

Mindset: the New Psychology of Success

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Chapter 1 - The Mindsets

1. Is there a talent or ability you would like to have but don't? How do you know you don't have it—what's the evidence?
2. Can you name one thing you could do to develop that ability? Two?
3. 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.
4. 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?
5. Is there someone in your life (a boss, mate, friend, child) 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?

Chapter 2 - Inside the Mindsets

1. Benjamin Barber, an eminent sociologist, doesn't divide the people in the world into the successes and failures. He divides them by mindset—into the learners and nonlearners. How do you divide people?
2. When do you feel smart? When you're doing something flawlessly or when you're learning something new? How can you make striving, stretching, and struggling into something that makes you feel smart?
3. Do you ever feel superior to other people? Stop it! It's the wrong mindset and it's one failure away from feeling inferior. Using the growth mindset, discuss ways of feeling confident and worthy without feeling superior.
4. Did you ever label yourself a failure or loser after something negative happened—failing a test, losing a job, being rejected? Describe a time this happened. How could you have been more like Jim Marshall, who made his humiliating experience into a life-changing opportunity?
5. Are you a person who tends to avoid responsibility for your problems or failures by making excuses or blaming others? Think of specific examples and discuss how you could use a growth mindset to take responsibility and start to correct the problems you face.
6. Have you ever been like Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg—afraid to give something important your full effort? Think of times you've done this. Are there other self-defeating ways you try to protect yourself from (meaningful) failure?

Chapter 3 - The Truth About Ability and Accomplishment

1. Did you always assume that success came right from innate talent or ability? Discuss people you know who are brilliant or talented but never went anywhere. And people who are not so brilliant or talented, but are highly successful. How did they do it?
2. Was there a difficult transition in your life where you fell into a fixed mindset and lost confidence in your abilities? Describe it.
3. Look at the before and after drawings on page 69. What do they tell you about talent?
4. Were you labeled a gifted child? Did it help you or hurt you?
5. Have you ever trusted someone's negative evaluation of your ability or talent? Think about it now. How could they judge your potential?

Parents, Teachers, and Coaches: Where Do Mindsets Come From?

1. Do you praise your children's intelligence to make them feel smart? Think of the last time you did this. Now how could you have given growth-oriented praise instead?
2. Do you excuse your children's failures so you won't harm their self-esteem? Think of times you've done this, and then think about how you could use the occasion to teach them a growth mindset (and help them succeed!).
3. People who send fixed-mindset messages to their children—even positive ones—often have children who feel judged and who may become anxious about achievement or even start avoiding effort and challenges. Have you seen signs of this in your children?
4. Have you used discipline to “teach your child a lesson”? What was the message you were hoping to convey? What was the message you did convey? How would you handle it now?
5. Think about the ideals, standards, and expectations you set for your child. Now think hard: Are these the kinds of ideals that make your child feel judged and afraid of disappointing you? Or are these ideals that make your child feel inspired to learn?
6. What did your parents do that fostered a fixed or growth mindset in you?
7. Are you a teacher or a coach? What are some ways you could put the growth-mindset strategies into practice right away? What's your very first step?