

THE GROWTH MINDSET

CLASSROOM-READY RESOURCE BOOK

A Teacher's Toolkit for Encouraging Grit and Resilience in All Students



Annie Brock and Heather Hundley
authors of *The Growth Mindset Coach*

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Editor: Renee Rutledge

Proofreader: Barbara Schultz

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INTRODUCTION

In *The Growth Mindset Coach*, we produced a chapter-a-month guidebook for cultivating growth mindsets in your classroom. In *The Growth Mindset Playbook*, we dug deeper into how classrooms and schools can empower students and increase achievement through building growth mindsets. In this new addition to our Growth Mindset series, we are expanding these ideas by offering turnkey lessons (ranging from 15 minutes to an hour) to use in your classroom. We'll revisit the same subject matter from our previous books and offer 45 valuable, ready-to-teach lessons and over 50 reproducible resources that will help you put the power of growth mindset to work for you and your students.

Each of our lessons will have a simple structure:

TEACHER TALK

A pre-lesson summary of the purpose of the lesson.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

What the students should know or do by the end of the lesson.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

The resources and materials necessary to conduct the lesson.

METHOD

Step-by-step instructions for lesson implementation.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Ideas to check for understanding during and after the lesson.

SUPPLEMENTAL/EXTENSION IDEAS

We have also included a section after each lesson that offers simple ideas to supplement the objective. These supplements might include ideas for student displays, read-aloud books, or other materials that

will supplement the lesson in some meaningful way. You can choose to use these or not; the supplements are not essential to the lesson itself.

Additionally, in the methodology of the lesson plan, we advise instructors to say certain things or ask certain questions. You should view these as suggestions, not mandates. If the natural progression of the conversation is moving to more in-depth questioning or conversation, by all means go with it. If you notice or hear something that you would like to elaborate on in the course of the lesson, take time to do that. Don't forsake powerful "a-ha" moments in service of the lesson plan. The lesson plan should be in service of those moments. Allow the lesson to go where it naturally progresses, skip sections where appropriate, add examples where necessary, and make it your own. You know your classroom and your students best, and we trust you to take the foundations of the lesson plans we've provided and build something truly powerful that will serve your students.

MINDSET BACKGROUND

In the early 1970s, psychologist Carol Dweck was studying how children responded to failure. Dweck and her research team devised an experiment involving difficult math problems that would allow them to gather data on how the children responded to failing a challenge. Dweck discovered that some students had a complete inability to cope with their failure. Other students approached the difficult task with the distinct attitude of wanting to learn from it and to challenge and grow their intellect. Dweck wondered what might cause these different reactions in children faced with challenges. This experiment was the beginning of Dweck's research into the mindsets.

Dweck coined the phrases "fixed mindset" and "growth mindset" to describe the way some students avoided challenges and others approached them head on. The fixed mindset is simply a belief that one's skills, abilities, and talents cannot be meaningfully developed. We sometimes refer to this as the "God-given talent" theory—the belief that you are born with only so much skill or ability in certain areas and there isn't much you can do to change that. According to this mindset, some people just have talent for things that others do not. Growth mindset, on the other hand, is the belief that with hard work, effort, and perseverance, one can develop their skills, talents, and abilities over time. Over decades of research, Dweck and her team amassed data that definitively showed that people who possessed a growth mindset had better outcomes in academics, careers, relationships, and other facets of life.

In *The Growth Mindset Coach* and *The Growth Mindset Playbook*, we outlined a series of steps teachers can take to create a growth-oriented classroom. A growth-oriented classroom focuses on growth over grades, progress over performance, and yet over right now. In this type of classroom environment, we reasoned, students' growth mindsets would have the best chance of flourishing.

In her TED Talk, “The Power of Believing You Can Improve,” Dweck asks, “How are we raising our kids? Are we raising them for now instead of yet? Are we raising kids who are obsessed with getting A’s? Are we raising kids who don’t know how to dream big dreams? Their biggest goal is getting the next A or the next test score? And are they carrying this need for constant validation with them into their future lives?”

