

Unlocking Potential: Signs of a Growth Mindset in Adolescent Students

OSU Motivation in Classrooms Lab – Motivation Minute. May 2024

What are fixed and growth mindsets?

Mindsets, or students' beliefs about the mutable or immutable nature of their abilities, are influential motivational factors orienting their thoughts and actions in learning. Students with a **fixed mindset** perceive their abilities as innate and cannot be changed. Meanwhile, those embracing a **growth mindset** believe that their abilities are mutable and can be developed through practice and effort. The mindset that a student holds affects their motivation, resilience, and academic achievement, and as such, it is highly desirable to cultivate a growth mindset among students.

Below are the characteristics of fixed and growth mindsets:



What prompts students to embrace a growth mindset?

- Learning about how the brain grows
- Learning about the impacts of possessing a growth mindset vs. a fixed mindset
- Examining specific examples of the benefits received from embracing a growth mindset
- Learning about specific growth mindset actions used in academics
- Supports throughout the school environment

What classroom strategies can teachers implement to promote students' growth mindset?

- In the face of student success, praise effort and the use of different problem-solving strategies
- Respond to student failures using the word *yet* to encourage them to continue striving
- Create classroom cultures that embrace struggles, mistakes, and negative emotions as part of the learning process
- Share your own struggles and how you face those setbacks to your students
- Provide extra practices or low-stakes assignments or quizzes to allow them to self-monitor their learning process

What are some signals of a student having a fixed mindset or deficit thinking?

- Gives up easily. See their efforts as pointless. *“I will never get good grades at this subject no matter how hard I try.”*
- Says, *“I am just not a math person”, “I am just not a science person”, “I am just not good at writing,”* etc.
- Attributes their success to luck, or just being smart
- Views their efforts as lacking the abilities.
- Is not willing to take more challenging tasks, and says, *“This is too hard for me, I will just skip these questions.”*

What can teachers do to encourage students to change these mindsets?

- Offer encouragement to students when they face appropriate challenges
 - Acknowledge the challenge they are facing, for example:
 - *“This is a challenge, but you are capable of doing it!”*
 - *“This exercise is meant to give you an opportunity to master your X skills. It’s normal for people to not get it right on the first try; do not feel bad, it means that you are in the process of learning.”*
- Provide “efforts-based” comments such as *“Your determination to find a solution is impressive.”*
 - Praise their efforts when they do well instead of *“You are so smart.”*
- Promote effort-based goals
 - Help students set small, attainable goals
 - Provide instant effort-based feedback (may utilize technology-assisted learning programs)
- Empower students to link prior knowledge with the new learning material or new problem encountered
 - *“You already know how to do _____, so now you can learn to do _____.”*

Resources

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