



When you think about the way you approach challenges in life, mindset is key. Having a growth mindset can influence the way you respond to challenges, the way you respond to failures, and even the chances you are willing to take. Being willing to push yourself in order to grow, even if it means you may fail, can be daunting. Fearing failure can cause you not to try new things, or believe that you have the ability to learn new skills.



This is why mindset matters. Author and researcher Carol Dweck has researched motivation and determined that a significant indicator of success is not talent, but rather mindset. She has developed a way of describing the two main mindsets most people have: fixed and growth.

People with fixed mindsets believe people are born with inherent skills and talents that cannot be developed. They believe if you do not know or understand something, you never will and that success is determined by talent. Alternatively, people with growth mindsets think of failure or a lack of understanding as an opportunity to grow. Just because you do not understand a topic or have a skill now does not mean you never will, rather it means you have an opportunity to learn and try something new. People with a growth mindset know that time and effort can be an indicator of success, rather than inherent intelligence.

This is an important distinction for success in the workplace. Being able to respond to failure or criticism by thinking about it as an opportunity to learn as opposed to proof you are incapable of completing the task in the future is necessary for personal and professional growth. As Carol Dweck puts it, reframing “passing and failing” as “yet or not yet” can make you ready to approach challenges with a mindset that better enables you to try and learn new things.

What is a Mindset?

Your thoughts, ideas, and reactions all contribute to your mindset. Even if you are not conscious of the type of mindset you bring to situations in life, it is there. This is why it is so important to practice having a growth mindset. No one can have a growth mindset all the time, but practicing responding to failures with the knowledge that you can improve will help make those improvements a reality in the future.



Why is Mindset Important?

Is the glass half empty or half full? Is a missed job opportunity a failure or an opportunity to grow and improve for the next one? Did that negative feedback mean you will never succeed or does it provide you with a chance to become even more successful? These are just a few ways your mindset may influence the way you see a situation and the way you react.



Reflection Question: Has there ever been a situation in which you could have benefitted from using a growth mindset? Do you think you often use a growth mindset already? Why? How do you know?

Activity 1 – What type of mindset do you usually have?

No one always uses one mindset, rather people use a combination of fixed and growth mindsets depending on the situation, however you may tend to use one mindset more than another. In order to work on improving your mindset, you must first take inventory of where your typical mindset falls.

Below is a set of questions designed to reveal the mindset you typically use. Circle your response to each of the following:

Activity developed from STEM Mentors tool kit.

1. Intelligence is something people are born with and can't be changed.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. No matter how intelligent you are, you can always be more intelligent.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. Musical talent can be learned by anyone.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. Only a few people will be truly good at sports – you have to be “born with it.”	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. Math is much easier to learn if you are male or come from a culture that values math.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. The harder you work at something, the better you will be at it.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11. Trying new things is stressful for me and I avoid it.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. Some people are good and kind, and some are not – it's not often that people change.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. I appreciate when people give me feedback about my performance.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. I often get angry when I receive negative feedback about my performance.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15. All human beings are capable of learning.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16. You can learn new things but you can't really change how intelligent you are.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18. Human beings are basically good but sometimes make terrible decisions.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. An important reason why I do my work is that I like to learn new things.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20. Truly smart people do not need to try hard	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Total:				

For the questions below, please tally your score. If you answered:

Strongly Agree give yourself 0 points
Agree give yourself 1 point
Disagree give yourself 2 points
Strongly Disagree give yourself 3 points

Question 1 = _____

Question 12 = _____

Question 4 = _____

Question 14 = _____

Question 7 = _____

Question 16 = _____

Question 8 = _____

Question 17 = _____

Question 11 = _____

Question 20 = _____

Your total points for this section: _____

For the questions below, please tally your score. If you answered:

Strongly Agree give yourself 3 points
Agree give yourself 2 points
Disagree give yourself 1 point
Strongly Disagree give yourself 0 points

