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Mindset Assignment

**The difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset**: A fixed mindset is one that believes the capacity to increase knowledge, problem solving, or even creativity is permanently etched into the physical genetics of that being. Like how tall a person is or the color of their eyes, a mind’s capacity to learn is forever fixed.

A growth mindset, on the other hand, believes that knowledge, problem solving, or creativity are all facets or traits that can be learned and improved upon. For example, if one person takes 20 minutes to read a chapter and know it inside and out, but another person takes 60 minutes to read the chapter and know it inside and out, is the first person any smarter? A growth mindset says no, and believes that if the person that takes 60 minutes to get through the chapter continues to work at it, they will see that eventually they could cut the time to get through the chapter from 60 minutes to 40, to 20, or even less.

**Key points from Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 7:** Chapter one sets the stage, and begins by explaining that having a fixed mindset is not something people are born with, but something that they learn. Dr. Dweck discovered that ten year olds “knew that human qualities, such as intellectual skills, could be cultivated through effort.” (Dweck 4)

It is human nature to group things. Fruit, vegetables, fiction, non-fiction, insects, mammals, the list is endless. So it is natural that humans began to ask the question and group our own species and intellect. Dr. Dweck explains that there are two groups of thought that came about to compare humans and their intellect. Some claimed that it was a strong physical basis, while others pointed to individuals’ backgrounds. Research has shown that both a strong physical basis and an individual’s background play a roll, and everyone’s predispositions are different. The good news is that “scientists are learning that people have more capacity for lifelong learning and brain development than they ever thought.” (Dweck 5) Therefore, it is critical to stop trying to prove you are smart, and accept that you must always learn. As the two-time Super Bowl champion quarterback Peyton Manning says, “if you are not getting better, you are getting worse. You never stay the same.”

Chapter 2 begins to look at the characteristics of a person who embraces a growth mindset and compares some of their behavior/decisions to a person with a fixed mindset. People with a growth mindset often surround themselves with friends or partners that will support them and encourage them to be lifelong learners, to take risks and challenge themselves. Dr. Dweck discusses how a fixed mindset will cause people to surround themselves with worshippers and reject critics. A fixed mindset individual prefers to stay with the status quo and what is comfortable – this combination is called the “CEO syndrome.” A syndrome where people will never change what is comfortable (or refuse to innovate) and will surround themselves with yes-men (or women) who never challenge their thinking and put them on a pedestal. Adopters of the growth mindset thrive on challenges, and cast away the status quo. They can appreciate when the people around them can question their thinking or actions.

In contrast to a growth mindset, chapter 3 looks to understand the apathy of a fixed mindset when introduced to challenge. A challenge to someone with a fixed mindset creates insecurity. To the fixed mind set, challenge is evidence that a person is not worthy or simply does not have the “smarts” to be successful. This often leads to the though process that it is easier to not try, then to try and fail. By trying, people with a fixed mindset fear they will have no excuse if they are not successful. This is unfortunate, because as stated before, so many factors are out of our control, but a human’s ability to try, put forth effort is boundless.

When people put forth effort the results can be staggering. Can a person become the next Einstein, Mozart, or Vangogh. That might not be attainable, but the amount a person can improve at any skill by focusing their efforts and chasing their curiosity is limitless. Like the example at the beginning of my paper, one student may take 20 minutes to read a chapter and comprehend, another may take 60 minutes. Is the first student any smarter when they are done? When the second student decides to put forth as much effort as it takes to be successful, time is no longer a factor. While successfully completing the task at hand is the outcome, the side effect of the hard work and effort is improvement. If the second student continues to put forth focus and effort, they will start reading faster and comprehending better. Eventually they will read a chapter as fast as anyone, or faster.

In chapter 7, Dr. Dweck explains the importance of encouraging, or promoting a growth mindset. “It is important to believe in the growth of intellect in any human, and always be fascinated with the process of learning” (Dweck 194). By supporting, challenging, and holding key constituents accountable a person can promote a growth mindset in others. Having a growth mindset is directly correlated to your natural curiosity to learn, and the effort put forth to focus on the task at hand.

It is important to always seek challenges. To be okay with failure, and at times seek it. To push to the limit (failure), because to push for the boundaries is where the greatest achievements are made. The best learning takes place when people are outside of your comfort zone, and have to mentally toil over a problem or project. When you are struggling, is when you are learning. And ones’ ability to focus, even when it is hard, is there true ability to learn.