

Fixed or Growth Mindset

01 What does this mean?

A growth mindset is a theory proposed by psychologist Carol Dweck approx. Thirty years ago, following work with students and modes of learning. It is centred around the belief that intelligence and learning can be developed and improved. If someone has a growth mindset, they have a positive attitude towards learning and their ability to progress and achieve. Conversely, if they possess a fixed mindset, they are more resistant to change and accept failure. People with a growth mindset are said to rise to challenges, be more resilient and learn from their mistakes rather than feeling distressed and defeated if they cannot do or understand something.

Before we define mindsets, it is essential to acknowledge a few statements:

- We have a choice; beware of generalisation.
- A person can have a fixed mindset in one area and a growth mindset in another.
- If you can change your mind, you can change your mindset; this has positive implications for cognitive behavioural style approaches.
- Everyone starts with a “learning bent” – a growth mindset; as babies, we learn to walk and talk; however, as we develop, we ask ourselves, “What changes?”
- How does mindset affect success and failure?

What is your mindset? See the test below.

The most effective leaders are continually developing and learning and are not afraid to make mistakes, learn from them, and then pick up and move forward. Acceptance of vulnerability, learning and development invokes trust from others.

Growth Mindset

"Failure is an opportunity to grow"

"I can learn to do anything I want"

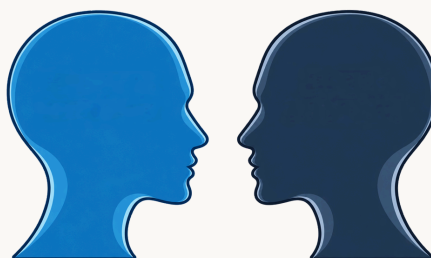
"Challenges help me to grow"

"My effort and attitude determine my abilities"

"Feedback is constructive"

"I am inspired by the success of others"

"I like to try new things"



Fixed Mindset

"Failure is the limit of my abilities"

"I'm either good at it or I'm not"

"My abilities are unchanging"

"I can either do it, or I can't"

"I don't like to be challenged"

"My potential is predetermined"

"When I'm frustrated, I give up"

"Feedback and criticism are personal"

"I stick to what I know"

02 How do we encourage, embrace, and enhance our “growth mindset”?

Individuals should explore this. Start with some foundation reflection around the following topics:

- The ability to reflect.
- The ability to take feedback.
- The ability and, importantly, the desire to learn and develop.
- How do different cultures present differently through a fixed and growth mindset? (e.g., losing face, organisational hierarchy, and structures).
- Explore and discuss past examples of learning and development.
- Where does their motivation come from?
- What are their core values and beliefs?
- Can you establish any patterns of behaviour?

03 The Fixed Mindset

This is described as an individual's belief about their basic abilities, qualities, and talents, which are seen to be essentially stable and cannot change. With this construct in mind, there are several attributes that, as mentors and coaches, we need to be aware of when confronted with this mindset:

- They enjoy being praised for output, not effort.
- They don't like to feel dumb – for not achieving their goal.
- They don't like to be challenged.
- They don't respond to difficulties, upsets, or setbacks well.
- They generally have low levels of resilience.

04 The Growth Mindset

This is an alternative at the other end of the mindset continuum. The basic idea and construct is that our abilities, qualities, and talents can be grown and developed. With this construct in mind, the attributes that, as mentors and coaches, we need to be aware of when confronted with this mindset:

- Effort and difficulty will be rewarded.
- They look for challenges.
- There is increased resilience in the face of setbacks.
- There is increased motivation from setbacks.

05 FIXED GROWTH MINDSET TOOL

To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?

NB** Please remember to reverse the scores on the following questions: 1, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 20.

RESPONSE SCALE

3	2	1	0
STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE

1.** Intelligence is something people are born with that cannot be changed



2. No matter how intelligent you are, you can always be more intelligent



3 You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.



4.** You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that



5. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.



6. Musical talent can be learned by anyone



7.** Only a few people will be truly good at sports – you have to be “born with it.”



8.** Maths is much easier to learn if you are male or maybe come from a culture who values maths.



9. The harder you work at something, the better you will be at it



10. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially



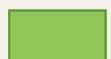
11.** Trying new things is stressful for me and I avoid it.



12.** Some people are good and kind, and some are not – it's not often that people change



13. I appreciate when people, parents, coaches, teachers give me feedback about my performance



FIXED GROWTH MINDSET TOOL

3

STRONGLY
AGREE

2

AGREE

1

DISAGREE

0

STRONGLY
DISAGREE

14.** I often get angry when I get negative feedback about my performance.



15 All human beings are capable of learning.



16.** You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.



17.** You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed



18 Human beings are basically good, but sometimes make terrible decisions.



19. An important reason why I do my schoolwork is that I like to learn new things



20.** Truly smart people do not need to try hard.



TOTAL

YOUR RESULT

Scoring Results		Score
Strong growth mindset	45 - 60	
Growth mindset with some fixed ideas	34 - 44	
Fixed mindset with some growth ideas	21 - 33	
Strong fixed mindset	0 - 20	

Notes