

Chapter 3: Why is it Important to have a Growth Mindset?

While all of this may be fascinating, you may be wondering at this point - how does this apply to me?

Ultimately, having a growth mindset will help you reach success and happiness in every aspect of your life. You just have to learn how to apply it to you specifically, and the area that you need the most help in. It trains you to look for the good, to work hard until you find it. It helps you to overcome obstacles, which will crop up in all areas of your life. Instead of being held back by them, you will find yourself breaking through them with ease.

Adopting a growth mindset is something that takes time, and will therefore bring happiness and success to your life over time. It will not be a sudden change, but rather a gradual increase of happiness in your life. You will find yourself achieving goals you never even knew you had.

So, I am going to take you through the most common areas that people will see the positive effects of employing the growth mindset. This will allow you to see the benefits you can gain from following through with this journey, and it will motivate you to understand how you can reach your best self.

As a Student

When Carol Dweck first explored the idea of mindsets, she was looking at how it affected children in school. Education is where the growth and toxic mindsets first rear their heads. It is also an area in which your chosen mindset can make a huge difference in how well you do as a student, as this can have ramifications for the rest of your life.

Children and older students with a toxic mindset are focused on looking intelligent over learning. They are far more focused on the outcomes of whatever they are doing, rather than focusing on what they have learned in the process. Education is meant to equip you with skills and knowledge to tackle obstacles you will encounter throughout your life. This is done through fostering the mindset of hard work and responsibility, of making children meet deadlines and work hard through the things that they struggle with in order to do

well. The result is not the most important thing, it is the skills you picked up along the way that matter.

However, if a student has a toxic mindset, they will not pick up any of this. All they are focused on is the result they get at the end - the percentage, or the test score. Because of this, they often miss out on the skills that it takes to get there. If you can find easier ways to reach the best score, they will do that instead of working hard. It does not matter if they remember nothing of their education after they receive their final results - as long as their results are good.



It is important to talk about the role some centers of education play, and educators themselves encourage toxic mindsets. When school and teachers place increased importance on results and looking intelligent, that is what the learners are taught to value. Because of this, many kids will start to develop toxic mindsets early in their education journey. They will then not be able to shake this and will keep it for the rest of their education journey as well as into their personal life and career later on. For example, I had a teacher in elementary school called Ms. Brown that used to favor the higher learners in the class. If you did well and got high test scores, you were allowed certain privileges. For example, she would call on you if she needed an errand run, or would immediately choose you for the class captain or allow you to clean the board and sharpen the pencils. She also tended to be kinder to those who did well, and harsher with those that did badly. Because of this, everyone in the class clamored to get good test results. No one was

concerned with what we were learning, all that mattered was doing well so that Ms. Brown liked us, and treated us favorably.

There are many reasons why a growth mindset is important when you are a student. When you are young, utilizing a growth mindset ensures that you learn all the basics and that you learn them well. It helps you to adopt learning-orientated behavior rather than results-oriented learning. It encourages you to let go of the idea that you have to prove your wit and your intelligence with every practice paper and every test, and accept that in order to do better you have to get things wrong and fail along the way.

One of the easiest ways to identify if you have a toxic mindset is to think back to how you study. When you study, and when you test yourself, do you allow yourself to learn from questions you get wrong? Or do you get mad at yourself for making a 'stupid' mistake? Students that get easily frustrated with themselves for making mistakes while they study are under the thrall of a toxic mindset. They are more worried about looking intelligent than learning, and they are terrified of making mistakes, even when they are just studying! That is the part when you are supposed to make mistakes because then you can learn from them, and you will not make those mistakes again. Studying is the part when you learn to work through the hard parts. It is a skill in itself, and if you are studying with a toxic mindset, you are losing out on gaining that skill.

This is why a growth mindset is important when you are a student. It teaches you to embrace failure and learn from it. A failed test isn't the end of the world - it is a chance to learn from mistakes that you made in order to never make them again. If you adopt this mindset, you are also not completely helpless when these things happen. You won't feel completely worthless and give up, because you have adopted a mindset that failures and marks do not define your intelligence. Your intelligence is not something that is set, it is something you can always work on. So failed tests are just another opportunity to get smarter and learn more. Your self-worth should not be tied to exam marks and percentages. Furthermore, it is easier to learn this while you are young, rather than later in life. It instills the importance of persistence and determination, of working through something until you get it right. As a student, whether younger or older, this will bleed into all parts of your academic and personal life.

