

Growth Mindsets

A Guide for Parents

Why are we learning about growth mindsets at Crossways?

Over the past two years, the children, staff and governors have been learning about growth mindsets. Mindset is a simple idea discovered by world-renowned Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck in decades of research on achievement and success. Dr. Dweck identified two mindsets people can have: a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. Her research shows us that by learning about mindsets, children can increase their learning power, become more resilient and improve their mental wellbeing.

What are mindsets?

Our mindset is the view that we have of our qualities and characteristics – where they come from and whether they can change. Dweck has discovered that our mindset can have significant impact on our lives and in the way the way that we learn. Dweck has found that characteristics of either growth or fixed mindsets can be seen in children as young as 4 years old. Just by learning about mindsets and how our brains work, children can change from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset.



Fixed Mindsets

People with a fixed mindset believe that their qualities are set in stone. We are born the way we are born and it cannot be changed. Intelligence, personality and creativity are fixed traits, rather than something that can be developed.

When people have a fixed mindset they often display the following traits:

- Belief that talent and intelligence is everything.
- Only less talented/intelligent people need to put in effort. Geniuses don't need to put in hard work.
- Finding the idea of trying and failing terrifying.
- Not listening or responding to feedback from others.
- Shying away from challenge for fear of embarrassment or failure.
- Being threatened by the success of others.
- Confidence which is easily undermined by setbacks.
- An urgency to prove that they are better than others.
- A lack of resilience when something is challenging.
- Giving up easily.

Growth Mindsets

People with a growth mindset believe that they can cultivate and grow their intelligence and understanding, through purposeful practice, effort and experience.

When people have a growth mindset they often display the following traits:

- Understand the importance of effort and that the right kind of effort will lead to achievement.
- Understanding that intelligence can be grown.
- Viewing mistakes as opportunities to learn.
- Responding positively to feedback from others.
- Learning from other people and their successes.
- Seeing challenge as positive.
- Believing in the power of yet.

Mixed Mindsets

In reality, most of us have mixed mindsets; our mindsets might change, depending on the subject that we are learning or the situation that we are in. A child's mindset can even differ at different stages of a lesson.

TOP TIPS

for helping your child to develop a growth mindset

1) Be a growth mindset model

- Talk to your child about your experiences of being a learner, including as an adult
- Explain to them what you do when you find something challenging. Talk to them about how you built resilience.
- Talk about the steps that people make to improve rather than making statements that imply that intelligence is fixed, e.g. talking about simply being clever.
- Encourage your child to see challenges as learning opportunities.

2) Focus your praise on effort, not intelligence

- Avoid praising your child for being clever, intelligent or talented as research shows that this helps to develop a fixed mindset. Instead, praise the effort that your child has made to get there, rather than the end result.
- Ask your child what they think they could do to challenge themselves further.

Instead of saying...

“You’re amazing at spelling!”

“Don’t worry, I’m not good at fractions either.”

You could say...

“Wow! You tried really hard at your spelling today.”

“We both find fractions tricky, but we just can’t do it yet. How could we get better?”

3) Build your child’s resilience

- Talk to your child about ‘growing’ or ‘exercising’ their brain.
- Remind them that mistakes are great because they help us to learn.
- Talk about challenges in a positive way, e.g. “I can see that you’re finding your maths challenging today. That means that you’re exercising your brain and helping it to grow.”

4) Talk about mindsets with your child

- Talk to your child about what they are learning in school about mindsets.
- Ask them if they have a growth or a fixed mindset today and encourage them to explain why.
- Look at the school growth mindset charter together.

