

Mindset Matters



Introduction to Mindset

We're going to start by talking about intelligence and mindset.

As a concept, most people already have a definition for intelligence that they have internalized over the years. Chances are, you have one of which you may not even be aware. My own view has changed dramatically over the last 30 years.

We need to find out what your current view is of intelligence and what your current mindset is. There is a short questionnaire on the next page for you to complete.

Don't overthink the questions. There is no right or wrong answer, no right or wrong way to believe. Put your initial gut instinct response. Working faster tends to give a more accurate response. The entire questionnaire should take less than 5 minutes.



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Mindset Quiz

Place a check in the column that identifies the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.				
2. No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.				
3. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.				
4. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that.				
5. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.				
6. Music talent can be learned by anyone.				
7. Only a few people will be truly good at sports—you have to be "born with it."				
8. Math is much easier to learn if you are male or maybe come from a culture who values math.				
9. The harder you work at something, the better you will be at it.				
10. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.				
11. Trying new things is stressful for me and I avoid it.				
12. Some people are good and kind, and some are not—it's not often that people change.				
13. I appreciate when parents, coaches, teachers give me feedback about my performance.				
14. I often get angry when I get feedback about my performance.				
15. All human beings without a brain injury or birth defect are capable of the same amount of learning.				
16. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.				
17. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed.				
18. Human beings are basically good, but sometimes make terrible decisions.				
19. An important reason why I do my school work is that I like to learn new things.				
20. Truly smart people do not need to try hard.				

Mindset Quiz Scoring Rubric

Now score the previous page using the rubric below. For example, on #1, if you chose “Disagree,” circle the 2 on line 1 below. Then add up the four columns, and put the sum in the Total line. Add the four totals together to get a single value for the Grand Total.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. ability mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
2. ability mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
3. ability mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
4. personality/character mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
5. personality/character mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
6. ability mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
7. ability mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
8. ability mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
9. ability mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
10. personality/character mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
11. ability mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
12. personality/character mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
13. ability mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
14. ability mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
15. ability mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
16. ability mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
17. personality/character mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
18. personality/character mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
19. ability mindset—growth	3	2	1	0
20. ability mindset—fixed	0	1	2	3
Sub-Total for each column				
Grand Total for all columns combined				

Type of Mindset	Grand Total points
Strong Growth Mindset	45 – 60 points
Growth Mindset with some Fixed ideas	34 – 44 points
Fixed Mindset with some Growth ideas	21 – 33 points
Strong Fixed Mindset	0 – 20 points ¹

Using this questionnaire, what kind of mindset do you appear to have?

¹ Adapted from [the website classroom 20](#).

What is Mindset?

- First, there is no right or wrong way to believe.
- Second, these beliefs can be *changed*.
- Third, changing these beliefs may help you tremendously in all your academic classes.

So, what is a fixed mindset or a growth mindset?

Fixed Intelligence Mindset

Intelligence is static, does not change.

You have a certain amount of it.

Growth Intelligence Mindset

Intelligence can be developed and changed.

You can grow it with actions.

We all have an underlying belief about intelligence which reflects the attitudes of our parents, siblings, teachers (particularly in the elementary years), and the culture in which we were raised.

This belief can affect how hard we work, how quickly or easily we give up at difficult tasks, and even whether or not we consider different careers.

It also has been associated with the achievements of people over the course of their lifetime.

Both groups start with a lot of promise, but people with a *Growth Intelligence Mindset* tend to achieve more in their lifetime, while people with a *Fixed Intelligence Mindset* achieve less and less over time.

Here's the really, really, really important point:

Neither mindset is associated with actual higher intelligence or ability!

MINDSET DETERMINES REACTIONS TO...

- Challenges – avoid versus embrace
- Obstacles – give up easily versus persist
- Tasks requiring effort – fruitless (pointless) versus path to mastery
- Criticism – ignore versus learn from
- Success of Others – feel threatened by versus find lessons and inspiration in

One big difference between the two mindsets is attitudes towards difficult tasks and challenges.

- The Growth Mindset feels that they can complete the tasks and meet the challenges with hard work and persistence. They tend not to notice if others are struggling with the same task or not.
- The Fixed Mindset feels that their intelligence is being judged by the difficulty of the task, feel a sense of dread and that it may be pointless or hopeless to try. They are also very aware of how others around them are doing on the same task and look to see how they compare.

How are Mindsets Formed

Mindsets are mostly a result of praising and labeling during early childhood.

- When you are praised for your ability, you tend to become more hesitant to try new things as you don't want to do anything which might make you look less intelligent. You don't want others to see your flaws.
- When you are praised for effort, you tend to continue to seek out new things regardless of whether or not you are successful at every task. Our school system tends to reward students based on test scores, which reinforces a fixed mindset.

Now watch this 5-minute video on the differences between the two mindsets.

[Growth Mindset versus Fixed Mindset](#)

Now watch this 7-minute video on how these two mindsets can develop.

[Mindset by Carol Dweck - Animated Core Message](#)

Study the graphic on the next page. Which side represents you? Does it depend on the activity?

