in a growth mindset. When you hear...
  - “I can’t do it” ... rephrase and add “yet”. “You can’t do it yet, is there anything I can do to help you?”



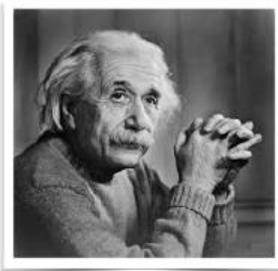
## Famous “failures”

Despite being told by their teachers that they were no good, each of these famous people became extremely successful.

Their secret? Hard work and plenty of self-belief!



Walt Disney's teacher wrote in a school report...  
"Walter has no real creative talent"



Einstein's teacher said he was  
"academically subnormal"



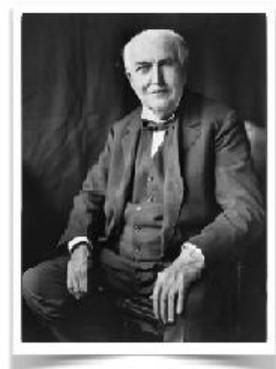
Winston Churchill had to repeat a year in primary school and was placed in the lowest group of the lowest class.



In school, Beethoven's music teacher called him "hopeless" as a composer.



Michael Jordan's High School Coach described him as having "no co-ordination" and a "very average sportsman".



Thomas Edison, inventor of the electric lightbulb, was told by his teachers that he was "too stupid to learn anything".

*“The hallmark of successful individuals is that they love learning, they seek challenge, they value effort and they persist in the face of obstacles.”*

Fixed Mindset ☹️	Growth Mindset 😊
<p><b>Beliefs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence and ability are <b>fixed</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nature</b> 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>Beliefs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence and ability can <b>grow</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nurture</b> 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>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>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 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>Attitude to Challenging Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge will help me learn.</li> <li>• Difficulties are an inevitable 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>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>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 or failure</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>Response to challenge or failure</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>• 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>	<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>

So how can we promote growth mindset thinking in our children?

There is a fascinating research study by Carol Dweck into the impact of praise. When children were given praise based on their ability / intelligence / how smart they were, their performance in subsequent, more challenging activities was less than those children who had had their effort praised. Furthermore children given 'Fixed Mindset Praise' were less likely to volunteer for harder challenges.

We must be aware of praise that could be reinforcing a judgement of a child's permanent traits. We must try to 'Praise the Process' and the effort, not the intelligence, the talent or the product. Remember that praising children's intelligence or talent, tempting as it is, sends a fixed-mindset message.

Try to focus on the processes they used; their strategies, effort, or choices.

- What did you learn today?
- What did you try hard at today?
- What mistake did you make that taught you something?
- What was a challenge today?
- What did you practice today?