If we want to raise kids as Dweck described—for yet instead of right now, we must offer them spaces where they see the positive association between effort and growth. In a classroom, this begins with you, the teacher. No matter how much you teach and encourage growth mindset as a classroom teacher, you may be sabotaging it with your own fixed mindset. It is imperative that you approach each day, each interaction, with a growth mindset, always viewing your students and their potential through the lens of growth and modeling growth mindset daily.

Dweck writes in her book *Mindset*, “A person’s true potential is unknown (and unknowable)... it’s impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil, and training.” Stop viewing your students through the lens of your preconceived notions, instead approach each day with the belief that with hard work and perseverance your students—even the ones who struggle most—have the potential to achieve great things.

This belief will propel both you and your students to embark on the growth mindset journey. If students understand that you believe in their unlimited potential, it sets the stage for them to believe deeply in their own abilities. The goal of the growth mindset classroom is to develop in each student the love of learning. This is not an easy challenge. Students come to us with a range of obstacles. They may have learning disabilities, lagging skills in behavioral development, difficult home situations, trauma, chronic absenteeism, a lack of family support, or a variety of other challenges that may impact their availability for learning and academic performance at school. As teachers, we are responsible for seeing each student for who they are, to build relationships with them, and to set them up for success by helping them understand the connection between effort and improvement, regardless of circumstance.

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER

The objective of this book is to teach students about the power of growth mindset, the science of learning, and specific behavior and character strategies and skills that impact student success. As much as we have attempted to make these lessons suitable for any classroom, many of the activities skew younger. All of them, however, can be adapted to higher-level classrooms. Don’t discount the power of Play-Doh and icebreakers in a high school classroom—we have used both to great effect. Prepare to adjust the lessons based on how your students respond to the learning and the tasks provided. We offer suggestions for doing this at the end of each lesson plan in the Supplemental/Extension Ideas section.

Although these lessons are meant to be taught in the span of 15 to 60 minutes, the objectives of the lesson should be revisited throughout the year. Teaching students about growth mindset and then abandoning the idea for the next several months will not help you make meaningful change in your classroom or in developing student skills. Be intentional about pointing out growth and fixed mindset messages and actions when you see them, continually discuss with students how their brains are doing the work of learning, and set up classroom practices that honor growth and progress over performance and perfect grades. These concepts need to be revisited often and become a part of your classroom ethos.

Beyond referring to the lesson objectives throughout the year, educators hoping to foster mindsets in the classroom can do other practices like the following:

- › **Praise students for effort.** Replace phrases like “You’re so smart” with comments about strategy or questions about effort. Emphasize the learning process in your praise. Say things like, “Wow, you did well on this test. How did you study for it?” Or, “I really like the way you took your time on your picture” instead of “You’re so artistic!” Taking praise away from the person and instead emphasizing the process will go a long way in dismantling the belief that some people are just meant to be great at certain things, and building up the idea that with hard work and a good strategy anyone can be, do, and learn anything.
- › **Normalize mistakes.** Mistakes can happen to anyone, especially when they are learning something new. Honor mistakes in your classroom as a normal and helpful part of the learning process. Find good work in mistakes where you can, and help students restrategize when something isn’t working. A classroom where learning from mistakes is welcome fosters growth mindsets.
- › **Create a culture of feedback in your classroom.** Teach your students to look at their work and others’ work with a critical eye, and give them the language to give one another clear, strategy-focused feedback. A growth mindset classroom is a place where assignments can always be improved, projects can be revisited, and feedback is viewed not as a criticism, but as a path to deeper understanding.
- › **Give parents the tools to promote a growth mindset at home.** Mindset is a fairly simple concept that any parent can incorporate into their home. Share research with them, teach them about the growth and fixed mindsets, and give them some strategies they can use at home to embrace challenges and apply a growth mindset.

In addition, educators will note that each section of this book embeds mindset and behavioral standards identified in “ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Students Success: K-12 College- and Career-Readiness for Every Student,” from *Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Every Student*, published by the American School Counselor Association. This book is a toolkit that focuses on the development of self-management, social skills, and learning strategies needed for encouraging grit and resilience in all students.

