

# Developing Mindsets that Promote Growth



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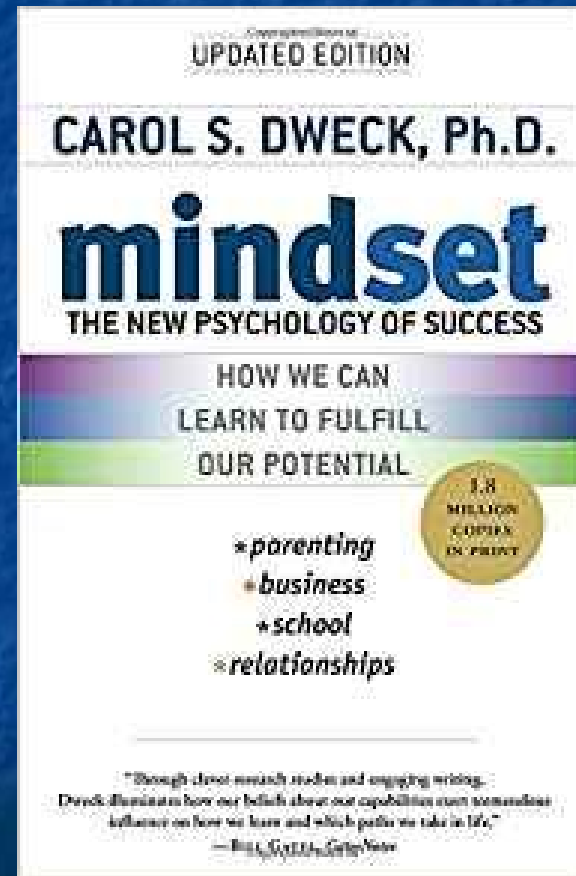
# What do we mean by “mindset”?

Mindsets are the assumptions and expectations we have for ourselves and others. These attitudes guide our behavior and influence our responses to daily events.

- Dr. Robert Brooks

# What does this mean?

According to Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck, success is not determined by innate talents and intellect. Rather, success depends upon mindset – the degree to which we believe we have the capacity to cultivate our intelligence and grow our abilities.





# Mindsets: Not Just Intellect

People embrace fixed or growth mindsets about all of their qualities, not just intelligence. Many people believe that our other qualities – creativity, artistic ability, athleticism, personality traits – are qualities with which we are born ... or not.

However, Carol Dweck asserts that any and all of these qualities can be cultivated.

# Fixed and Growth Mindsets

Why might gifted or struggling learners be especially vulnerable to fixed-mindset thinking?

# When do you feel smart?

## Fixed mindset:

- “When I don’t make any mistakes.”
- “It’s when I finish first and it’s perfect.”
- “When something is easy for me and others can’t do it.”

## Growth mindset:

- “When it’s really hard, and I try hard, and I can do something I couldn’t before.”
- “When I work on something a long time and finally figure it out.”

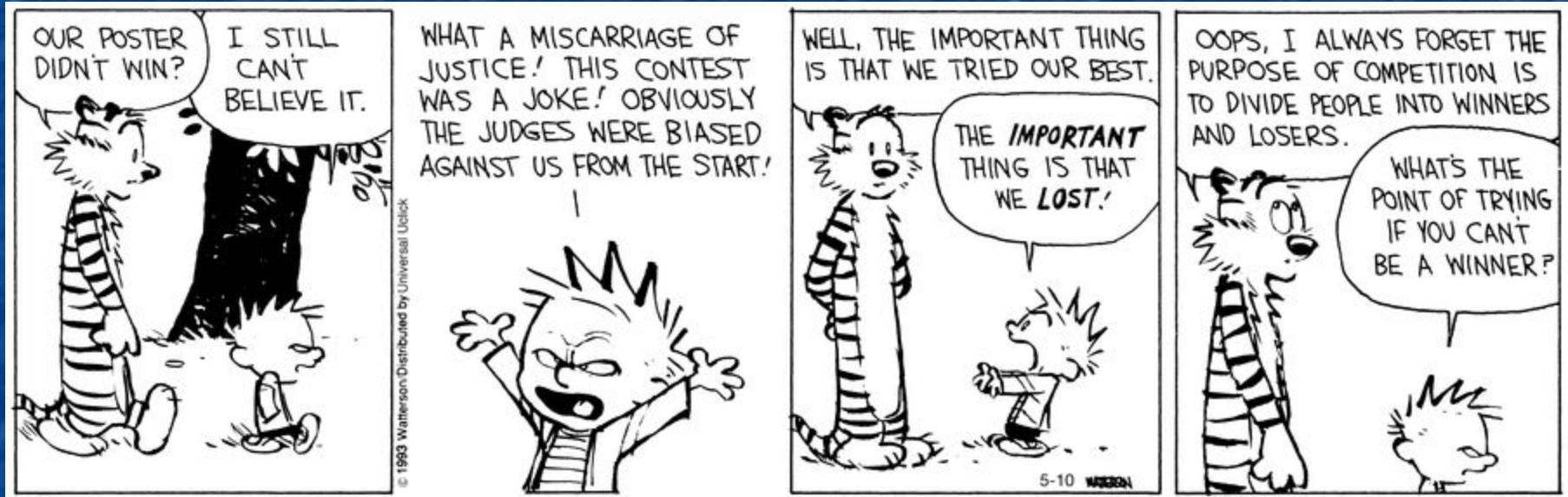


# What's the big deal?

Fixed-mindset thinking results in:

