

Developing a Growth Mindset

To some extent, we're set in our ways. We all have those little quirks that other people find weird or annoying. Whether it's being overly clean, telling awkward jokes at the wrong moment, or simply being a bit stubborn - it's what makes us, "us".

We also have a good understanding of what we're good at and what we're not so good at. But that doesn't mean we should close off to the idea of learning new things! We need to allow ourselves to keep an open mind and have the ability to embrace learning new tasks without judgement or trepidation.

If we become too set in our ways, over time our mental health and overall happiness can actually suffer as a result. This is where having a growth mindset is pivotal.

WHAT IS A GROWTH MINDSET?

There are two types of mindsets within this sphere. One is a **fixed** mindset, the other is a **growth** mindset.

FIXED MINDSET

- Become influenced by the opinions of teachers, parents, bosses, colleagues and friends who are 'good' at something.
- These opinions can become an entrenched narrative/set in stone.
- Decide you're only talented enough to succeed at certain things and close yourself off because you're terrified of failure.
- Can also become too overly confident in specific disciplines and shut off from other things you could be more successful at - and happier doing!
- Has a hunger for approval.

GROWTH MINDSET

- Believe that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts
- Although people may differ - in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments - everyone can change and grow through application and experience.
- Don't necessarily believe that anyone can do absolutely anything, but that a person's true potential is unknown.
- Believe it's impossible to foresee what can be accomplished with years of passion, toil, and training.
- Has a passion for learning.

DON'T BE AFRAID OF FAILURE

How often have you tried something, been knocked back and then subsequently never tried that thing again? Well, the term "never give up" goes hand-in-hand with developing a growth mindset - and also success.

Many people we consider as having huge success have failed multiple times:

- Stephen King's novel, *Carrie*, was rejected by 30 publishers.
- J.K. Rowling was turned down by 12 publishers before finding success with her *Harry Potter* Books.
- The founder of Honda went broke, had his first factory bombed during the Second World War and his second factory was destroyed by an earthquake.



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- Thomas Edison - the inventor credited with the invention of the first commercially usable lightbulb - is quoted as saying: "I have not failed, I have found over 9,000 ways that won't work."

Sometimes, in order to achieve the success we want in life, we need to stop equating effort with failure. Over time, if we avoid trying new things we won't:

- Progress in our careers,
- Strengthen our relationships or
- Increase the number of skills we have

When these things happen, our risk of depression and stagnation actually increases.

HOW CAN WE GROW OUR MINDSET?

Of course, some people find trying new things easier than others. You may even feel like you're more inclined to enjoy the simpler things in life. There can be a number of things that can hold you back, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try new things - here are a few pointers for developing a growth mindset:

1. Try something that is outside your comfort zone. Think about how often, in the regular course of your life, you've failed. If the answer is seldom or never then perhaps you are choosing to play very safe. You won't have the opportunity to develop a growth mindset if you only ever do the things you know you are competent at.
2. Be aware of your reactions when you fail. How do you feel? What do you tell yourself? Where possible, try to change the storyline you tell yourself internally, from "I'm not good at this" to "I might need to work on this for longer to get better".
3. Acknowledge and embrace imperfections as part of life. If you know or suspect that you are a perfectionist, ask yourself why and what it would take to stop when something is "good enough" instead of "perfect".
4. View challenges as opportunities to try something new and see learning as a continuous part of life.

5. You don't need to take up something extreme like skydiving. Try a creative activity like music, painting or writing. These activities are helpful in developing a growth mindset because they are open ended, anyone can have a go at them, they promote continuous learning and development, they force you to embrace imperfection and they use parts of your brain that can sometimes be less exercised in your daily life.

The world is your oyster, so take the plunge and try something new!

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