SECTION 1

ALL ABOUT GROWTH MINDSET

*“Success comes from knowing that you did your best to
become the best that you are capable of being.”*

—John Wooden

In this section, we’ll focus on the concept of growth mindset and the science behind it. These lessons range from introductory vocabulary to critical thinking exercises that require examining our own experiences to see growth mindset at work in our lives. Once this foundational piece is in place, you can move on to subsequent sections that take a deeper dive into concepts, skills, and abilities essential to cultivating growth mindsets in your classroom.

LESSON 1

Mindset Assessment

Duration: 15–30 minutes

TEACHER TALK

We know what you're thinking—ugh. Another assessment? But do not fear, this super-simple, straightforward mindset assessment has no right or wrong answers. You can (and should) take it right alongside your students. The purpose of this assessment is to gauge whether the test-taker leans toward a fixed or growth mindset in their overall attitudes and beliefs about learning. Use it as a foundational tool for examining the entrance into the mindsets. Once students (as well as colleagues, parents, and anyone else who wants to take the assessment) begin to understand their own beliefs about intelligence and how a fixed and growth mindset might influence achievement, you can begin the process of dismantling barriers to a growth-mindset environment and building practices that promote growth and improvement.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to identify whether they tend toward a fixed or growth mindset.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

The resources and materials necessary to conduct this lesson are:

- › Copies of the Mindset Assessment
- › Growth Mindset and Fixed Mindset definitions

METHOD

☐ DO Hand out a copy of the Mindset Assessment. Ask the students to put a check mark next to the statements they believe to be true. After all students have concluded the assessment, they will calculate how many odd-numbered statements had a check mark and how many even-numbered statements had a check mark. The odd-numbered statements represent fixed mindset thinking; the even-numbered statements represent growth-mindset thinking. If they have more of one than the other, it is likely they default to that mindset when dealing with life events and challenging situations. Share the definitions of growth and fixed mindset with students.

Growth mindset is the belief that intelligence and other qualities, abilities, and talents can be improved with effort, learning, and dedication over time.

Fixed mindset is the belief that intelligence and other qualities, abilities, and talents are fixed traits that cannot be significantly developed.

SAY Research has shown that when students approach their school work and other pursuits with a growth mindset, they get better results. We will be talking a lot about growth mindset this year. I want you to have the ability to call on your growth mindset when you need it—like when you are taking on a hard challenge, solving a really difficult problem, or when you feel like you want to give up.

If your score leaned toward a fixed mindset, that's okay. We are all a mixture of fixed and growth mindsets. *(Here, you have an opportunity to share personal examples of situations in which a growth or fixed mindset impacted your outcome.)* But we're going to start practicing how to use our growth mindsets as we approach challenges and learning in our classroom, because I believe you can learn anything, and I want you to believe that too.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Review the students' Mindset Assessments for completeness and accuracy of calculations. Check for understanding of fixed mindset and growth mindset definitions.

SUPPLEMENTAL/EXTENSION IDEAS

EXIT TICKET Ask students for examples of when they had a growth mindset and/or a fixed mindset in their own lives.

WATCH "Growth Mindset for Students (1 of 5)" by ClassDojo on YouTube

WATCH "RSA Animate: How to Help Every Child Fulfill Their Potential" by The RSA on YouTube

DO Have students take copies of the assessment to parents to start an at-home discussion.

MINDSET ASSESSMENT

Directions: Put a check mark next to all the statements you agree with.

