

# Mindset

## The New Psychology of Success

Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.

### Summary

Our mindsets are very important in our growth and learning. This book helps us understand the importance of having a growth mindset versus a fixed mindset. Growth mindsets are beneficial to everyone and can impact business, sports, school and relationships. The author really explains that changing the way we look at success and failures can impact our lives as well as how we view and attempt our goals. Mindsets has the ability to change the way you think about the experiences you encounter and the importance of effort in our daily lives.

### About the Author

Carol Dweck is a Stanford University psychologist professor who has spent several decades researching achievement and success. She is extensively thought of as one of the worlds top researchers in personality, social psychology and developmental psychology. Prior to being a professor at Stanford she was a professor at Columbia University.



"If you manage people or are a parent (which is a form of managing people), drop everything and read *Mindset*."  
—Guy KAWASAKI, author of *The Art of the Start*

# mindset

THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY OF SUCCESS

HOW WE CAN  
LEARN TO FULFILL  
OUR POTENTIAL

- \*parenting
- \*business
- \*school
- \*relationships

"Will prove to be one of the most influential books ever about motivation."  
—Po BRONSON, author of *NurtureShock*

CAROL S. DWECK, Ph.D.

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### Special points of interest

- Mindsets change the meaning of effort.
- Mindsets can be changed.
- Failures = learning opportunities.
- Look for opportunities to learn and grow.



Image source: <http://big-change.org/growth-mindset/>

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*“What are the consequences of thinking that your intelligence or personality is something you can develop, as opposed to something that is a fixed, deep-seated trait?” (p.4)*

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## Mindsets

We all differ as people, this has a great deal to do with our upbringing and what we learned. Were you told that you were smart, so you could do anything? Or were you told that if you put your mind to it, with hard work you can do anything? We often develop fixed or growth mindsets from early on, as we go through life we often let our fixed mindset limit what we do. If you could choose would you rather be the person who throws in the towel when you get a poor grade, or do you think about how you can change the grade and make a plan of what needs to be done to improve? As Dweck tells us, even though you may feel distressed, people with a growth mindset are ready to take the risks, confront the challenges and continue working at them (p.9).

People with a fixed mindset will believe that if at first you don't succeed, then you probably won't because you are not capable of it. A growth mindset person would approach this as a challenge and learning/growing opportunity.

*“The message is: You can change your mindset” (p.14).*



Image source: <https://www.actuaries.digital/2015/06/16/actuarial-mindset-fixed-in-the-past-or-positioned-for-growth/>

## Inside the Mindsets

*Is success about learning— Or proving you're smart?*

Who wouldn't want to continue learning daily? When you have a fixed mindset you are "smart" so typically you stay with what is safe as you do not want to risk "failing" or "looking poorly". When you have a growth mindset you are ok with the risk and view it as a learning opportunity. People who have a fixed mindset will only want to do "safe" things so they can show others how "smart" they are, where as those with a growth mindset view their success about what they have learned.

***"People in a growth mindset don't just seek challenge, they thrive on it. The bigger the challenge, the more they stretch" (p.21).***

### Changing the meaning of Failure and Effort

Failure is difficult, in both the growth mindset and fixed mindset. However, in the growth mindset you learn from failure, it does not express who you are, you face it, deal with it and learn from it. People with a fixed mindset believe that if you don't have the ability then you must put forth the effort, it is an either or scenario. Growth mindset individuals see it as a combination, everyone has to work hard for their accomplishments. "They may appreciate endowment, but they admire effort, for no matter what your ability is, effort is what ignites that ability and turns it into accomplishment" (p.41).

## The Truth About Ability and Accomplishment

Students with a fixed mindset often struggle when they transition to junior high and high school as they are afraid of failure. This fear of being measured causes them to put in very little effort so they cannot be judged therefore losing out on learning opportunities. Growth mindset students never stop trying and their grades usually increase as their effort to learn does too. Having a fixed mindset limits achievement and interferes with individuals learning. Often times people with a fixed mindset know the right way and are not willing to try anything else. Those with a growth mindset continuously grow and develop their learning strategies as they are willing to try new things and look for different strategies.

*“With the right mindset and the right teaching, people are capable of a lot more than we think” (p.64)*

### Labels

When are labels a good thing? Especially when it comes to stereotypes? People that have a fixed mindset really have a difficult time with labels, if it is a positive one they are afraid of losing it and if it is a negative one they are afraid of being worthy of it. Labels limit and define those with a fixed mindset. People with a growth mindset will work hard to fight for or defy the labels they have been given. They are able to stay positive and not limit themselves or allow others to define them. Often through this process they are able to fully develop and grow from the experience.