If you can change the way you think, you can change the way you learn.

In many ways, our education provides the foundation for the rest of our lives. It molds how we go through life, how we approach challenges, and how we determine success for ourselves. This is true when we are first starting in Kindergarten, all the way through elementary school, to middle and high school, to College and PhDs and beyond. It prepares us for everything else we will go through. Fostering a growth mindset as a student will not only help you with your journey through your education, it ensures that you will be in the best position to succeed throughout your life.

For your Personal Life & Career

Having a growth mindset is essential for finding success in your career.

In the modern world, things are evolving at a rapid rate. Whether it comes to technology or social media, there are constantly new things to learn and new skills to master in order to do your best professionally. If you do not have a growth mindset, if you are not willing to put time and effort in to developing yourself, you are going to struggle to find success in any modern career path. Having a toxic mindset often holds us back professionally, because we lack the confidence to take on extra opportunities and challenges (Castrillon, 2019). Because we fear failure, we will not step up to anything that we are not guaranteed to succeed in. Having a growth mindset will help you to break through these barriers and you will find yourself seeing and seizing opportunities you could only have imagined before. Having a growth mindset expands your horizons, it allows you to look past the challenges and to see the outcome. And then you can't help but chase it.

Having a growth mindset makes you go above and beyond, and therefore leads to higher achievements. Your superiors will notice you, because you will be that person that is always going the extra mile, and always looking to improve themselves and their performance. You will succeed and climb in the business because of this.

A growth mindset is also invaluable to your personal life too. It allows you to grow and cultivate positive habits that will aid in your happiness. If you have a toxic mindset, you will hold yourself back and not try new things out of fear of failing, preventing you from finding dozens of new things that could bring you happiness, and make you a better person. The ability to try new things, and laugh at yourself if you fail, is essential for personal growth. The brain has the ability to change throughout life, and although you may once have failed at something, you may try it years later and love it. Furthermore, trying everything is essential to understanding your strengths and weaknesses fully, and understanding what brings you fulfillment.

You will also see improvements in your relationships and the way you interact with those around you. If you have a toxic mindset, you are unconsciously bringing negativity into all the relationships in your life, from your family to your friends to your partner. You will tend to lose people because you cannot effectively deal with conflict, and you are not developing so those around you will quickly outgrow you. However, if you have a growth mindset, you will not only have better relationships but you will also be able to handle the loss of them better. Your relationships will blossom because you will be able to handle conflict, communicate, and then take the problems of your friend or partner and work through them.

Furthermore, it will help you to deal with rejection and heartbreak. These are natural parts of life - everyone has a story of being rejected, of being cast aside by someone in their life, and having to pick up the pieces and move on. And some people are better able to handle this and move on, so what sets them aside? Naturally, it's their mindset (Dweck, 2017). If they are stuck in a toxic mindset, the rejection labels them. If they have been broken up with, they feel permanently scarred and branded as 'unlovable.' They struggle to move on because they cannot see past what they see as a failure, both of themselves and the relationships. They are more focused on revenge, on hurting the other person, rather than themselves. On the other hand, those with a growth mindset will see it as a chance to learn something about themselves. They will undoubtedly be heartbroken, but they will be able to work through it because they realize that they have a whole new life waiting for them on the other side, and they know the only way they can reach it is by forgiving, forgetting, and moving forward.

This is the difference that having a growth mindset will make. You will be able to find happiness in all aspects of your life, as even the harder things become more manageable.

Growth Mindsets in Businesses

Growth mindsets are not only beneficial on a personal level, they are helpful on an organizational level too. Since Dr. Dweck's revelation in 2006, many businesses have been specifically looking for individuals with growth mindsets when hiring new employees.

Growth mindset individuals are in high demand in any business because they have a different perspective. They are willing to learn and respond well to constructive criticism because they view it as an opportunity to do better. Because they don't believe their personal qualities are fixed, they constantly strive to do better and learn. People with toxic mindsets will not develop. They don't believe that they can do better, so it is not something that they will actively work towards. Furthermore, they will respond badly to any form of advice and will also constantly seek validation and praise. They care more about looking impressive rather than doing a good job. They are stuck in a cycle of trying to prove themselves, without actually putting in any work to do better.