- a false sense of superiority, undermined by a deep sense of self-doubt.
- a fear of failure; refusal to take risks.
- a feeling that failure permanently defines you as a loser.
- a need to prove yourself again and again.
- the belief that only untalented, ungifted people have to work for success; effort somehow reduces you.
- a need for validation and reassurance in labels ("smart," "jock") – whether earned or not.
- a desire to blame others or outside circumstances when things don't go your way.

# The Fixed Mindset



How does Calvin demonstrate the fixed mindset?



# Growth Mindset

Growth-mindset thinking results in:

- a love for learning and self-improvement.
- a desire to be challenged.
- a willingness to work for positive results.
- a belief that you can control the outcomes in your life with effort and practice.
- the ability to learn from mistakes and failures.
- emotional resilience.

# Process, Not Product



How do you respond when your child succeeds?  
What about when he fails?

# What is Self-Efficacy?

Self-efficacy is the belief that you are capable of accomplishing the things you set out to do.

A healthy self-esteem results when a child has a strong sense of self-efficacy. This comes from actual earned accomplishments, not piled-on praise.



# Self-Efficacy vs. Self-Esteem

Students who demonstrate self-efficacy are more successful than students who have an inflated self-esteem (high confidence).



# What can I do?

10 Parenting Tips for Fostering  
the Growth Mindset

# 1. Practice what you preach.

- Model growth-mindset thinking with your child.
- Explain how you deal with challenges and how you continue to learn.
- Don't label yourself in ways that demonstrate a fixed mindset:
  - "I'm a terrible cook."
  - "I always had trouble in math too."



## 2. Emphasize the joy of learning for learning's sake.

- Talk about your student's interests and how he or she is responding to the curriculum – not just, “How did you do on that test?”
- When discussing school, talk about learning as a means for personal reward, growth, intellectual challenge, and opportunity – not as a means to earn a grade or get into a great college.

### 3. Set appropriately high expectations and provide support.

- Lowering standards does not raise self-esteem.
- Expectations should focus on habits, effort, and growth, not grades.
- Provide students with needed supports (extra help, additional resources). Don't assume that "you could do it easily if you just tried harder."

# 4. Be mindful of the goals you set for your children and the messages they send.

- Work with your child to set goals that are reasonable and desirable for both of you.
- All goals should emphasize growth – the development of a skill or the expanding of knowledge. Having innate talent is not a goal your child can work toward.





## 5. Praise effort, practice, and process – not outcome.

- When your child succeeds, talk about the work that went into the success.
- Praise persistence and perseverance. Focus on the positive habits your child practiced and the choices she made which led up to the success.



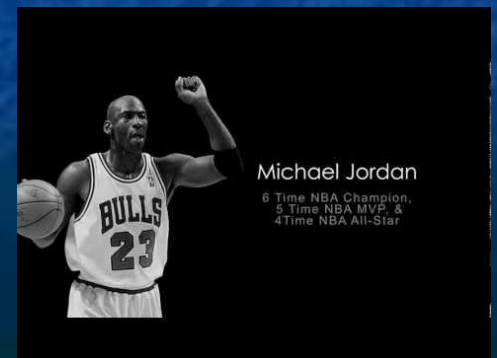
## 6. Use failures as an opportunity for reflection and growth.

- Don't use labels, and don't let your child use them.
- Don't shelter your child from the realities of failure by placing blame on others.
- Ask: "What can you learn from this experience? What could you try differently the next time?"



# 7. Point out the perseverance/ effort of favorite athletes and stars.

- Discuss what habits (focus, goal-setting, daily practice, commitment) enabled the athlete to be so successful.
- Avoid referring to a star athlete's "natural" talent or "effortless" ability.
- Talk about famous people who failed in their early efforts.





## 8. Provide honest, constructive criticism that emphasizes growth.

- Don't harp on your child's shortcomings or past mistakes.
- Work with your child to identify strategies for improvement.
- Involve your child in the problem-solving process, rather than handing out punishments.

# 9. Make concrete plans for growth.

- If your child identifies an area of weakness or is struggling, help your child establish a concrete plan for improvement.
- Avoid vague solutions:
  - Ineffective: "I'll study more."
  - Better: "I'll review my class notes nightly and make flashcards for the difficult concepts."
- Follow up with your child, and help him evaluate the process and refine the solution if necessary.



# 10. Take reasonable risks, and encourage your child to do so.

- The growth mindset is about being a lifelong learner. Accepting risk and a certain amount of failure is part of that process.
- Is there something you always wanted to try but were afraid you'd fail? Make a plan to do it. Allow your child to do the same.



# Notes