

Growth Mindset vs Fixed Mindset

The Growth Mindset principle is to create successful individuals that love learning, seek out challenges, that value effort and persist in the face of obstacles.

Professor Carol Dweck

Carol S. Dweck is the Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. Dweck is known for her work on the mindset psychological trait. She graduated from Barnard College in 1967 and earned a PhD from Yale University in 1972.

Her Research

Professor Dweck's research suggests that some students with a fixed mindset believe their intellectual abilities are simply fixed, whereas those in a growth mindset believe that they can grow their abilities, for example, through hard work, good strategies and mentoring.

Growth and Fixed Mindset Characteristics

Growth Mindset

- Learn at all costs
- Thinks about how they learn
- Works hard, effort is key
- Believes that effort creates success
- Sees effort as necessary for growth
- Embraces challenge
- Views mistakes as opportunities to develop

Fixed Mindset

- Look clever at all costs
- Are fearful of making mistakes
- Are reluctant to take on challenges
- Prefer to stay in their comfort zone
- Sees effort as useless
- It should all come naturally
- Think that it is important to 'look clever' in front of others

Pupil Statements

Growth Mindset

- I want to make sure I stretch myself and learn
- I feel good when I try hard
- I feel good when it starts to make sense
- I enjoy challenges
- I am excited by challenge
- When I get things wrong it means I'm not fulfilling my potential

Fixed Mindset

- I want to make sure I succeed
- I feel good when I don't make mistakes
- I feel good when it's perfect
- I avoid challenges
- I'm hesitant in engaging in difficult tasks
- When I get things wrong it means I'm not talented or good enough

Statements Promoting Mindsets

Growth Mindset

- Praising effort and strategies
- Use formative comments that emphasise effort and process
- Spend time developing intelligence and ability
- Giving children a strong voice in the learning process and a sense of purpose
- Providing constructive criticism
- Place importance on learning rather than grades/levels

Fixed Mindset

- Praising children for being 'clever'
- Use formative comments that emphasise achievement
- Spending time documenting intelligence and ability
- Directing pupils to which task to complete
- Praising pupils for achievement that comes easily
- Placing importance on grades/levels rather than learning

Carol Dweck's thoughts about mindsets

- Students need to try new strategies
- Don't praise effort if no learning has happened
- Don't tell children everyone is clever or that just putting in effort is enough
- Don't use fixed mindset to blame children
- React to mistakes as if they are helpful not a problem
- Acknowledge fixed mindset feelings and work through them

A Growth Mindset Drives Motivation and Achievement



Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck (2007) *Child Development*