- _____ 1. There are just some things I will never be good at.
- _____ 2. When I make a mistake, I try to learn from it.
- _____ 3. When others do better than me, I feel threatened.
- _____ 4. I enjoy getting out of my comfort zone.
- _____ 5. When I show others I'm smart or talented, I feel successful.
- _____ 6. I feel inspired by the success of others.
- _____ 7. I feel good when I can do something others cannot.
- _____ 8. It is possible to change how intelligent you are.
- _____ 9. You shouldn't have to try to be smart—you just are or you're not.
- _____ 10. I enjoy taking on a new challenge or task.
- _____ 11. If something is extremely difficult, it means it's probably not for me.
- _____ 12. When I fail at something, I usually just try again.
- _____ 13. Some people are just born good at some things, and that's okay.
- _____ 14. Anybody can improve if they put in the effort.
- _____ 15. It makes me feel good to show off what I'm good at.
- _____ 16. I like taking on a challenge.
- _____ 17. When someone criticizes me, I just ignore it.
- _____ 18. When someone criticizes me, I try to listen with an open mind.
- _____ 19. I don't like asking questions, because people might think I'm dumb.
- _____ 20. I am not afraid to ask questions about things I don't understand.

GROWTH MINDSET

The belief that intelligence and other qualities, abilities, and talents can be improved with effort, learning, and dedication over time.

FIXED MINDSET

The belief that intelligence and other qualities, abilities, and talents are fixed traits that cannot be significantly developed.

LESSON 2

What Is Growth Mindset?

Duration: 40–60 minutes

TEACHER TALK

Teaching mindset begins with giving your students the vocabulary and understanding of the mindsets. When taught explicitly even the youngest learners can understand the differences between growth and fixed mindset. Beyond learning the textbook definition, it's also important that students are able to conceptualize growth and fixed mindsets at work in their own lives. Continued reflection on student beliefs about their ability to improve their intelligence, skills, and abilities is essential to cultivating growth mindsets in the classroom. Once you introduce the ideas of fixed and growth mindset, bring them into your daily teaching, discussion, and feedback as often as possible. This continued reference to the mindsets during authentic learning times will help your students cement the notion that their effort and perseverance have a direct impact on what they can achieve as learners.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to define growth mindset and fixed mindset and provide examples of each.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

The resources and materials necessary to conduct this lesson are:

- › Copies of My Fixed and Growth Mindsets
- › Pencils or pens
- › Nontoxic markers
- › Growth Mindset and Fixed Mindset definitions
- › White paper or white board
- › T-Chart (Draw a T-Chart on a whiteboard or poster.)
- › Projector
- › Internet-enabled device
- › YouTube access

METHOD

DO Activate prior knowledge by first asking students to fill out the first section of the My Fixed and Growth Mindsets. Have them write or draw about a time they tried really hard at something and got better. Then, ask students to think of a time when something felt hard and they gave up because they believed they could not get better. Ask students to write or draw about that experience.

Ask for volunteers to share their examples with the class. A Pair-Share would also be appropriate for sharing individual stories. Tell students that the examples they provided are examples of the fixed and growth mindsets.

Define growth mindset: Growth mindset is the belief that intelligence and other qualities, abilities, and talents can be improved with effort, learning, and dedication over time.

Define fixed mindset: Fixed mindset is the belief that intelligence and other qualities, abilities, and talents are fixed traits that cannot be significantly developed.

Read the following two stories to the students:

When Jude joined the basketball team, he was excited, but at the first practice, Jude felt embarrassed that all the other players were better than him. He struggled to dribble the ball and his shots barely made it to the basket. His coach asked him to stay after practice to work on some shots, but Jude was tired and he thought it was unfair that no one else had to stay after, so he refused. At the team's first game, Jude sat on the bench for much of it and didn't score any points. After the game, he asked his mom if he could quit. When his parents asked why, Jude said he just wasn't cut out for basketball.

When Erica joined the softball team, she was nervous. She had never played softball before but really wanted to try something new. At the first practice, she realized she had a lot of learning to do. Slowly, Erica learned the rules of the game, how to swing the bat, and how to throw. She often asked her dad to help her practice in the yard after dinner. During the first game, Erica struck out every time and missed two pop flies. She asked her dad to take her to the batting cages and she stayed after practice with the coach to practice fielding. During the last game of the season, Erica fielded two balls almost perfectly and hit a double that helped tie the game. She sat on the bench as well, and even though she knew she wasn't the best player on the team she was proud of herself for how much better she had become. She looked forward to joining the softball team again next year.

