

---

# Mindset: Growth & Fixed

---

Have you ever wondered why some highly “talented” people never reach their potential? Or have been amazed when seemingly “ordinary” people achieve extraordinary things? Professor Carol Dweck<sup>1-4</sup> proposes that the key isn’t talent or ability; it’s whether a person looks at their ability as something inherent that needs to be demonstrated, or as something that can be developed and cultivated. In short, it is about a person’s mindset.

## Growth and fixed mindset

Mindsets are beliefs about yourself and your most basic qualities, such as your intelligence, talents, and personality. People have been found to generally subscribe to one of two mindsets:

- **Fixed Mindset:** In this mindset our personal traits and qualities are “carved in stone” and nothing can be done to change them. Skills, talents, and capabilities are considered to be predetermined and finite. Talent or natural ability alone is seen to create success - without effort.
- **Growth Mindset:** In this mindset our traits and qualities are things that can be developed through dedication and effort. Qualities like intelligence are seen as a starting point; however, success comes as a result of effort, learning, and persistence. Accomplishment is seen to be achieved through passionate practice, perseverance and learning.

## Where does our Mindset come from?

Mindsets are created in childhood and extend into adulthood. Role models such as parents and teachers are instrumental in the development of either a growth or fixed mindset. Well-intended messages of praise from influential figures can send a judgmental message, as opposed to a developmental message.

A child that works hard must be recognized, regardless of the outcome. Alternatively, a child that puts in little effort but still succeeds should be given a more challenging task, as opposed to praising their ease of success. Children, and adults, should be taught to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, value effort, and keep on learning.

“I have missed more than 9000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

Michael Jordan

## Books

Mindset: The new psychology of success, Carol Dweck.

## Website

www.mindsetonline.com

## Questions

? Do you spend more of your time in a growth or fixed mindset?

? What creates a growth mindset in you?

## How does our Mindset affect us?

The fixed mindset focuses on judging when interpreting events, e.g., this means, “I am a loser” or “my partner is selfish”. Whilst the growth mindset focuses on the implications of events for learning and constructive action, e.g., “What can I learn from this?” or “How can my partner and I do this better?” Research demonstrates that each mindset leads to predictable patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving, as seen below.

	Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
Motivated to	Prove themselves	Learn from their experiences
Challenges	Avoid challenges	Embrace challenges
Obstacles	Give up easily	Persist in the face of setbacks
Effort	See effort as pointless	See effort as the path to mastery
Criticism	Ignore feedback	Learn from feedback
Success of Others	Feels threatened	Inspired and learns from others
Performance	Plateaus early and achieves less than their full potential	Reaches ever-higher levels

“Children, and adults, should be taught to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, value effort, and keep on learning.”

## Can you change your Mindset?

While it requires effort, it is definitely possible to change from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset, here’s one way to do it:

- **Step 1:** Learn to hear your fixed mindset voice. It may say things like “Why bother trying – I’ll probably fail and look like a fool” or “You don’t have the talent for this”.
- **Step 2:** Recognise that how you interpret challenges, setbacks, and criticism is your choice. You can choose to interpret them through a fixed mindset or through a growth mindset.
- **Step 3:** Practice using a growth mindset voice, e.g., saying things like “I’m not sure I can do it now, but I can learn to with time, effort and persistence”.
- **Step 4:** Take action. Act in accordance with your growth mindset voice by embracing challenges, seeing effort as the path to mastery, learning from and persisting in the face of setbacks and criticism, and finding inspiration from the success of others.

1. Dweck, C. (2007). The secret to raising smart kids. *Scientific American Mind*, 18(6), 36-43.
2. Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York: Ransom House.
3. Dweck, C. S. (2010). *Mind-Sets*. Principal Leadership.
4. Mueller, C. M., & Dweck, C. S. (1998). Praise for intelligence can undermine children's motivation and performance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 75(1), 33.

## Questions

- ? What does your growth mindset voice say?
- ? What action could you take to adopt a growth mindset in different domains of your life?

## Action

1. People often tend to be more one mindset than the other, depending on the context. For example, you may have a growth mindset at work but a fixed mindset at home. To explore your dominant mindset complete a short questionnaire at: <http://mindsetonline.com/testyourmindset/step1.php>
2. Who do you know that exhibits a growth or fixed mindset? Observe and learn from them – what to do and what not to do.