The Gift of Failure

Building Children’s Capacity for Risk
Let’s reflect on our own beliefs

Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree or disagree?

- Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you cannot change at all.

- You can learn new things, but you can’t really change your basic intelligence.

- You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can’t really be changed.

How have your upbringing and life experiences shaped your responses?
Every so often a truly groundbreaking idea comes along.

Mindset explains:
- Why brains and talent don’t bring success
- How they can stand in the way of it
- Why praising brains and talent doesn’t foster self-esteem and accomplishment, but jeopardizes them
- How teaching a simple idea about the brain raises grades and productivity
- What all great CEOs, parents, teachers, athletes know

Mindset is a simple idea discovered by world-renowned Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck in decades of research on achievement and success—a simple idea that makes all the difference.
What is mindset?

**Growth**: We can develop certain qualities (intelligence, talent, abilities) through hard work and dedication. It is about growing through taking informed **RISKS** and learning from them. This involves looking frankly at deficiencies and seeking to remedy them.

**Fixed**: We are born with certain qualities (intelligence, talent, abilities) and there’s nothing we can do to change those qualities. Failure at a task is reflective of a person’s innate talents and is to be avoided.
Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-_oqghnxBmY
a growth mindset leads to ..... 

The evidence from research studies.

People with a growth mindset had more active brains than people with a fixed mindset when they got feedback that could help them learn.

After performing poorly on a test, people with a growth mindset choose to learn from people who did better than them. People with a fixed mindset made themselves feel better by looking at the scores of people who did worse than them.
a growth mindset leads to ...

Adolescents with a growth mindset earned higher math grades than those with a fixed mindset.
a growth mindset leads to ...

Middle school students with a growth mindset were more likely to take advanced math.
a growth mindset leads to ...

In Chile, students who had a growth mindset were three times as likely to score in the top 20% of students nationally.
IUSD and CIE

Continuous Improvement Efforts

2015-2016 District Goal

To encourage intellectual risk taking and the admission of error as a central part of the learning process for students and staff.
Mindset in our classrooms

- Direct instruction on how the brain works and the power of mindset
- High expectations exist
- Lessons incorporate challenging and open ended problems/activities
- Students are provided opportunities to grapple and build perseverance and grit
- Risk taking is the norm
- Mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities
- Feedback focuses on process
How Parents can support the effort at home

Recognize your own mindset: Be mindful of your own thinking and of the messages you send with your words and actions.

Praise the process: Praising kids for being smart suggests that innate talent is the reason for success, while focusing on the process helps them see how their effort leads to success.

Model learning from failure: When parents talk positively about making mistakes, kids start to think of mistakes as a natural part of the learning process.
How Parents can support the effort at home

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d4uKCZTmyy4
Use Growth Mindset Language

Everyone falls into fixed mindset thinking sometimes. The first step toward fostering a growth mindset in our children is to become aware of language that signals one mindset or the other.

Here are some questions to think about:

1. How often do you notice and praise effort, strategies, and progress?

2. What thoughts did you have this week when your child struggled? How could you frame their struggle in a growth mindset way by helping them understand that this is when their brain is growing most?

3. What thoughts did you have when your child excelled? How could you frame their success in a growth mindset way, e.g., by talking about the process that went into their success?

4. What kinds of fixed and growth-mindset statements did your child make?
Modeling a growth mindset means being willing to try hard even when failure is likely because that's how growth happens. For example, parents should try to get excited when their children make mistakes because these mistakes can reveal important conceptual gaps that should be filled. When adults get excited about the learning that mistakes can facilitate, children start to think of mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. This leads to a few important changes in learning behavior:

1. Children stop avoiding challenging work just because it could mean making more mistakes.
2. Children become less likely to try to "sweep mistakes under the rug" because they stop to think of them as something to be ashamed of.
Responding when your child is succeeding

**Action Ideas:** Language of praise or praise the process

- When you hear or provide praise, ask yourself "What is being praised?" Is it effort, strategy, persistence, focus, and improvement, or does it sound more like a fixed trait or ability?

- When something you or your child says or does signals a fixed or a growth mindset, write it down! You may be surprised how often mindset statements come up. Keep a chart on your fridge for a week then see if it changes at some later time.
Responding when your child is struggling

Action Ideas

• Make mistakes in front of your kids, have a positive reaction to those mistakes, and openly reflect on what could be learned from the mistake. Try to show that it's all about learning, not about being right.

• At the dinner table, talk about a time that you struggled with something and how hard it is and how you overcame it. Then ask your kids if there's anything they struggled with, how they overcome it, and what they learned from the experience.

• Get excited when your child makes a mistake and help her think through what could be learned from it. Even mistakes that seem careless can be good learning opportunities. For example, if your child forgot to study enough for an important test, it might be an opportunity to learn about prioritization and to-do-lists.
Putting it into practice

Nine-year old Elizabeth was on her way to her first gymnastics meet. Lanky, flexible, and energetic, she was just right for gymnastics and loved it. Of course, she was nervous about competing, but she was good at gymnastics and felt confident of doing well. She had even thought about the perfect place in her room to hang the ribbon when she won. In the first event, floor exercises, Elizabeth went first. She did a nice job, and did well in other events too. By the end of the evening, she had received no ribbons and was devastated.
What would you do if you were Elizabeth’s parents?

1. Tell Elizabeth you thought she was the best.

2. Tell her she was robbed of a ribbon that was rightfully hers.

3. Reassure her that gymnastics is not that important.

4. Tell HER she has the ability and will surely win next time.

5. Tell her she didn’t deserve to win.
What is the growth Mindset Statement ???

1. Tell Elizabeth you thought she was the best. Basically insincere. She wasn’t and it gives her no opportunity to improve.

2. Tell her she was robbed of a ribbon that was rightfully hers. Blames others. Do you want her to grow up to blame others for her deficiencies?

3. Reassure her that gymnastics is not that important. Devalues anything that you don’t do well at right away.

4. Tell HER she has the ability and will surely win next time. Perhaps the most dangerous. Does ability automatically take you where you want to go?

5. Tell her she didn’t deserve to win. Seems hard-hearted, but it’s pretty much what the growth-minded dad said. On the next slide.
The growth-minded response

“Elizabeth, I know how you feel. It’s so disappointing to have your hopes up and to perform your best and not to win. But you know, you haven’t earned it yet. There were many girls who have been in gymnastics longer than you and who’ve worked harder than you. If this is something you really want, then it’s something you’ll have to really work for.”
Creating opportunities to grow

Experiencing failure **enhances performance** and productivity. Experiencing failure **facilitates learning** and growth.

Make challenge the new comfort zone.

Create room and opportunity for mistakes.

Talk about and normalize struggle.

Use wait time to allow your children space to think and grapple with a problem.

Reflect on situations and explicitly frame the struggle.

**Group brainstorm on how we do this... homework time, family activities, children’s play, sports, hobbies**
Further learning for parents

**Mindset Book** by Carol Dweck

**Mindset kit** for parents

**Our website**