Question 2 = _____

Question 10 = _____

Question 3 = _____

Question 13 = _____

Question 5 = _____

Question 15 = _____

Question 6 = _____

Question 18 = _____

Question 9 = _____

Question 19 = _____

Your total points for this section: _____

Your total score (add two sections together): _____

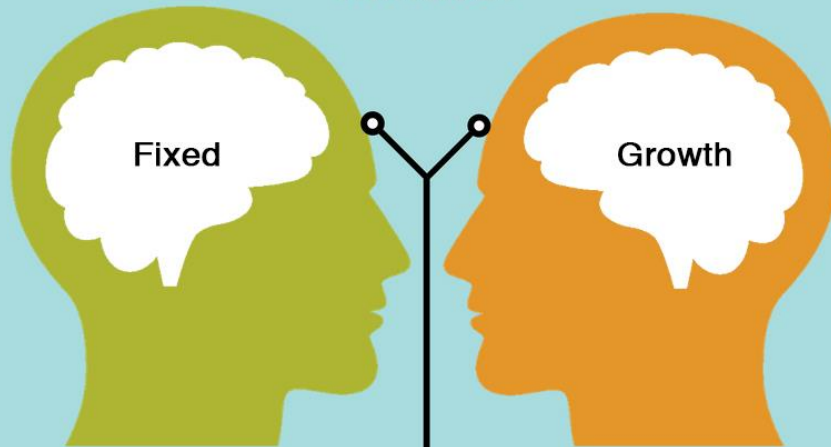
Interpreting your score:

60-45 points = strong growth mindset
44-34 points = growth mindset with some fixed ideas
33-21 points = fixed mindset with some growth ideas
20-0 points = strong fixed mindset



For more what growth mindset means, watch this short video:
[Developing and Embracing a Growth Mindset - YouTube](#)

Fixed vs Growth Mindset



People with fixed mindsets believe that:

- Skills, intelligence and talents are natural.
- Failure is shameful and should be avoided.
- Some people are naturally good at things while others are not.
- You are not in control of your abilities.

People with growth mindsets believe that:

- You have the capacity to learn and grow your skills.
- Failure is a valuable lesson.
- People who are good at something are good because they built that ability.
- You are in control of your abilities.

Beliefs

Not Necessary or Useful
See effort as a negative thing and something you do when you're not that good

Important Part of the Process
Focused on the process of getting better

Effort

Avoid
Back down and avoid challenges

Embrace
More likely to embrace challenges and persevere

Challenges

Avoid
Get discouraged when making mistakes and avoid them

Improve
See mistakes as learning opportunities and ways to improve

Mistakes

Defensive
Get defensive, take it personally. Ignores useful criticism/feedback

Constructive
Appreciate feedback and use it. Learns from criticism

Feedback

Image Courtesy of: [Fixed vs Growth Mindset | AOT Blog](#)

Activities for Building a Growth Mindset

Activity developed from *STEM Mentors tool kit*.

1. Draw a box with 4 squares

2. In three of the boxes, write in a skill you have or something you are good at.

Math	Carpentry
Customer service	

3. In the fourth box, write a skill you would like to improve.

Math	Carpentry
Customer service	Playing guitar

4. Fill out each of these boxes, for the skills you have listed above.

I'm good at:

How I developed this skill, ability, etc:

1.

2.

3.

I'm good at:

How I developed this skill, ability, etc:

1.

2.

3.

I'm good at:

How I developed this skill, ability, etc:

1.

2.

3.

I'd like to improve at:

How can I develop this skill, ability, etc:

1.

2.

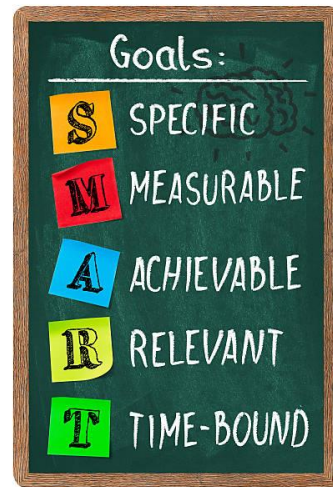
3.



For more on cultivating a growth mindset, read this article:
[Growth Mindset | Psychology Today](#)

Now What? – Setting SMART Goals

Hopefully you are now encouraged to begin practicing a growth mindset, but you may not know where to start. The best place to start is to simply begin setting goals. If there is something you would like to achieve, identify the goal then begin the planning process, being sure to use your growth mindset when considering the goal. The best way to set goals is using the SMART format, Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-based.



The link to VWW's SMART Goals guide can be found [here](#).