Image Source: <https://www.mindsetworks.com/science/>

Athletes with a growth mindset are not in it to be stars. They want to continue working and training to be their best. That is why we remember them. If they only had a fixed mindset they would most likely not be famous today. Staying on top takes much more than ability, it takes character, strength, determination, hard work and self motivation to get to the top and to stay there.

It's hard to  
beat a person  
who NEVER  
GIVES UP.  
— Babe Ruth

## Sports: The Mindset of a Champion

Having a growth mindset in sports really sets athletes apart from those that do not. Talent is not enough to be great in sports, you need to have the perseverance and tenacity that a growth mindset provides. The minute you fail or are not as good, things can fall apart quickly and those with a fixed mindset look for something to blame and often quit. However using a growth mindset enables you to have discipline to work hard and train to become a champion.



***Character, the sportswriters said. "It's the ability to dig down and find the strength even when things are going against you" (p.92).***

According to Dweck, athletes with a growth mindset show the most character (p. 98). When you are losing you look at what needs to be changed or switch things up and try something new. It is hard but living with a growth mindset allows you to be up for the challenge. Dweck also looked at what is success and what is failure according to sports researchers....

***"Finding #1: Those with the growth mindset found success in doing their best, in learning and improving. And this is exactly what we find in the champions"(p.98).***

***"Finding #2: Those with the growth mindset found setbacks motivating. They're informative. They're a wake-up call"(p.99).***

***"Finding #3: People with the growth mindset in sports (as in pre-med chemistry) took charge of the processes that bring success and that maintain it"(p.101).***

## Business: Mindset and Leadership

What takes an organization from good to great? A leader with a growth mindset... Leaders who are always asking questions and facing hard realities while having the ability to confront difficult circumstances. They are able to do this while staying positive that they will be successful in the end. Leaders with a growth mindset are successful because they are always looking for ways to develop rather than ways to stay “on top”, they do not have to be the superior in the company. Leaders that can lead like this create teams of like minded individuals that want to work for them, energy is constantly being created and people are working together... who would not want to work in an organization like that?

### **Creating a Growth-Mindset Environment Involves:**

- ⇒ **Presenting skills as learnable.**
- ⇒ **Conveying that the organization values learning and perseverance, not just ready-made genius or talent.**
- ⇒ **Giving feedback in a way that promotes learning and future success.**
- ⇒ **Presenting managers as resources for learning.**

**(Dweck, 2006, p.141)**

Fixed mindset leaders typically consider themselves prodigies and the people that work underneath them are their minions that carry out their genius plans. Organizations that have these leaders typically stay the same, there is little to no room for suggestions or improvements unless the leader changes because it is usually the leader’s way or the highway.

Growth mindset leaders use their organizations as a growth mechanism. They are looking for new ideas and ways to do things together as a team. Working in an organization with this type of leadership is like being on a learning journey where everyone benefits including the team members and the organization.

### Are Leaders Born or Made?

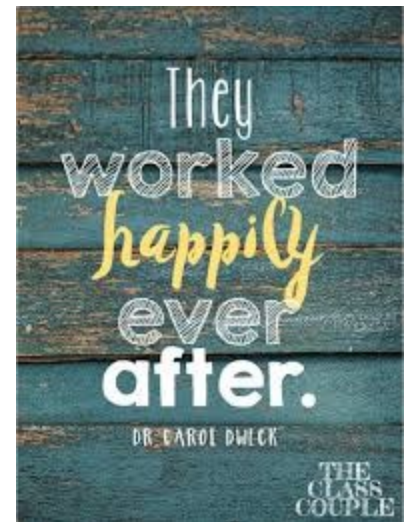
It is important to note the difference between a boss and a leader, not all bosses will become leaders but all bosses are capable of becoming leaders. If people are willing to give up their fixed mindset and focus on transforming themselves as well as their organizations and the people involved, they will become leaders. These leaders will continue to grow, learn and develop with their organizations continuously.



