

A brief guide to Dweck's Mindset theory

Key Idea

In her books on Mindset, psychology professor Carol Dweck argues that the main key to success in life is what we believe about ourselves. Broadly speaking we fall into 2 main groups: A fixed mindset group that believes ability is natural and fixed whereas a growth mindset group believes that ability can be changed and developed. The view we adopt of ourselves can profoundly affect how we lead our lives. Dweck argues that we can be more successful by choosing/training ourselves to adopt a growth mindset.

The two mindsets

A fixed mindset:

- Believes intelligence, personality and ability are broadly fixed.
- Tend not to value effort – if you have a talent you don't need to work at it and if you don't have it, why bother trying?
- Understands their own ability through comparison to others, finds others threatening.
- Fears getting it wrong, prefers praise to a challenge,
- When it goes wrong they can tend towards excuses and blame – effort is scary because it robs you of excuses,
- Takes criticism personally rather than seeing it as a chance to develop.

A growth mindset

- Believes intelligence and personality can be developed and cultivated. Talents and aptitudes etc are merely a starting point.
- Are 'oriented towards learning' and have 'a special talent for identifying their own strengths and weaknesses.'
- Understand that hard work and effort can bring big changes in ability and performance
- Sees getting things wrong as a useful step towards getting it right,
- Enjoys difficulty and challenge,
- Take ownership of the process of learning

Which one are you most like?

Remember it is possible to change your mindset!

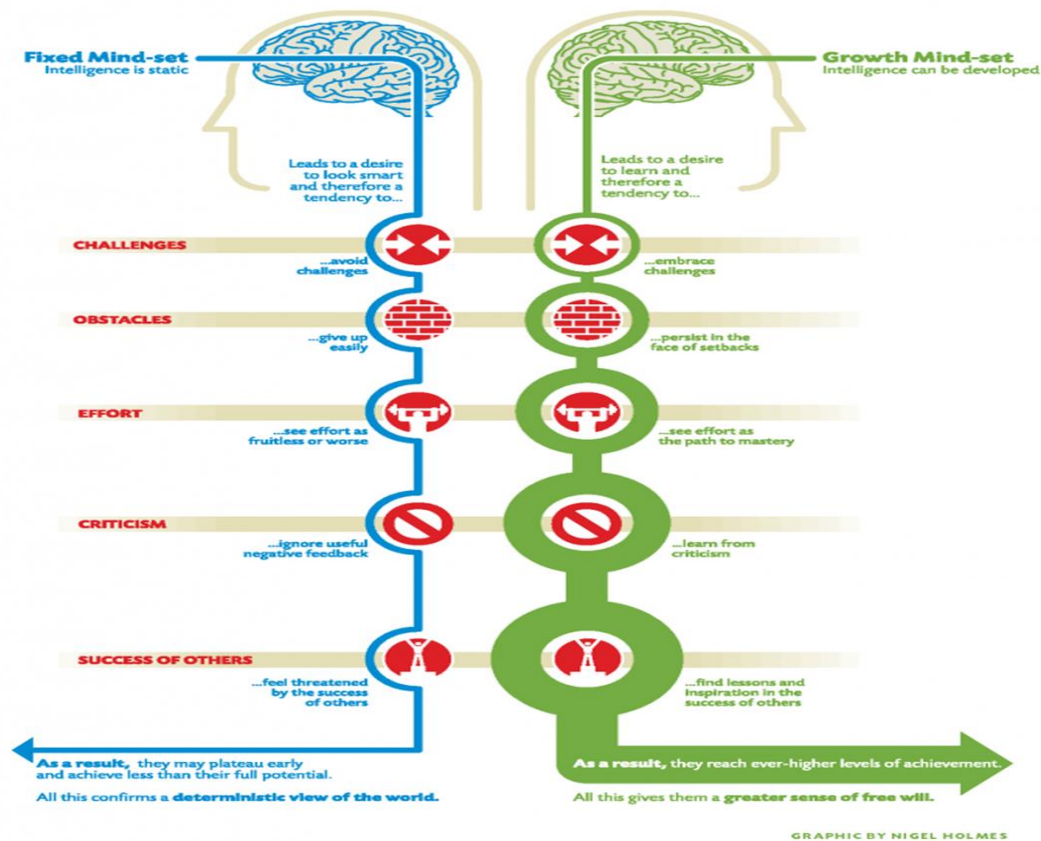
One researcher, Benjamin Bloom, did a detailed study of the lives of 120 great musicians, sportspeople, scientists, etc. He concluded that even in adolescence –you couldn't predict their achievements – most didn't especially stand out. Edison, Einstein, Michael Jordan, David Beckham etc were all significantly behind peers in early life. **It's effort and attitude more than intelligence and talent**

So what?

1. Your GCSE results are just a starting point. It is where you were 3 months ago, not where you are going.

2. If you found GCSE easy, watch out! You may be unprepared for the effort required at A Level and those with lower GCSEs who work hard will overtake you.
3. You may do badly on assessments at first. This does not matter. What matters is that you learn, you improve and that you do well when it matters – in the final exams.
4. Remember your competition is not the other people in the room. It is the thousands of others who will sit the exam with you.

For those who prefer diagrams



	Fixed mind-set - a desire to look smart	Growth mind-set - a desire to learn
Challenges	avoid them	embrace them
Obstacles	give up easily	persist
Effort	fruitless	the path to mastery
Criticism	ignore, even if useful	learn from it
Success of others	feel threatened by it	be inspired by it