

FIXED AND GROWTH MINDSET HANDOUT

Is there something in your past that you think measured you?

A test score? A dishonest or callous action? Being fired from a job? Being rejected? Focus on that thing. Feel all the emotions that go with it.

Now put it in a growth-mindset perspective. Look honestly at your role in it, but understand that it doesn't define your intelligence or personality.

Instead, ask:

What did I (or can I) learn from that experience?

How can I use it as a basis for growth? Carry that with you instead.

How do you act when you feel depressed?

Do you work harder at things in your life or do you let them go?

Next time you feel low:

Put yourself in a growth mindset—

Think about learning, challenge, confronting obstacles.

Think about effort as a positive, constructive force, not as a big drag.

Try it out.

- Is there something you've always wanted to do but were afraid you weren't good at? Make a plan to do it.

Grow Your Mindset

Which mindset do you have?

Answer these questions about intelligence.

Read each statement and decide whether you mostly agree with it or disagree with it.

1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.
2. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.
3. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.
4. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.

Questions 1 and 2 are the fixed-mindset questions.

Questions 3 and 4 reflect the growth mindset.

Which mindset did you agree with more?

Many people have elements of both

You can be a mixture, but most people lean toward one or the other.

People can also have different mindsets in different areas.

You also have beliefs about other abilities.

You could substitute “artistic talent,” “sports ability,” or “business skill” for “intelligence.” Try it.

It’s not only your abilities; it’s your personal qualities too. Look at these statements about personality and character and decide whether you mostly agree or mostly disagree with each one.

1. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that.
2. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.
3. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can’t really be changed.
4. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.

Questions 1 and 3 are the fixed-mindset questions

Questions 2 and 4 reflect the growth mindset

Which did you agree with more? Did it differ from your intelligence mindset? It can.

- Your “intelligence mindset” comes into play when situations involve mental ability.
- Your “personality mindset” comes into play in situations that involve your personal qualities—for example, how dependable, cooperative, caring, or socially skilled you are.
- The fixed mindset makes you concerned with how you’ll be judged
- The growth mindset makes you concerned with improving.

Here are some more ways to think about mindsets:

- Think about someone you know who is steeped in the fixed mindset. Think about how they're always trying to prove themselves and how they're supersensitive about being wrong or making mistakes. Did you ever wonder why they were this way? (Are you this way?) Now you can begin to understand why.
- Think about someone you know who is skilled in the growth mindset—someone who understands that important qualities can be cultivated. Think about the ways they confront obstacles. Think about the things they do to stretch themselves. What are some ways you might like to change or stretch yourself?
- Okay, now imagine you've decided to learn a new language and you've signed up for a class. A few sessions into the course, the instructor calls you to the front of the room and starts throwing questions at you one after another. Put yourself in a fixed mindset. Your ability is on the line. Can you feel everyone's eyes on you? Can you see the instructor's face evaluating you? Feel the tension, feel your ego bristle and waver. What else are you thinking and feeling? Now put yourself in a growth mindset. You're a novice—that's why you're here. You're here to learn. The teacher is a resource for learning. Feel the tension leave you; feel your mind open up. The message is: You can change your mindset