

ENHANCING RESILIENCE RESOURCE SERIES

Growth Mindset

STUDENT RESOURCE

What is resilience?

Resilience is important for your emotional, psychological and social wellbeing and for your ability to learn and perform. More specifically, resilience is positively associated with good mental health, happiness, optimism, coping with stress, persistence in the face of challenges, successful completion of a degree, career decision making and career adaptability. Resilience can be developed.

One of the factors that influences your resilience is your mindset. Professor Carol Dweck from Stanford University, a leading researcher on mindset, identified two different mindsets: a growth mindset and a fixed mindset.

Do you tend towards a growth mindset or a fixed mindset? To find out, answer the following questions adapted from Carol Dweck's (2006) book [Mindset: the psychology of success](#).



Resilience Activity: Growth Mindset

Read each statement and note whether you mostly agree or mostly disagree with each one.

Agree / Disagree

1. Your sporting ability is something you can't change very much	
2. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how sporty you are	
3. No matter how much sporting ability you have, you can always change quite a bit	
4. You can always substantially change how sporty you are	

Now look at these statements about personality and character, and decide whether you mostly agree or mostly disagree with each one.

Agree / Disagree

1. You are a certain kind of person, and there's not much that can be done to really change that	
2. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially	
3. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed	
4. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are	

Reading the results

Statements 1 and 2 about sporting ability relate to having a fixed mindset; statements three and four reflect a growth mindset. For the statements on personality and character, statements 1 and 3 reflect a fixed mindset while 2 and 4 reflect a growth mindset. Did your responses to the two sets of question indicate more of a fixed or a growth mindset?

According to Dweck (2005), people with a fixed mindset believe their talents and abilities are fixed; they have a certain amount of ability and that's it. In contrast, people with a growth mindset think of talents and abilities as things they can develop - as potentials that can be improved through hard work, effort, effective strategies, practice and instruction or input from others.

People with a growth mindset don't believe everyone has the same potential. For example, they don't believe that everyone can be a sporting superstar, but they understand that even Olympic athletes wouldn't be representing their countries without years of dedicated practice.

Talent is something you build on and develop. Research has shown that a growth mindset fosters a positive attitude towards learning, a desire for feedback, and a greater ability to deal with challenges. People are a mixture of both mindsets but most of us lean toward one or the other - as you may have found in the previous activity.

Individuals with a growth mindset tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset (those who believe their talents are innate gifts). This is because they are less focused on appearing intelligent and competent and instead put more energy into learning.

Dweck (2016) acknowledges that it is not easy to develop a growth mindset as we all have our own fixed mindset triggers. For example, in the face of particular challenges or receiving critical feedback, we can feel insecure or defensive. We need to keep in mind that responding defensively limits your growth and learning.

Practicing a growth mindset

As students we receive feedback on everything from assignments to teamwork. You can develop your growth mindset by approaching feedback differently. The following two resources will guide you through the process.

Making the most of feedback

Take the quiz! What's your attitude to feedback?

Where do I start?

Just like in the cartoon it is useful to view obstacles you face with a growth mindset – as opportunities to learn and grow. Pick one or two of the suggestions outlined by Sara Briggs on the following page and apply them over the next fortnight to your studies. Reflect on whether they worked for you. If they did, keep working on them. If not, pick a couple of other ideas to try.

I want to
challenge myself!

When I stumble I learn, I pick
myself up and
keep going



Read Sara Briggs (2015) 25 Ways to Develop a Growth Mindset

By [Sara Briggs](#). Retrieved from:

<http://developinggrowthmindset.blogspot.com/2015/04/25-ways-to-develop-growth-mindset.html>

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. Learn more about how to fail well.
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.
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 prioritise 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. **Emphasise 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 yourself when you'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. **Dissociate improvement from failure:** Stop assuming that "room for improvement" translates into failure.
15. **Provide regular opportunities for reflection:** Reflect on your learning at least once a 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:** Students with that extra bit of determination will be more likely to seek approval from themselves rather than others. Be one of those students!
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 favourite phrases. Whenever you struggle with a task, just tell yourself that you haven’t mastered it *yet*.
21. **Learn from other people’s mistakes:** It’s not always wise to compare yourself to others, but it is important to realise that humans share the same weaknesses.
22. **Make a new goal for every goal accomplished:** You’ll never have finished 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 accept that you will fail 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. Don’t expect to master every topic under the sun in one sitting.
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 career.

References

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

Dweck, C. S. (2016) What having a “growth mindset” actually means. *Harvard Business Review*, January 13, 2016

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