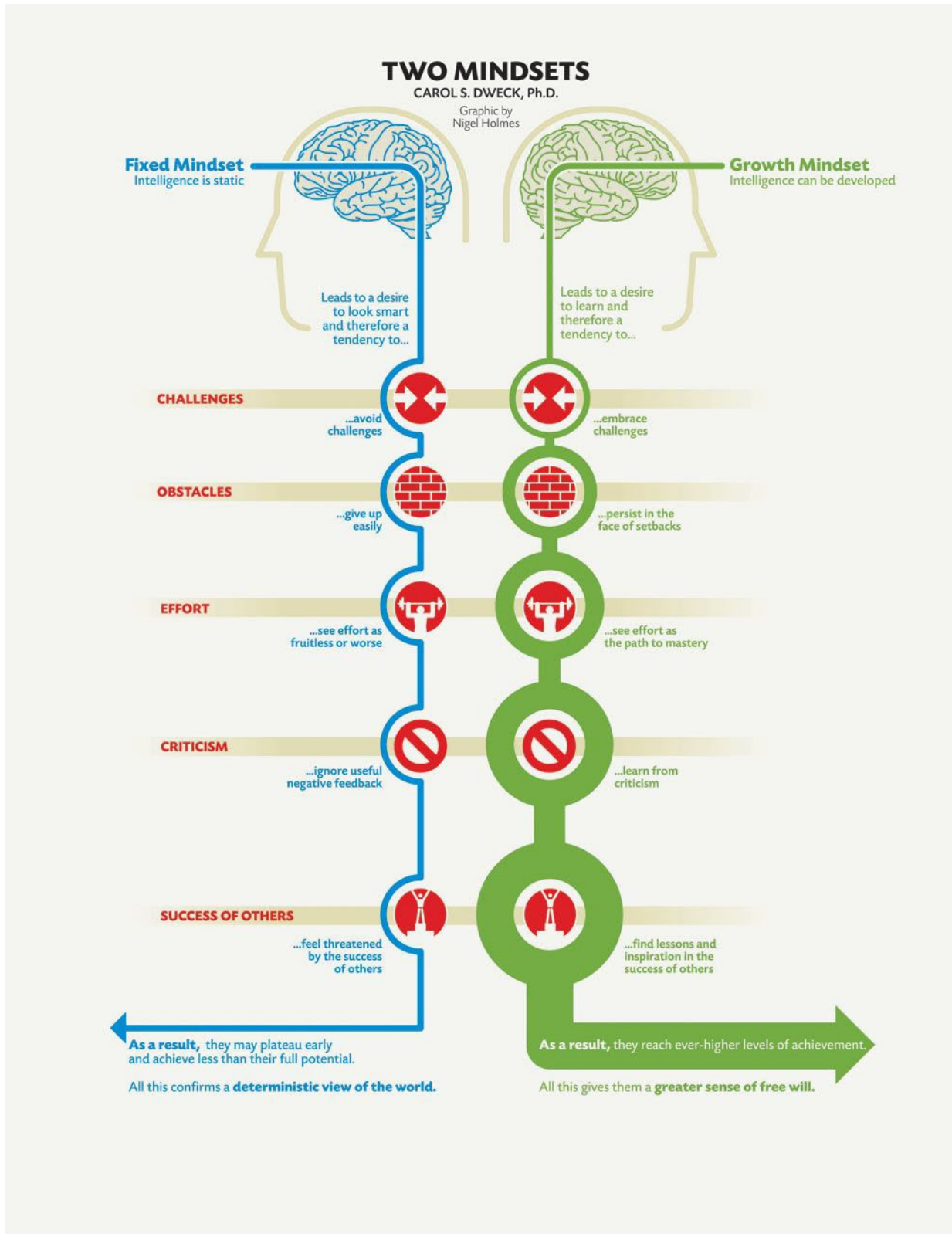


Figure 1 Two Mindsets

Source: [Mindset works website](https://www.mindsetworks.com/)

How can you change from a Fixed Mindset to a Growth Mindset?

- **Learn to hear your fixed mindset “voice.”** Do you sometimes hear a voice in your head that says things like, “Are you sure you can do it?” or “What if you fail?” or “What if people think you’re stupid if you can’t get it?” When you receive feedback, the voice might say, “It’s not my fault.” or “I knew you couldn’t get it.” This is your inner fixed mindset voice.
- **Recognize that you have a choice in what you believe.** No one can control your brain but you. If you experience a challenge, setback, or receive criticism or feedback, how will you handle it? Choose to believe that you need to challenge yourself, try harder, change your strategies, and continue to seek out ways to learn.
- **Talk back to your inner fixed mindset voice with a growth mindset voice.** Say to yourself, “I can do this.” “I can’t do it now, but I will learn with time and effort.” “I only can’t do it until I can.” “I have to figure out how to learn this material. It’s my responsibility.”
- **Take a growth mindset action to reinforce the growth mindset voice.** Plan your next step, go for help during Office Hours or at the Math Lab, set a SMART goal for solving the current issue, try to identify your error, develop good study habits that will make learning easier, etc.

So, what is Grit, and what does it have to do with your mindset?

Grit can be defined as your tendency to persist in the face of difficulty and not give up.



We’ve seen that your mindset affects your tendency to persist and keep trying, so mindset will affect your level of grit.

However, like intelligence, grit is NOT fixed. You can, and people often do, become more resilient as you grow older.

Resilience and persistence are a part of grit. In the next handout, we will consider how to improve your level of grit.