

GROWTH MINDSET

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(taken/adapted from Mindset by Carol Dweck and other sources)

1. How did your parents and/or teachers praise you as you were growing up? Did they tell you how “smart” you were or did they focus on how hard you worked? How do you praise others?
 2. Is there someone in your life (a parent, teacher, friend, boss) with a fixed mindset – someone who won’t take risks, who can’t admit mistakes, who falls apart or gets defensive after setbacks? Do you understand that person better now?
 3. How do you act toward others in your classes, your dorms, etc.? Are you a fixed-mindset student, focused on being smarter than others? Or, do you take advantage of the learning opportunities available to you through your peers?
 4. Was there a difficult transition in your life where you fell into a fixed mindset and lost confidence in your abilities? Describe it.
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1. When do you feel smart? When you’re doing something flawlessly or when you’re learning something new?

Grow Your Mindset: How can you make striving, stretching, and struggling into something that makes you feel smart?

2. Can you think of a time you faced an important opportunity or challenge with a fixed mindset? What were your thoughts and worries – about your abilities? About other people’s judgments? About the possibility of failure? Describe them vividly.

Grow Your Mindset: Now, can you take that same opportunity or challenge and switch into a growth mindset? Think of it as a chance to learn new things. What are the plans and strategies you’re thinking about now?

3. Think of times other people outdid you and you just assumed they were smarter or more talented.

Grow Your Mindset: Now consider the idea that they just used better strategies, taught themselves more, practiced harder, and worked their way through obstacles. You can do that too, if you want to.

3. Are there situations where you get stupid – where you disengage your intelligence?

Grow Your Mindset: Next time you’re in one of those situations, get yourself into a growth mindset – think about learning and improvement, not judgment – and hook it back up.

5. Is there something in your past that you think measured you? A test score? A dishonest or callous action? Being fired from a job? Being rejected. Focus on that thing.

Grow Your Mindset: Now put it in a growth-mindset perspective. Look honestly at your role in it, but understand that it doesn't define your intelligence or your personality or anything else about you. Instead, as: What did I (or can I) learn from that experience? How can I use it as a basis for growth? Carry that with you.

6. How do you respond to “constructive criticism”?

Grow Your Mindset: Remember that constructive criticism is feedback that helps you (and others) understand how to fix something. It's not feedback that labels something in deficient. Use the constructive feedback to improve, even if you believe you've already done your best work.

7. Are you a person who tends to avoid responsibility for your problems or failures by making excuses or blaming others?

Grow Your Mindset: Think of specific examples and discuss how you could use a growth mindset to take responsibility and start to correct the problems you face.

8. Do you use feeling bad as a reason for doing nothing? When you feel disappointed, thwarted, cheated, or depressed do you use this as a reason to stop trying?

Grow Your Mindset: What steps could you take to help growth mindset thinking overcome your fixed mindset? Discuss a specific plan.

SOME GROWTH-MINDSET PRACTICES

1. Think about a time during the past week when you were faced with an academic or social or personal challenge. Determine if you faced that challenge with a growth mindset or a fixed mindset?

How do you know?

If you faced the challenge with a fixed mindset, how might you have approached it differently?

2. Reflect on real-life examples of the use of a growth mindset (by you or someone you know). Do some journaling or free writing about this example. Try to explain how the growth mindset helped you (or someone you know) to solve a problem or to achieve a goal.

Be specific. What did you think and/or do that allowed you to push through the challenge? Save your writing.

3. After engaging in #2 multiple times, read through your free-writing. Are there similarities in what you did each time? What you thought each time? Is there a pattern you can identify?

Again, be specific. Try to identify specific thinking patterns and behavioral patterns that exemplify the growth mindset. Remember these when you face a new challenge.

4. Think of something about yourself you've been wanting to change. What is it? Has a fixed mindset prevented you from doing this?

Think about it from a growth mindset and spell out a concrete plan for change.

5. When you're feeling stuck, remember **THE POWER OF "Yet"**

6. **Remember to:**

- * **focus on effort, struggle, & persistence despite setbacks**
- * **choose difficult tasks**
- * **focus on strategies**
- * **reflect on different strategies that work and don't work**
- * **focus on learning and improving**
- * **seek challenges**
- * **work hard**

(as found on ESU web-page, Developing a Growth Mindset)

25 WAYS TO DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET

Sara Briggs, <http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/author/saga/>

1. Acknowledge and embrace imperfections.
Hiding from your weaknesses means you'll never overcome them.
2. View challenges as opportunities.
Having a growth mindset means relishing opportunities for self-improvement.
3. Try different learning tactics.
There's no one-size-fits-all model for learning. What works for one person may not work for you. Learn about learning strategies (<http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/learning-strategies/>).
4. Follow the research on brain plasticity.
The brain isn't fixed; the mind shouldn't be either.
5. Replace the word "failing" with the word "learning".
When you make a mistake or fall short of a goal, you haven't failed; you've learned.
6. Stop seeking approval.
When you prioritize approval over learning, you sacrifice your own potential for growth.
7. Value the process over the end result.
Intelligent people enjoy the learning process, and don't mind when it continues beyond an expected time frame.
8. Cultivate a sense of purpose.
Dweck's research also showed that students with a growth mindset had a greater sense of purpose. Keep the big picture in mind.
9. Celebrate growth with others.
If you truly appreciate growth, you'll want to share your progress with others.
10. Emphasize growth over speed.
Learning fast isn't the same as learning well, and learning well sometimes requires allowing time for mistakes.
11. Reward actions, not traits.
Tell others when they're doing something smart, not just being smart.
12. Redefine "genius."
The myth's been busted: genius requires hard work, not talent alone.

13. Portray criticism as positive.
You don't have to use that hackneyed term "constructive criticism" but you do have to believe in the concept.
14. Disassociate improvement from failure.
Stop assuming that "room for improvement" translates into failure.
15. Provide regular opportunities for reflection.
Reflect on your learning every day.
16. Place effort before talent.
Hard work should always be rewarded before inherent skill.
17. Highlight the relationship between learning and "brain training".
The brain is like a muscle that needs to be worked out, just like the body.
18. Cultivate grit.
19. Abandon the image.
"Naturally smart" sounds just about as believable as "spontaneous generation". You won't achieve the image if you're not ready for the work.
20. Use the word "yet".
Dweck says "not yet" has become one of her favorite phrases.
21. Learn from other peoples' mistakes.
It's not always wise to compare yourself to others, but it is important to realize that humans share the same weaknesses.
22. Make a new goal for every goal accomplished.
You'll never be done learning. Just because your midterm exam is over doesn't mean you should stop being interested in a subject. Growth-minded people know how to constantly create new goals to keep themselves stimulated.
23. Take risks in the company of others.
Stop trying to save face all the time and just let yourself goof up now and then. It will make it easier to take risks in the future.
24. Think realistically about time and effort.
It takes time to learn.
25. Take ownership over your attitude.
Once you develop a growth mindset, own it. Acknowledge yourself as someone who possesses a growth mentality and be proud to let it guide you throughout your educational career.