



When you think about the way you approach challenges in life, mindset is key. Having a growth mindset can influence the way you respond to challenges, the way you respond to failures, and even the chances you are willing to take. Being willing to push yourself in order to grow, even if it means you may fail, can be daunting. Fearing failure can cause you not to try new things or believe that you don't have the ability to learn new skills.



This is why mindset matters. Author and researcher Carol Dweck has researched motivation and determined that a significant indicator of success is not talent, but rather mindset. She has developed a way of describing the two main mindsets most people have: fixed and growth.

People with fixed mindsets believe people are born with inherent skills and talents that cannot be developed.

They believe if you do not know or understand something, you never will and that success is determined by talent. Alternatively, people with growth mindsets think of failure or a lack of understanding as an opportunity to grow. They believe just because you do not understand a topic or have a skill now does not mean you never will. It means you have an opportunity to learn and try something new. People with a growth mindset know that time and effort can be an indicator of success, rather than inherent intelligence.

This is an important distinction for success in the workplace. Being able to respond to failure or criticism by thinking about it as an opportunity to learn as opposed to proof you are incapable is necessary for personal and professional growth. As Carol Dweck puts it, reframing “passing and failing” as “yet or not yet” can make you ready to approach challenges with a mindset that better enables you to try and learn new things.

### What is a Mindset?

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Your thoughts, ideas, and reactions all contribute to your mindset. Even if you are not conscious of the type of mindset you bring to situations in life, it is there. This is why it is so important to practice having a growth mindset. No one can have a growth mindset all the time, but practicing responding to failures with the knowledge that you can improve will help make those improvements a reality in the future.



## Why is Mindset Important?

Is the glass half empty or half full? Is a missed job opportunity a failure or an opportunity to grow and improve for the next one? Did that negative feedback mean you will never succeed or does it provide you with a chance to become even more successful? These are just a few ways your mindset may influence the way you see a situation and the way you react.



**Reflection Question:** Has there ever been a situation in which you could have benefited from using a growth mindset? Do you think you often use a growth mindset already? Why? How do you know?

## Activity 1 – What type of mindset do you usually have?

No one always uses only one mindset, rather people use a combination of fixed and growth mindsets depending on the situation. However, you may tend to use one mindset more than another. In order to work on improving your mindset, you must first take inventory of where your typical mindset falls.

Below is a set of questions designed to reveal the mindset you typically use. Circle your response to each of the following:

1. Intelligence is something people are born with and can't be changed.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. No matter how intelligent you are, you can always be more intelligent.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. Musical talent can be learned by anyone.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. Only a few people will be truly good at sports – you have to be “born with it.”	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. Math is much easier to learn if you are male or come from a culture that values math.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. The harder you work at something, the better you will be at it.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

11. Trying new things is stressful for me and I avoid it.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. Some people are good and kind, and some are not – it's not often that people change.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. I appreciate when people give me feedback about my performance.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. I often get angry when I negative feedback about my performance.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15. All human beings are capable of learning.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18. Human beings are basically good but sometimes make terrible decisions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. An important reason why I do my work is that I like to learn new things.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20. Truly smart people do not need to try hard	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<b>TOTAL:</b>				

**For the questions below, please tally your score. If you answered:**

Strongly Agree: 0 points  
 Agree: 1 point  
 Disagree: 2 points  
 Strongly Disagree: 3 points

Question 1 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 12 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 4 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 14 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 7 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 16 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 8 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 17 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 11 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 20 = \_\_\_\_\_

**Your total points for this section: \_\_\_\_\_**

**For the questions below, please tally your score. If you answered:**

Strongly Agree: 3 points  
Agree: 2 points  
Disagree: 1 point  
Strongly Disagree: 0 points

Question 2 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 10 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 3 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 13 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 5 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 15 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 6 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 18 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 9 = \_\_\_\_\_

Question 19 = \_\_\_\_\_

**Your total points for this section:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your total score (add two sections together):** \_\_\_\_\_

### Interpreting your score:

60-45 points = strong growth mindset  
44-34 points = growth mindset with some fixed ideas  
33-21 points = fixed mindset with some growth ideas  
20-0 points = strong fixed mindset

*Activity developed from STEM Mentors tool kit.*



For more what growth mindset means, watch this short video:  
[Developing and Embracing a Growth Mindset - YouTube](#)

## Fixed vs Growth Mindset

In a fixed mindset, people believe their qualities are fixed traits and therefore cannot change. These people document their intelligence and talents rather than working to develop and improve them. They also believe that talent alone leads to success, and effort is not required. With a growth mindset, people have an underlying belief that their learning and intelligence can grow with time and experience. When people believe they can get smarter, they realize that their effort has an effect on their success. So, they put in extra time, leading to higher achievement.

