

Three Ways to Spot a False Growth Mindset

Having a growth mindset can help with how we learn and help us think about how we're learning. When we adopt a growth mindset, we focus more on what we can learn through an experience, than on getting things right on the first try.

For example, we can focus more on receiving feedback and asking questions when completing a task or assignment, than worrying about looking unintelligible.

Using a growth mindset approach helps us develop new skills, overcome obstacles, take on new challenges, and appreciate the progress we make in our learning when we try something new. While a growth mindset is beneficial to our learning, it's important to understand the difference between a growth mindset and a false growth mindset

A false growth mindset can look like this: "If having a growth mindset is the right mindset, I already have it."

Unfortunately, simply declaring you have a growth mindset does not mean you have one. It takes practice and effort to cultivate as we navigate our learning experiences. Being an open and optimistic person may not necessarily mean you have a growth mindset either! "I have a growth mindset all the time."

A growth mindset exists on a continuum, so it's unlikely that a person will always have a growth mindset. Rather, people are more likely to have a mixture of both fixed and growth mindsets. For instance, you might have a growth mindset towards challenging readings that you were assigned for a class, but you may be quick to approach a group presentation with a fixed mindset.

"Well, I tried so that's all that matters."

Putting in effort to learn and develop our abilities is an important element of growth mindset, but thinking about growth mindset as simply effort, is not helpful for developing learning skills. For example, if we put in effort but it's not genuine, or if we only focus on how much



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effort we put into a task, we miss thinking about other important elements of learning: like process and progress.

In Carol Dweck's own words: "unproductive effort is never a good thing. It's critical to reward not just effort but learning and progress...and the processes that yield these things, such as seeking help from others and trying new strategies...."

It's also important to clarify that growth mindset does not suggest the belief that unsuccessful learners lack something within themselves to be successful—like grit, or positivity.

There are also many structural, socio-economic and individual factors that can impact our wellbeing and learning, but research shows that leaning into a growth mindset can be a useful approach and learning tool to help you in your academic journey.

A good way for us to develop a growth mindset is to identify the moments where we have a fixed mindset approach. For example, if you are anxious about leading a group presentation in class and you tell yourself that you can't lead because you just aren't a good presenter, see how you can take a growth mindset approach instead.-You might want to discuss presentation strategies with your peers or instructor, practice presenting in front of different audiences to build your confidence or try out tactics that will help you feel more comfortable while you present, like deep breathing or speaking through your script slowly.

So, remember, taking a growth mindset approach takes time and practice – it's not something we simply can say we have but something we choose to lean into and cultivate over time.

Good luck!



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