

# DEVELOPING GROWTH MINDSET

Aberdeenshire Council Educational Psychology Service July 2020

## Carol Dweck: mindsets and why they matter

We now have evidence that our beliefs about intelligence shape our learning and success. Educators are very interested in the work of Carol Dweck a psychologist who has researched Mindsets. But what is a mindset and why are they important?

Mindsets are how we view our intelligence and Dweck has identified two mindsets that help explain how students see themselves as learners and influence how they behave as learners:

**Growth Mindset** is the view that intelligence is incremental and can develop and grow over time through persistence, hard work and effort.

**Fixed Mindset** is the view that intelligence is fixed and we cannot change it.

Someone with a Fixed Mindset might think 'learning should come naturally'; whereas, someone with a Growth Mindset might think 'work hard, effort is key'.

The mindset that an individual holds has been found to have an effect on the **effort** they put into their learning and **what they attribute their success or failure too**.

An individual with a fixed mindset may have a lower resilience to difficult tasks often becoming helpless and attributing success to internal factors (within themselves) and failure to external factors. They may view effort as a lack of ability, instead believing that ability should come naturally.

An individual with a growth mindset will welcome challenges in their learning, viewing these as opportunities to develop their ever growing skills, attributing success to effort and failure to not achieved yet.

People with a growth mindset are more likely to have positive learning abilities, such as:

- \* Accepting and embracing challenges
- \* Seeing mistakes as learning opportunities
- \* Seeking and listening to feedback
- \* Keeping going with difficult tasks
- \* Practising and using strategies to get better
- \* Asking questions to move their learning forward
- \* Taking risks and trying new things



### Inside this leaflet:

The brain as a muscle	2
What can parents do?	2
Growth mindset statements/affirmations	2
Tips and questions to develop Growth Mindset in children	3
Further information and resources	4
Pause for thought– Making praise powerful	4

“We like to think of our champions and idols as superheroes who were born different from us. We don’t like to think of them as relatively ordinary people who made themselves extraordinary”

**Carol Dweck**



## The brain as a muscle

Research has found that the brain is like a muscle, which grows and develops as it comes into contact with previous material and new material. As an individual learns connections between the brain's cells (neurons) become stronger and faster. For instance, when coming into contact with a new task neuron connections are formed; whereas, when coming into contact with a previous task more neuron connections are formed consolidating the learning. Therefore, often tasks which were once very challenging or even impossible can become easier as the brain evolves and changes.

## What can parents do?

Parents often wonder what they can do and say to change their child's mindset from fixed to growth. The good news is that mindsets can change, and there are certain strategies you can use right away. Giving process praise (see p.4), talking about the brain, accepting mistakes as learning opportunities, and understanding the role of emotions in learning are all things you can begin today.



*Refer to our leaflets on [Emotion coaching](#) and [Understanding Anger](#)*

**Making mistakes  
is one of the best  
ways our brains  
learn and grow**

## Encourage children to use the following statements/affirmations

I have a **GROWTH  
MINDSET.**

I am in charge of how smart I am because

I can **GROW** my **BRAIN**

like a muscle by learning hard things.

I can achieve

**ANYTHING**

with **EFFORT** and

**RIGHT STRATEGIES.**

And when I fail or make a mistake,

it is a **GREAT** thing, because

I can **LEARN** from them and

**I GET BETTER!**

Big Life Journal

[www.biglifejournal.com](http://www.biglifejournal.com)

- Mistakes help me learn and grow
- I haven't figured it out YET
- I am on the right track
- I can do hard things
- This might take time and effort
- I stick with things and don't give up easily
- I strive for progress, not perfection
- I go after my dreams
- I cheer myself up when it gets hard
- I am a problem solver
- I try new things
- I embrace new challenges
- Learning is my superpower
- I am brave enough to try
- I get better at things when I practice
- I grow my brain by learning hard things
- I try different strategies
- When I don't succeed right away, I try again
- I ask for help when I need it
- I learn from my mistakes
- I focus on my own results and don't compare myself to others
- I was born to learn
- When I fail, I say "I can't do it YET" and try again
- I strive to do my best
- I can learn anything



## 8 Tips to foster growth mindset in children

### 1. Be aware of your own mindset

Do you view intelligence as something which can grow or that is fixed? How do you approach problems?

### 2. Model a growth mindset

Children learn by observing their environment and what the adults around them say or do. Use praise to model a growth mindset see p.4.

### 3. Praise effort not attainment

Instead of 'you are so smart'. Say, 'I'm proud of you for sticking with it and taking the time to understand what you're trying to learn'.

### 4. Establish high expectations

Let children know that you are challenging them because you know that they have the ability to meet high expectations.

### 5. Describe the behaviour, not the person

Instead of saying 'Your lazy' say they are not putting in enough effort so that they see they are capable of doing things differently.

### 6. Remember the brain is a muscle.

Talk to children about how their brain grows and develops like a muscle and when they are finding things tricky it stretches the most. The effort they put in can change their brain connections throughout their life.