This is why growth mindsets are so highly valued in business over toxic mindsets. Furthermore, organizations can foster growth mindsets within their employees by making it a part of their culture. It is not just about individual mindsets, large groups or organizations can have toxic or growth mindsets too. As previously mentioned, by placing too much emphasis on results and marks, educational institutions can encourage toxic mindsets. Organizations and businesses have realized that by providing incentives for employees, they can make them more likely to move forward and work with a growth mindset. This can be done by giving their employees opportunities to develop and learn new skills, and more importantly, give them incentives to do. They focus on promoting those willing to step outside of their comfort zones and try new things and encouraging an ecosystem within the organization that has room for mistakes in the name of growth. This also helps people to feel more productive and inspired in their work, and if done correctly, can slowly transform toxic mindsets into growth ones.

It is also beneficial for businesses if their employees have a growth mindset. They also tend to be innovative people, and innovation is one of the main ways that businesses are able to grow and develop. A company cannot move forward and keep developing if they do not have people that are willing to take risks and try new things - if all of their employees had toxic mindsets, they would stagnate and eventually go bankrupt. Furthermore, toxic mindset organizations also tend to encourage less freedom, less collaboration, and less risk-taking. Not only is this limiting for the businesses, but it also

leads to high employee dissatisfaction. You need creativity, innovation, and teamwork to push any company forward. Strong leadership is encouraged within the employees as well as continual learning, two things from which the business will continually benefit from. In fact, research has shown that employees in growth mindset-orientated organizations tend to work better and more honestly (Lloyd, 2019). They pursue more innovative and risky projects because they know they have the backing of the company. They tend to be more transparent and honest in their actions and are less likely to cut corners and look for the easy way out. They are happy to work hard and work with others. This not only benefits the company, but it is also indicative of the happiness of the individual employees. Employees in a growth-minded environment tend to feel more committed because there are benefits outside of their salary, and the ability to grow and learn. These employees tend to feel more motivated and committed, because not only is their hard work valued, so is their personal improvement.

If you are a business owner or manager there are several ways to fully encourage a growth mindset within your company structure. It is something to look out for when you are hiring - look for people that are willing to learn. Employment should not just be dependent on what they have done, what degrees or experience they have, but also what they have potential for. Are they innovative? Do they try different things? Are they open to learning and new ways of doing things? That is what you need to investigate. Then, the work is up to you to build a work culture that is growth-minded. Build a work culture that is accepting of taking risks and failing. Make sure your employees have opportunities to develop, even if it falls outside of their daily job description. If they want to try something new, encourage it. Encourage change and development at all costs. Lead by example, and show that failure is an inevitable part of growth.

While increased freedom might be terrifying to contemplate, you will see the benefits in the long run.

Exercise: Figuring Out your Goals

One of the best ways to start developing a growth mindset is to create and focus on your goals. While we all have vague ideas of what we want to do in life and what we want to achieve, we often don't break them down exactly into what we want to achieve. Because of this, they are harder to work towards. If we do not have a concrete idea or steps to achieve that idea, how do we even know where to start?

So that is what this exercise is going to help you do. Furthermore, planning out your goals helps to foster a growth mindset because it gives you something to work towards. It is

much easier to deny growth and challenge when you have nothing to work towards or nothing that seems achievable anyway. By breaking down your goals into steps, it seems far more achievable and less intimidating. And you are more likely to do it.

Firstly, you are going to write down all the big goals that you have. Maybe you have one for your personal life, one for your career or profession, and one for your family life. Maybe you have a ton more! For sport or personal hobbies - it doesn't matter how many you have, just make sure to write them all down.

Then you are going to go through them one by one, and take time with each. With each goal, you are going to ask yourself three questions:

1. What do you need to do yearly to achieve it?
2. What do you need to do monthly to achieve?
3. What do you need to do weekly to achieve it?

This is not something you need to do all at once. In fact, it would be better to set aside time for each goal individually. Sit down with your career goal, for example, and dedicate half an hour to breaking it down in this way. For example, let's say that you're working in admin or something now, but what you really want to do is be a chef. Then you would ask yourself the three questions. Maybe yearly, you need to find a culinary school and do a course. Maybe you need a few years to save for this. That would then be your monthly goal. And then weekly, you need to practice your skills. You need to devote time to cooking and baking each week so that you get better and better. This is a simple way of breaking it down, and you should go into much more depth. But, it will give you an idea of what you are working towards.

This helps to cultivate a growth mindset as it serves as a constant reminder that there is something that you are trying to grow towards. It also helps to realize how easier it is to grow and develop once you break everything down into smaller steps, things that you can do daily and monthly that will help to achieve your wildest dreams. You are far more capable of change and growth than you have ever realized.