

# Succeeding with a *growth mindset*

*A mindset includes assumptions or attitudes we have towards something—including ourselves and our abilities. A growth mindset is the belief that our minds, talents, and abilities can grow with perseverance and hard work.*

## **Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset**

A person with a **growth mindset** doesn't believe that his or her success depends just on talent or intellect, or that he or she is just born smart, talented, or successful. A person with a growth mindset believes that he or she becomes these things through effort.

In the absence of a growth mindset, some students have a **fixed mindset**. Those with a fixed mindset believe they have a limited amount of intelligence, cannot learn, and tend to give up easily.

Most people have a mixture, with a growth mindset in some areas and a fixed mindset in others. The goal of Learning Coaches is to help their students work towards a growth mindset in all areas.

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
<p><b>Belief</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence is limited or “fixed” and cannot be changed.</li> <li>• “I’ll never be able to learn...”</li> <li>• “I’ll stick with what I know I can do.”</li> <li>• “Failure is bad.”</li> </ul>	<p><b>Belief</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abilities, talents, and intelligence can be developed.</li> <li>• Brain is like a muscle and grows with use.</li> <li>• “I am capable of learning...”</li> <li>• “I can learn from failure.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Runs from failure.</li> <li>• Doesn’t want to appear “stupid.”</li> <li>• Gives up easily.</li> <li>• Avoids challenges, especially if fearful that s/he won’t succeed.</li> <li>• Doesn’t want to put forth the effort.</li> <li>• Ignores feedback.</li> <li>• May resort to cheating or hiding mistakes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learns from failure and improves.</li> <li>• Persists in learning.</li> <li>• Embraces challenge.</li> <li>• Recognizes that success correlates to the amount of effort.</li> <li>• Welcomes feedback and learns from it.</li> <li>• Doesn’t give up.</li> <li>• Looks for new strategies or ways to learn.</li> </ul>

*continued*

## Why Does Mindset Matter?

Students who believe they can learn and are willing to put in the effort will work towards—and achieve—success. This person recognizes that his or her brain is a muscle that will grow and develop with use and doesn't expect success to come easily.

Over time, students who are considered “gifted” but have a fixed mindset have been found to fall behind the “ordinary” student with a growth mindset. Those with a growth mindset surpass their “gifted” counterparts who tend to depend on their innate intelligence and little effort.

Ultimately, a student with a growth mindset achieves success, whereas a student with a fixed mindset often does not reach his or her full potential.

More importantly, students with a growth mindset become **self-directed learners** who:

- Develop an interest in the material.
- Stay focused and pay attention.
- Avoid or ignore distractions.
- Think about what they are learning and apply it to real-world scenarios.
- Monitor their understanding and performance.
- Seek help when needed.

## How Can You Encourage a Growth Mindset?

- Listen for fixed-mindset language and help your student shift attitudes or assumptions.
- Stress that failure isn't always a bad thing as long as we learn from it.
- Don't praise intellect; praise effort, willingness to try something new, and persistence.
- If something doesn't work, encourage your student to try another way or strategy to accomplish a task or solve a problem.
- Discuss how the brain is like a muscle and how it will grow stronger with exercise.
- Tell your student that he or she shouldn't be afraid to seek help.
- Recognize the learning process, not just the grade. Did your student learn something?
- Recognize that learning and improvement are more important than effort alone. Stress that effort leads to learning.
- Praise effort when it leads to new abilities or alternative strategies—not just working hard at doing the same thing over and over with no results.
- Avoid statements such as, “Try harder” or “You'll get it.”
- Use statements such as, “Tell me what strategies you tried so far,” “What else can you try?” or “What have you learned so far?”

For more information on a growth mindset, read *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2007) by Carol Dweck, or search for growth mindset using your favorite search engine.