

# Educational Psychology Matters

## Sharing our Knowledge and Skills for the Benefit of All

**“ 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.”**

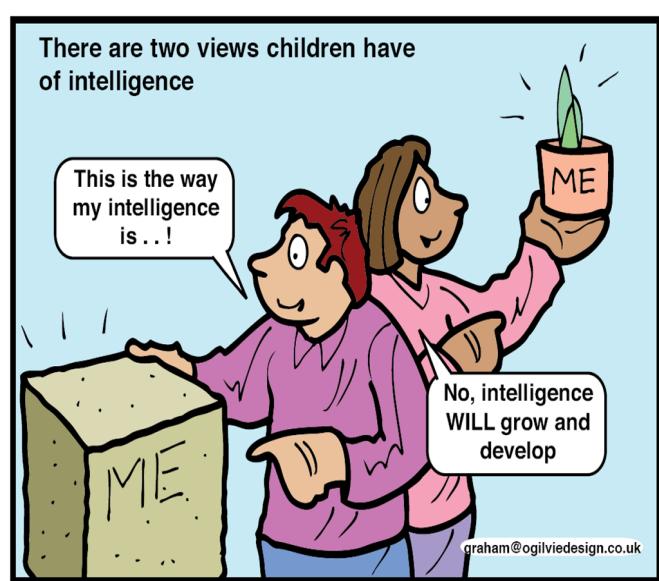
**Carol Dweck  
(year)**

**FAIL**  
**(F)IRST  
(A)TTEMPT  
(I)N  
(L)EARNING**

**MINDSETS:** Recently there has been growing evidence towards how individual beliefs about intelligence can shape subsequent learning. In particular there has been a rising interest in the work of Carol Dweck on Mindsets in education. But what is a mindset and why are they important?

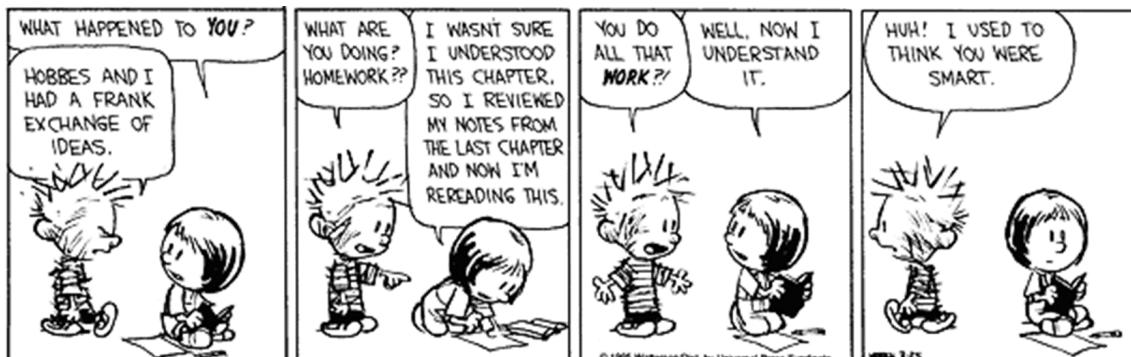
Mindsets are the way in which an individual views their intelligence. Dweck identified two basic mindsets: **Growth Mindset** is the view that intelligence is incremental and can develop and grow over time. Whereas **Fixed Mindset** is the view that intelligence is fixed and unchanging.

For instance, someone with a fixed mindset might think ‘in learning should know right away or never will’; whereas, someone with a Growth Mindset might think ‘work hard, effort is key towards learning’.



**The Brain as a muscle.** Research suggests that it is favourable to think of the brain is like a muscle, which grows and develops as it comes into contact with previous and new learning. As an individual learns, connections between the brains cells (neurons) become stronger and faster. For instance, when coming into contact with a new task initial neural connections are formed; whereas, when coming into contact with a previous task further neural connections are formed consolidating learning. Therefore, often tasks which were once very challenging or even impossible can become easier .

**Impact of Mindset.** The mindset that an individual holds has been found to have an effect on the effort and perseverance they put into their learning and what they attribute their successes or failures to. An individual with a fixed mindset may have a lower resilience towards undertaking difficult tasks often giving up, generally attributing success to internal factors and failure to external factors. 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’. In addition to this they will have a high level of resilience towards setbacks in their learning.



