What does a child with a ‘fixed mindset’ look like?

A child with a fixed mindset will limit his or her chances to achieve. They want to look “smart” at all costs and do not like to undertake a task that may provide some challenges for them. Children with a fixed mindset tend to follow three rules:

1. Don’t make mistakes

A child with a fixed mindset believes that making mistakes shows a lack of ability. They would believe that the mistake indicates that they are not good at that particular area and would try to avoid it in the future.

2. Don’t work hard

A child with a fixed mindset believes that intelligent people should not have to work hard. If you work hard, it means that you have low intelligence and indicates a limited ability. The idea that high effort equals low ability, is one of the worst beliefs fixed mindset children have.

3. If you make mistakes, don’t try and repair them

A child with a fixed mindset is only interested in whether an answer is right or wrong. If they get an answer wrong, they tend to not care about what the correct answer was. They do not want to correct their errors and understand the concept for future learning.

What does a child with a ‘growth mindset’ look like?

A child with a growth mindset is focused on the learning instead of the grades. Their main aim is to build on previous understanding and push themselves to the next level. Although they are not fixed on achievement, achievement usually goes hand in hand with this mindset. Children with a growth mindset tend to follow three rules:

1. Take on challenges

A child with a growth mindset often accepts many challenges that they could fail at. They want to stretch their abilities and learn new things.

2. Work hard

A child with a growth mindset believes that the harder you work at something, the better you will be at it. They do not believe that you are born with high intelligence or low intelligence but you can work hard and get success.
3. Confront your mistakes and correct them

A child with a growth mindset is very eager to remedy their mistakes and learn from them. They want to focus on their mistake and get feedback to show them where they went wrong.

What can we do to help develop growth mindset in our children?

As parents and educators we need to focus on the process or journey that the child undertakes instead of the finished product. We can give praise to a child in regards to their persistence, strategies used, their change of thinking due to new learning, their questioning, critical thinking and creative ideas.

We can celebrate how a child solved a problem or how they undertook a difficult challenge. This is what will motivate a child to have a growth mindset. They need to see us as the parents and educators going through this process as well and observe how we deal with difficult and frustrating setbacks within a task.

It is great to praise a child’s finished task (a child loves this intelligence praise) however, praising a child’s process which could be their effort, concentration, choices and persistence is more powerful to help a child achieve, have confidence and be a motivated learner.

I look forward to exploring this further with both our staff, students and families throughout the reminder of the year. If you are interested in reading more about the research and value of teaching our children a growth mindset you can find more information in these resources:


2. *Mindset – The New Psychology of Success* by Carol S. Dweck PH.D.