

## What is a growth mindset?

In Carol Dweck's 2006 book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, she distinguishes between two types of mindsets people tend to have about their intrinsic qualities:

**In a fixed mindset**, “your qualities are carved in stone.” Whatever skills, talents, and capabilities you have are predetermined and finite. Whatever you lack, you will continue to lack. This fixed mindset applies not just to your own qualities, but to the qualities of others.

**In a growth mindset**, “your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts...everyone can change and grow through application and experience.” Qualities like intelligence are a starting point, but success comes as a result of effort, learning, and persistence.

## Can your mind grow?

We can all agree: if you are a regular gym-goer, each time you bench press you will grow and strengthen your pectoral and deltoid muscles. Now, research has shown that our brain works in a similar way: when we focus and “exercise” our minds to learn something, new connections are established in our brains. Neurons, which are tiny nerve cells in the cortex of the brain, connect the communications network our brain uses to process. These connections are able to multiply and grow stronger when a brain works hard – like learning a new skill, practicing an instrument, or reading and processing content. Thus, the brain and its abilities are capable of growing like a muscle.

### The results can be stunning:

- People with a growth mindset had more active brains than people with a fixed mindset when they got feedback that could help them learn.
- After performing poorly on a test, people with a growth mindset chose to learn from people who did better than them. People with a fixed mindset made themselves feel better by looking at the scores of people who did worse than them.
- Adolescents with a growth mindset earned higher math grades than those with a fixed mindset.
- Middle school students with a growth mindset were more likely to take advanced math.
- In Chile, students who had a growth mindset were three times as likely to score in the top 20% of students nationally while students with a fixed mindset were four times more likely to score in the bottom 20% of students.

## Think About It

As a manager, what are at least three reasons why it is important to realize that employees can develop their abilities?

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