

Growth Mindset

What is it?

People with a fixed mindset believe that their qualities are fixed traits and therefore cannot change. They also believe that success depends largely on innate talent rather than sustained effort. In contrast, people with a growth mindset believe 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.

Who is affected?

Even high-achieving students may have fixed mindsets, which hinders their ability to tackle more challenging learning materials.

How is it measured?

The mindset scale was proposed by Carol Dweck. The full version of the scale has 8 items to which students respond on a 1-6 Likert scale. An abbreviated scale has three items, corresponding to the three fixed mindset items. We recommend using the three-item scale, as it has a lower chance of being affected by desirability bias (i.e., participants selecting socially desirable responses instead of how they actually feel). Higher scores on this scale are associated with a “fixed mindset,” meaning that those with high scores believe their intelligence is *not* something they can improve. Lower scores are associated with a “growth mindset,” meaning that those with low scores believe their intelligence can be developed and can grow.

How can we get students to adopt growth mindsets?

- Praising effort rather than talent
- Emphasizing learning over exam scores
- Providing opportunities for practice and feedback through multiple low-stakes assessments rather than few high-stakes exams.

References

- Chiu, C. Y., Hong, Y. Y., & Dweck, C. S. (1997). Lay dispositionism and implicit theories of personality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(1), 19.
- Lin-Siegler, X., Dweck, C. S., & Cohen, G. L. (2016). Instructional interventions that motivate classroom learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 108(3), 295.