Now, make a T-Chart (see page 14). Ask students to examine the two stories and give examples of fixed and growth mindset. (Examples of fixed Mindset: Jude quit the team, Jude wouldn't stay after with his coach, Jude was worried about the other players instead of himself. Examples of growth mindset: Erica practiced at home, Erica had a positive attitude, Erica stayed late to work on her skills, Erica didn't give up when she messed up.)

WATCH “You Can Learn Anything” by Khan Academy on YouTube

SAY In the video, it said that complex things are built on basic ideas that anyone can learn. Let’s take a look at three people we are all familiar with and come up with ideas of things they had to learn first before they became great. (Make a list for each.)

Lebron James

Possible answers: He had to learn to dribble, shoot the ball, walk, run, etc.

Dr. Seuss

Possible answers: He had to learn to write, draw, invent rhymes, etc.

Beyoncé

Possible answers: She had to learn to read music, dance, hit musical notes, etc.

Note: You can substitute any recognizable personalities that may resonate with your students.

ASK What do you think would have happened if LeBron James didn’t score any points in his first game and quit? Or Beyoncé gave up because she lost a singing contest? Or someone told Dr. Seuss that his books were silly and no one would like them so he stopped writing altogether? (*Possible answers: LeBron wouldn’t be one of the greatest players of all time; Beyoncé might not have pursued her dream to sing; Dr. Seuss wouldn’t have published any books!*)

All people struggle before they stride, especially people who eventually become great. Growth mindset is believing you can do anything and working hard to get better. Fixed mindset is believing you can’t get better and giving up.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Determine whether or not students know the difference between the fixed and growth mindsets and are able to give real-world examples of each. Invite students to label their posters with the correct mindset and share how or why they made that determination.

SUPPLEMENTAL/EXTENSION IDEAS

DO Post definitions of Growth Mindset and Fixed Mindset in your classroom for easy reference.

DO Point to the fixed and growth mindset definitions when you see examples of each in your classroom.

WATCH “The Power of Belief” TEDx Talk by Eduardo Briceño

WATCH “The Power of Believing That You Can Improve” TEDx Talk by Carol Dweck

MY FIXED AND GROWTH MINDSETS

Write or draw about a time you tried really hard at something and got better:

Write or draw about a time something felt hard so you gave up:

Definitions to know:

Growth Mindset: The belief your skills, qualities, and abilities can improve with effort, hard work, and perseverance.

Fixed Mindset: The belief your skills, qualities, and abilities are fixed traits and cannot improve.

FIXED MINDSET EXAMPLES

GROWTH MINDSET EXAMPLES

LESSON 3

Change My Words, Change My Mindset

Duration: 20–30 minutes

TEACHER TALK

So much of fostering a growth mindset in the classroom depends on how we speak to and communicate with our students. The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand that words have incredible power to propel us forward through a challenge or want to make us give up altogether. Changing our words to empower growth mindsets is one way to create a stronger classroom culture that values growth over grades and progress over perfection.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to practice the skill of changing their words or self-talk to move from fixed-mindset language to growth-mindset language.

RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

The resources and materials necessary to conduct this lesson are:

- › Growth and Fixed Mindset definitions
- › Fixed Mindset Message Cards (Provide one set per group.)
- › Pencils or pens
- › Nontoxic markers
- › Chart paper and/or whiteboard

METHOD

THINK, PAIR, SHARE Think of a time that someone said something unkind to you. Turn to your partner and tell them what was said and how it made you feel. Take turns sharing your stories. Now, tell your partner about a time when someone said something kind to you and tell your partner how it made you feel. Take turns sharing your stories. (Optional: Have a few students share their personal story with the class or provide examples from literature.)

SAY We know from the stories we shared that words have the power to make us feel really bad or really good. When someone says something hurtful or kind to us, we get different feelings. The same is true about the words we say to ourselves.

We have already learned what fixed and growth mindset are; here are the definitions to help you remember. (Use the Growth Mindset and Fixed Mindset worksheets, pages 17 to 18. Keep the definitions posted in your classroom for easy reference.)