

MIND BREW

Office of Student Success

Growing Pains: How Growth Mindset Facilitates Mastery.

THE LEARNING SPECIALIST TEAM

If at first you don't succeed, try again. Doesn't matter how many times you get knocked down as long as you get back up. There are numerous inspirational and cheesy quotes that convey the idea of constantly trying even in the depths of failure.

However cheesy, psychological and cognitive science supports the idea of a growth mindset. Growth mindset entails the implicit belief that one can improve with focused effort, persistence, and coaching (Dweck, 2016).

Intelligence or proficiency in any facet has often been viewed through the lens of talent. We admire an athlete, musician, or even a writer for their extraordinary talent; often forgetting the countless hours of practice and failures that preceded their success. This often reflects our implicit bias and epistemic beliefs that intelligence is fixed. We either get something right away or we are never going to get it.

However, research has demonstrated that learners can improve mastery of difficult learning tasks by adopting a growth mindset. Intelligence and proficiency fluctuates with time and effort. Studies have also shown that medical students who demonstrated growth mindset were more likely to accept errors during medical training and were less likely to produce the same errors during clinical rotations (Klein et al., 2017). So what defines growth mindset?

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"It is hard to fail
but it is worse
never to have
tried to
succeed."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT



Learners with growth mindset have distinct characteristics from learners that have a fixed mindset.

Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset Characteristics (Richardson et al., 2021):

- Growth Mindset
 - Believes that attributes are malleable and can be improved
 - Focus on increasingly difficult or challenging tasks despite chance of failure
 - Engage in tasks that align with their values and goals
 - Engage in self-monitoring and adapt their strategies accordingly
 - Seek external feedback and ways to improve
- Fixed Mindset
 - Believes that attributes are fixed
 - Engage in behaviors or tasks that make them look good
 - Avoid tasks that they could fail
 - Often react helplessly in the face of obstacles
 - Resistant to feedback or criticism

If you found yourself resonating more with a fixed mindset, that is okay. There are certain contexts or situations where we employ growth or fixed mindsets. However, when it comes to learning and education, the more that we can adopt a growth mindset the more likely we are to develop mastery. Growth mindset can be adopted and learned through a few simple strategies.

Strategies to Improve Growth Mindset:

- Engage in self-monitoring and self-assessment
 - Learners with growth mindset continually assess where they are at in the mastery process
- Adapt your strategies
 - Engage in divergent thinking- many problems have more than one solution
- Ask for feedback
 - Those with growth mindset ask for critique and feedback to make the necessary adjustments to succeed

For more strategies and tips, please email your assigned learning specialist.

References

Dweck, C. (2016). What having a "growth mindset" actually means. *Harvard Business Review*, 13, 213-226.

Klein, J., Delany, C., Fischer, M. D., Smallwood, D., & Trumble, S. (2017). A growth mindset approach to preparing trainees for medical error. *BMJ Quality & Safety*, 26(9), 771-774.

Richardson, D., Kinnear, B., Hauer, K. E., Turner, T. L., Warm, E. J., Hall, A. K., ... & ICBME Collaborators. (2021). Growth mindset in competency-based medical education. *Medical Teacher*, 43(7), 751-757.

Cognitive Science in Media

Can a growth mindset help students achieve their potential?
(APA's Speaking of Psychology)



Should we stop telling kids that they are smart? (NPR TED Radio Hour)



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Episode 4: Growth Mindset

