

## Growth Mindset

### What is a Growth Mindset?

*Growth mindset* is a belief that intelligence and skill can be grown or developed with lots of determination, effort and a focus on learning from mistakes. The opposite of a growth mindset is what researchers call a *fixed mindset* and people with a fixed mindset believe that intelligence, skills and talent are something you are born with, that is predetermined.

### Understanding Growth Mindset

For many years, people believed that intelligence was fixed and could not change very much after the age of about 8 years old. Through research, scientist called neurologist now know that the brain is constantly changing as learning takes place. This is called brain plasticity, meaning the brain is malleable and changes as new learning takes place.

Understanding that the brain changes and actually grows is very important to learning. In her book, ***Mindset: The New Psychology of Success***, Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D. writes about her findings from over thirty years of research on achievement and success. What she found is that **how** one thinks about things like intelligence and talent is very important to reaching one's potential.

Dweck discovered that people with a growth mindset see learning new things as a challenge and they are willing to work hard with focus and effort. Growth mindset people come to realize that learning is naturally hard and that making mistakes is a normal part of learning. They are not handicapped with a fear of what people will think of them if they have trouble with something at first and they struggle and make mistakes.

### Connection to Soccer

Learning to play soccer involves a lot of practice. Even the most basic skills like dribbling, passing and juggling require hours and hours of practice to begin to develop the skills necessary to play the game of soccer well. Think about it for a minute, do you think it's an advantage to begin to learn and practice soccer skills with a growth mindset or a fixed mindset?

Of course a growth mindset is going to help players develop skills more rapidly because they are actually learning from their mistakes. Players with a growth mindset understand that learning new skills takes time, and so they are a little more patient and are prepared to persevere, which just means they are going to try hard even when they are experiencing failure.

## How to Develop a Growth Mindset

Developing a growth mindset requires the understanding of the plasticity of the brain (science) and the belief that with hard work you too can learn new things and develop new skills.

Watch this animated video that explains the plasticity in the brain and how the brain grows and becomes stronger by taking on challenges <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7FdMi03CzI>

Here are some things to recognize and to focus on as you work to develop more of a growth mindset:

- Developing a growth mindset is a process that happens over time, not overnight.
- Recognize fixed mindset thinking (we all have fixed mindsets with certain things) and growth mindset thinking. Make a T chart to with 2 columns - fixed mindset on one side of the line and growth mindset on the other side. What can you do to change fixed mindset into growth mindset?
- Add yet, to fixed mindset thinking. For example, "I can't solve this math problem, yet". <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86yEfy-z9og>

## For Parents and Coaches

Another key finding in Dweck's research is that **how** parents (and coaches) praise children play a big role in which mindset they will develop. When children are praised for being smart or for being natural athletes, then they tend to have a fixed mindset, believing they have some special innate talent. If, however, they are praised for the amount of effort they gave on a test or in a soccer match, then they are more motivated to try hard because this is within their control.

Parents and coaches should take about a week to pay close attention to their comments to their children/players when it comes to their learning goals and mistakes. Think about these questions:

- What do you say when your child/player tell you he/she isn't good at something?
- What do you say when your child/player has done well on a test or in a game?
- What do your child/player say when he/she has made a mistake?

## List of Do's and Don'ts:

- Do praise the process he/she used
  - Do praise the effort he/she gave
  - Don't say you're smart or you're so talented
- <https://www.mindsetkit.org/topics/praise-process-not-person/dos-donts-of-praise>

## Excellent Resource

<https://www.mindsetkit.org/>

<http://www.mindsetworks.com/>

Source: Carol S. Dweck, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008)