## Relationships

Relationships can benefit from growth mindsets too. Not just romantic relationships, but friendships and work relationships as well. When it comes to relationships, there is not just one mindset but three: your mindset, your partners and the actual relationship. This is why it is extremely important to operate with a growth approach. No relationship is perfect, there are problems that will arise. With a fixed mindset people would perhaps say it was not meant to be and dissolve the relationship instead of working on it with a growth mindset. Approaching issues in the relationship with a growth mindset can potentially create a stronger bond as you work, grow and learn through tough times together.

*“A no-effort relationship is a doomed relationship, not a great relationship. It takes work to communicate accurately and it takes work to expose and resolve conflicting hopes and beliefs” (p.152)*



Through a study Dweck took part in about bullies and victims it was clear that often bullies had a fixed mindset. They wanted to be superior to others and be the judges of who was inferior to them. After looking through the responses, it was noted that victims that had a fixed mindset took bullying more personally than those with a growth mindset. They also immediately wanted revenge, which we know can lead to horrible situations. The victims with a growth mindset responded a bit differently, they thought that bullies were behaving that way as a result of their own issues. The victims in this case often wanted to talk with the bully to understand why they were doing those things and to talk to them about it.

In schools it can be difficult to always be aware of the bullying going on and catching it when it is happening. However if we work on educating students about growth mindsets we might be able to reduce the amount of bullying that occurs.

## Grow Your Mindset

- Listen to what you are saying to your children.
- Praise the processes children use.
- Pay attention to when your child makes an error, give them constructive criticism.
- Set goals with your children to expand their skills and knowledge.
- Believe in the growth of talent and intellect with your students.
- Ask for full commitment an effort in coaching.
- Use growth mindset practices to develop children's potential.

## Parents, Teachers, Coaches

Working with children it is really important to think about the messages we are sending them. Are they growth mindset or fixed mindset messages? We know that children like to be praised, but it is important to praise them for the right thing. We do not want to be praising them for their intellectual ability, instead we want to be praising them for their learning. What about failure? What do we tell our children about failure? Often times we want to protect them but in doing so we actually cause more damage and create a fixed mindset. We want to encourage them and provide them with the truth so they grow to appreciate and learn from constructive criticism and feedback.

***“Withholding constructive criticism does not help children’s confidence; it harms their future” (p.183).***

Fixed Mindset Messages	Growth Mindset Messages
“You learned so quickly, you are so smart!”	“I like the way you tried different math strategies until you found one that worked”.
“Look at your drawing, it is so good, you are going to be the next Picasso”.	“We all learn differently, let’s keep trying to find a way that works for you”.
“You are so brilliant, you didn’t even study and you got an A on your test”.	“Looks like that was too easy for you. Sorry for wasting your time, let’s do something you can really learn from”.

As teachers, parents and coaches we want to set high standards for our kids but we also want to show them how to achieve those high standards. We have probably all worked with students that do not seem to care, but once they realize they too can learn, their mindsets change. Teachers working with students like this must also love to learn and use growth mindsets. Creating the growth mindset culture in school is extremely beneficial for teachers and students working towards their full potential.

***“Growth-minded teachers tell students the truth and then give them the tools to close the gap” (p.199).***



## Changing Mindsets

Changing our mindsets takes time, practice and effort. Our old fixed mindset does not just go away rather the new mindset lives beside it. The more you use and practice growth mindset, the easier it is to use. Our brain is constantly growing and making new connections, the more you use it by challenging yourself, the greater your brain cells grow. This allows us to constantly learning and growing, and in time will allow the growth mindset to over take the fixed mindset.

Using the growth mindset is not always easy but it gives you another way to view things. We continuously monitor what happens in a day on a regular basis, often looking at it with judgement (fixed mindset). The challenge is to change the judgmental thoughts to non-judgmental ones. This can be difficult especially if we have been living in the fixed mindset for quite some time. It can be done, take risks and challenge yourself, just remember that these challenges are opportunities to grow. Look back upon your day and see the setbacks as learning opportunities, make a plan and stick to it. Change is hard but worth every bit of effort you put into it. When you see these changes happening for yourself, ask yourself this...