### 7. Provide opportunities to try new things and to celebrate mistakes

Allow a safe environment for adults and kids to try new things and make mistakes. Celebrate mistakes, teaching children that mistakes are okay to make and part of everyday life.

### 8. Providing time to reflect

Allow time to reflect on the process and learning that has taken place.



## What you can say?

### 1. Did something go wrong? Great!

How can you use this mistake to improve your idea?

**2. Finished?** Have you put in the effort to achieve a result which makes you proud?

**3. Stuck? Fantastic!** What can you try next? What other ways might there be?

**4. Not happy with your ...? Fantastic!** Who can you ask for feedback to make it better?

**5. Want to break the rules? Excellent!** What new ideas will you try? What risks will you take?

**6. Finding it tricky? Wonderful!** What will you practice to get better? What strategies will you use?

**7. Not the best? Brilliant!** Who can you learn more from?

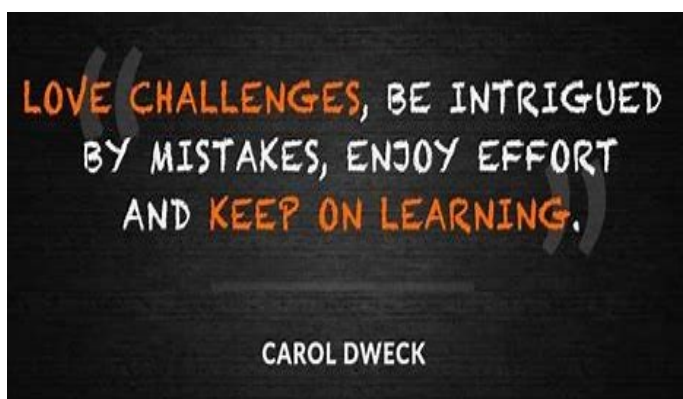
**8. Don't know what to do? Terrific!** How will you tackle this challenge?

**9. Easy? Okay!** How can we make this more challenging for you?

**10. Proud of your..? Congratulations!** Where to next? What are your goals?

## 10 'What' questions to develop a Growth Mindset in Children

1. What did you do today that made you think hard?
2. What happened today that made you keep on going?
3. What can you learn from this?
4. What mistake did you make that taught you something?
5. What did you try hard at today?
6. What strategy are you going to try now?
7. What will you do to challenge yourself today?
8. What will you do to improve your work?
9. What will you do to improve your talent?
10. What will you do to solve this problem?



CAROL DWECK

Aberdeenshire Council

Educational Psychology Service  
Woodhill House  
Westburn Road  
Aberdeen

Phone: 01569 690542

Email: [eps@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:eps@aberdeenshire.gov.uk)

Website:

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/as/aberdeenshireeps/>



Twitter @aberdeenshireEP

We value your feedback, please complete our short survey by scanning the QR code.



Pause for thought.....



## Further information and resources



[Carol Dweck Ted Talk 'The Power in Believing in you'](#)

[Carol Dweck explains growth mindset & why some kids do better than others](#)

[Dr Hazel Harrison explains developing growth mindset in kids](#)



[Big life journal, register for freebies, download booklets](#)

[Mindset works parenting section](#)

[Brainology an interactive programme for kids](#)

[Growth Mindset Guide for parents by Bervie School](#)

[Article explaining growth mindset with book titles to share with kids](#)

[Fun books to encourage growth mindset in children](#)



Mindset: Changing the way you think to fulfil your potential (2017) by Dr Carol Dweck

Growth Mindset Pocketbook (2014) by Barry Hymer and Mike Gershon

Mindsets in the Classroom: Building a Culture of Success and Student Achievement in Schools (Carol Dweck)

## Making Praise Powerful!

	Why?	Instead of:	You could try:
Make praise <b>SPECIFIC</b>	Children often dismiss general praise such as 'great job!' but praise that is linked to <u>specific</u> behaviour is more meaningful and is more likely to be believed.	<b>That is a fabulous picture!</b>	<b>I really like the way you have drawn the eyes..</b>
Make praise <b>DESCRIPTIVE</b>	Attaching a positive description to the praise gives them positive label for themselves—it builds self-esteem!	<b>What a good boy!</b>	<b>That was very kind!</b>
Make Praise <b>REALISTIC</b>	Praise that is too excessive actually makes children more cautious and less likely to risk failure because they are anxious about falling below the high standard they have been set.	<b>You must be the BEST violin player in your whole school</b>	<b>I can hear how much you have practised—it sounds much better!</b>
Praise <b>EFFORT</b> more than achievement	There are many steps on the way to mastering a skill. Praising perseverance and effort on the way to mastery encourages children to value the process of learning and to persevere next time.	<b>Spelling is easy for you—I knew you would get them all right!</b>	<b>I was so proud that you didn't give up even though it was tricky!</b>
Only praise what they can <b>CHANGE</b>	Praising children for things they have no control over such as appearance or intelligence can actually demotivate children. You can't try harder at things you can't change.	<b>You are SO clever!</b>	<b>That was really good thinking.....</b>