# 8 Top tips to foster a growth mindset in the classroom

## 1. Be aware of your own mindsets

Are you aware of the mindset you hold towards intelligence and tasks. Do you have a Growth or Fixed Mindset? How do you approach a setback?

## 2. Model a growth mindset in the classroom

Children learn by observing their environment and what the adults around them say or do. Use praise and constructive feedback to support a growth mindset.

## 3. Praise effort not attainment

Instead of saying 'you are so smart' you might say, 'I'm proud of you for sticking with it and taking the time to understand the what you're trying to learn' using language like 'we have not got there 'yet' with this sum.'

## 4. Establish high expectations

Let students know that you are challenging them because you know that all of them have the ability to meet those expectations.

## 5. Describe the behaviour, not the person

Instead of saying 'you can't do that, its too hard' tell the young person, our usual strategy didn't work. lets see if we can think of another one to try. Phrasing criticism in this way allows the person to see how they are capable of doing things differently.

## 6. Describe the brain as a muscle.

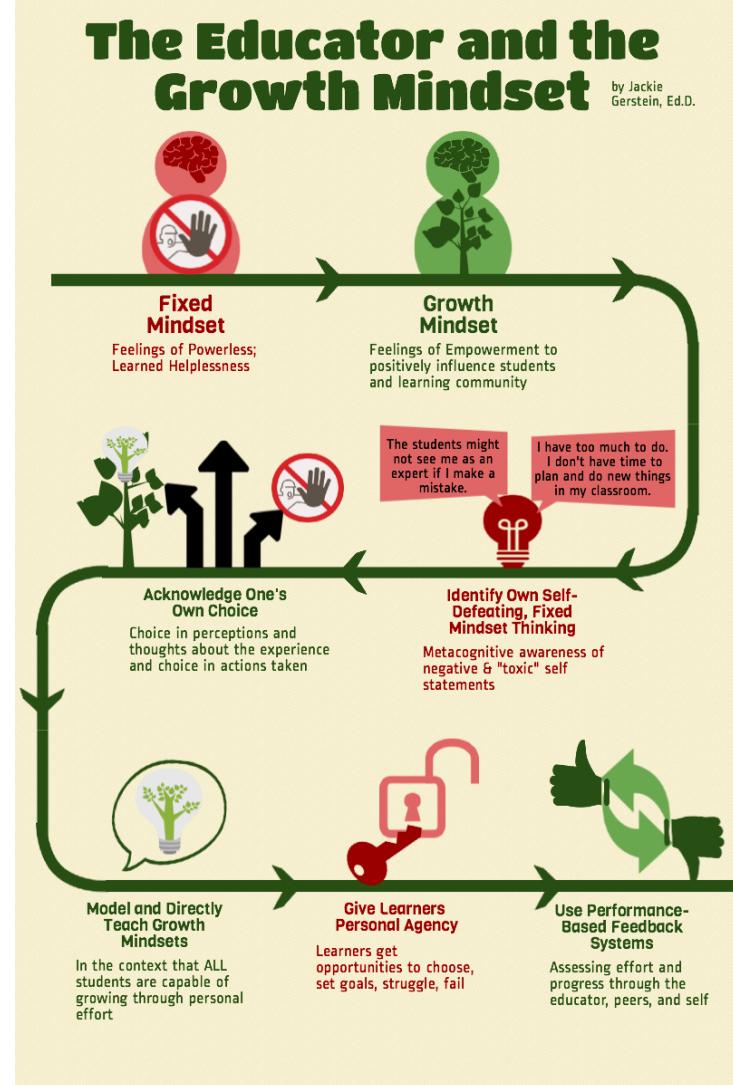
Explicitly teaching children how their brain grows and develops like a muscle and the effort (trying to think of different ways) they put in can physically change the neural connections throughout their life. They will always be capable of learning new things.

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

This applies to teachers and children. Allowing a safe environment to try new things (approaches and tasks) whilst encountering mistakes. Celebrating mistakes teaches children that mistakes are a part of everyday life and learning.

## 8. Providing time to reflect

Allowing time for reflection on the learning process that has taken place, including the problem solving process.



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## Useful References & Resources

**Dweck presenting a Ted talk 'The Power in Believing in you':** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_X0mgOOSpLU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_X0mgOOSpLU)

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

**Website:** [www.mindsetonline.com](http://www.mindsetonline.com)

<http://www.mindsetworks.com/>

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