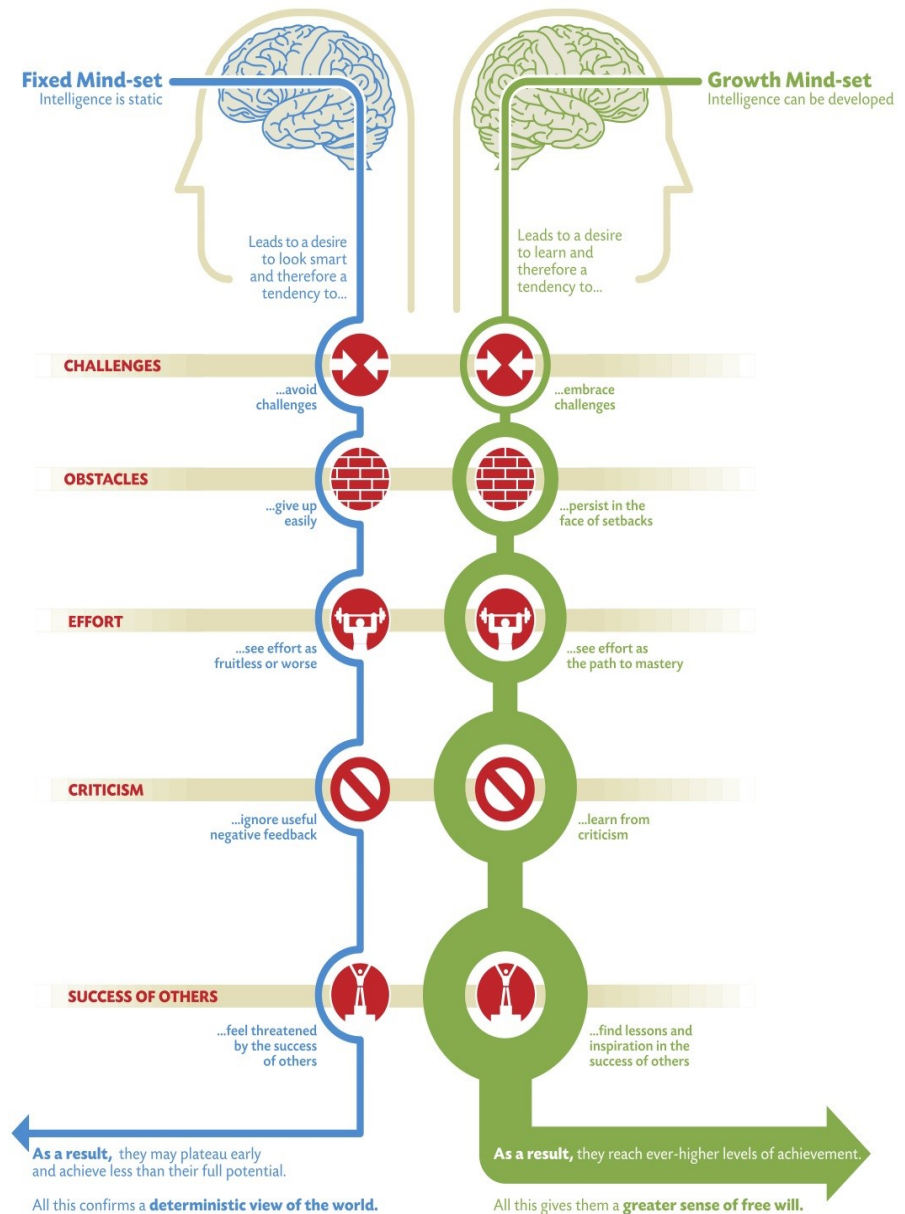


Image retrieved from: <http://blogs.parktdor.org/exploringeducation/2012/08/growth-mindset-struggling-to-grow/>

*“What do I have to do to maintain and continue the growth” (p.246).*

# Summary of Dweck's *Mindset*

## Fixed vs Growth

<u>ability is static</u>		<u>ability is developed</u>
avoids challenges		embraces challenges
gives up easily		persists in obstacles
sees effort as fruitless		sees effort as necessary
ignores useful criticism		learns from criticism
threatened by others		inspired by others' success

Image Source: Research on Success: Grit, growth mindset, and the marshmallow test via SlideShare

This book does a really great job of outlining the growth mindset and fixed mindset. The author has explained both mindsets and given real life examples of each in the chapters. At the end of each chapter, there is an opportunity to 'grow your mindset' which really gives readers an opportunity to stop, reflect and apply the concepts to their own individual lives. As a teacher this book really brought awareness to the language I am using with my students. It gave me several great strategies and opened up my mind to look at things differently. Changing your mindset takes time as the author points out, it is something that will be ongoing in our daily lives. This book has great value to me both professionally and personally, I have been able to take concepts and apply them to all aspects of my life.

### References

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: the new psychology of success*. New York: Ballantine Books