



FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES

TOGETHER



Our Family is Adaptable! Flexibility to Change

Youth can have either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset, and sometimes they switch between the two. According to Carol Dweck, Professor of Psychology at Stanford University, youth with a fixed mindset believe that skills, intelligence, and talents cannot be changed in a meaningful way. On the other hand, youth with a growth mindset believe their skills and intelligence can grow with effort, learning and persistence. A growth mindset fosters motivation, resilience and determination in youth, while a fixed mindset creates a sense of importance and can help our teens to adapt to change and to learn that being flexible is okay.

Promoting a Growth Mindset

- **Remind your teen that “a brain can grow.”** The brain is flexible, it never stops growing. This is exciting because it means your brain, with time and effort, can grow stronger.
- **Praise the process, not the results.** For example, instead of saying, “I am thrilled you worked hard to save money for a new jacket,” reward the effort by saying, “You didn’t give up. You worked hard and it paid off. Great job!”
- **Reward persistence.** Acknowledge your teen’s hard work and persistence. When you see this in action, let them know. Example: “You’re really trying hard and taking your time to learn. Way to be persistent!”
- **Use the word “yet.”** When your teen says “I can’t,” remind them that they “can’t, yet.”
- **Link praise to something specific.** Instead of saying, “You’re really smart,” try “You took the time to think of creative ways to solve the problem. You kept trying even when some of the strategies didn’t work. Great job!”
- **Failure is an opportunity to learn.** Talk positively about failures and mistakes (both yours and your teen’s). For example, talk to your teen about what they learned when something didn’t go as planned.
- **Don’t be tough on your teen if they don’t succeed at something.** Instead, gently explore what happened and help them to make a plan for next time. You might ask, “What have you learned that can help?”
- **Encourage your teen to make constructive self-statements.** Some examples might include, “I work hard,” “I am a creative person,” “I enjoy learning and discovering,” or “I care about others.”

Growth Mindset Activity

Conversations with your teen are a wonderful way to encourage growth mindset development. Consider the following questions to get a conversation started:

- What did you do today that took a lot of thought?
- What happened today that made you keep going despite wanting to stop? What strategies did you try?
- What did your mistake teach you? What did you learn from it?
- Did you try something today that was really hard? What made it hard?
- What will/did you do to challenge yourself today?
- What will you do to solve this problem?

Learn more about growth mindset by viewing [The Power of Believing That You Can Improve](#).



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To learn more about the science behind growth mindset, you may wish to read the below research:

- [A national experiment reveals where a growth mindset improves achievement](#)
- [Fixed and Growth Mindset in Education and How Grit Helps Students Persist in the Face of Adversity](#)