## Fixed vs Growth Mindset

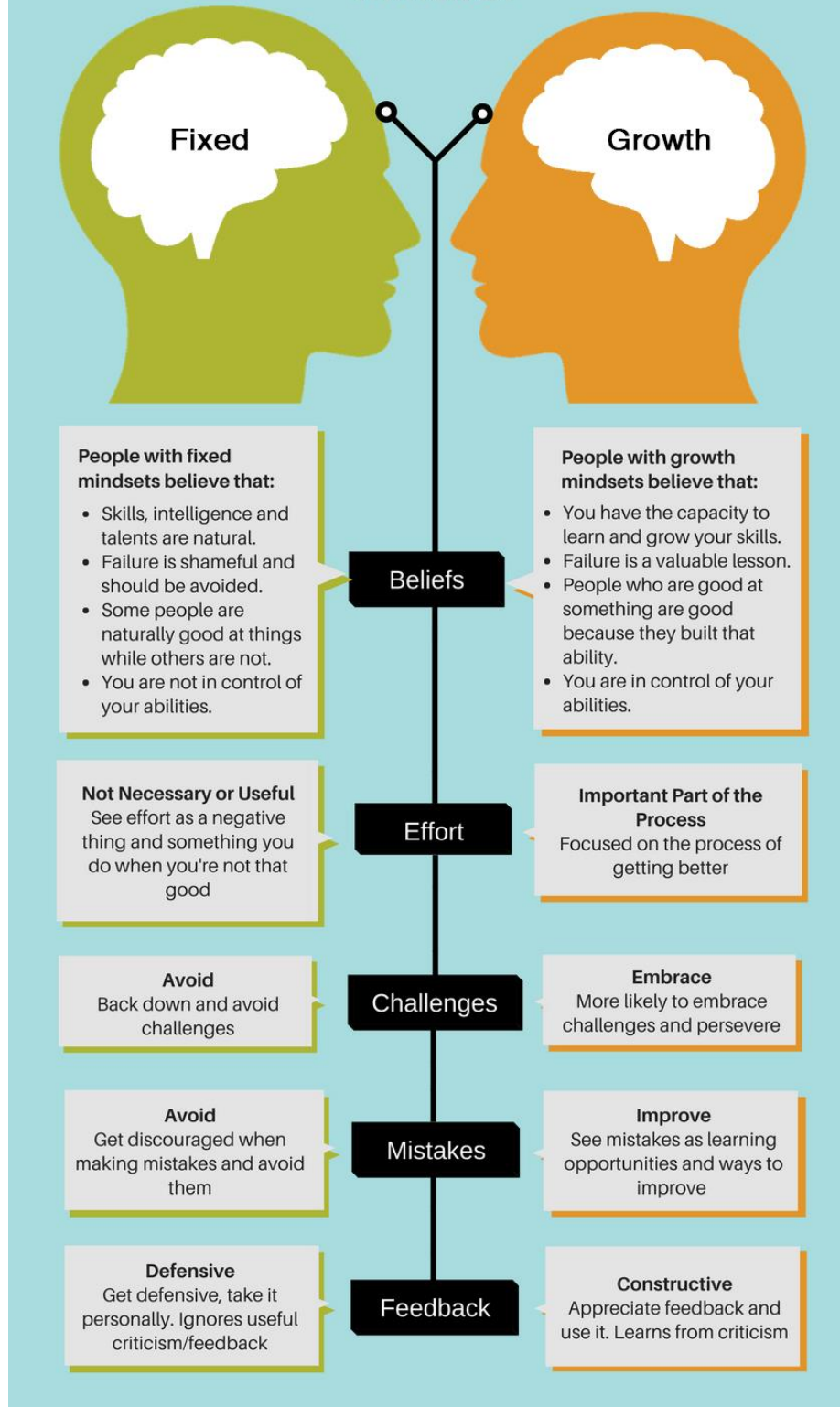


Image Courtesy of: [Fixed vs Growth Mindset](#) | [AOT Blog](#)

## Activity 2 – Building a Growth Mindset

Use this activity to help you think about incorporating your own growth mindset into activities where you have a hard time seeing personal improvement or the ability to grow.

In the first three boxes, write down a skill or something you are good at doing. Then list at least three things you did to develop your skill or ability.

In the 4th square, write a skill or something you don't think you are good at and would like to develop or improve. List at least three things you can do to develop that skill or ability.

I'm good at:

How I developed this skill, ability, etc:

1.

2.

3.

I'm good at:

How I developed this skill, ability, etc:

1.

2.

3.

I'm good at:

How I developed this skill, ability, etc:

1.

2.

3.

**I'd like to improve at:**

**How can I develop this skill, ability, etc:**

1.

2.

3.

*Activity developed from STEM Mentors tool kit.*



For more on cultivating a growth mindset, read this article:  
[Growth Mindset | Psychology Today](#)

## Conclusion: Now What?

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Hopefully you are now encouraged to begin practicing a growth mindset, but you may not know where to start. The best place to start is to simply begin setting goals. If there is something you would like to achieve, identify the goal, and then begin the planning process, being sure to use your growth mindset skills when considering the goal. The best way to set goals is using the SMART format: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based. Using the SMART goal format, you can increase our chances of achieving what you want by clarifying your ideas, focusing your efforts, and using your time and resources effectively.



*Image courtesy of slidehunter.com*



For more information and guidance for setting SMART goals, please read the VWV Setting SMART Goals Guide