
The Meaning of Having a Growth Mindset

After taking the quizzes in Carol Dweck's book, I found that I am a mix between the two mindsets, but lean towards a growth mindset. Having a growth mindset means that I believe my intelligence can be developed with persistence and effort (Ricci, 2013). The opposite of this would be a fixed mindset, where one believes that a person is born with the abilities they will have.

I am not surprised that I lean more towards a growth mindset. Looking back on my childhood, my parents sent me mixed messages about mindsets. They held the belief that most children are born with their abilities, and there is very little room for growth, but they also would say that through hard work, a person can accomplish great things. I remember when I came home with bad grades one time in 7th grade, I attributed it to only being so smart, and that I had reached my potential. My parents did not support my notion, and although I did not appreciate it at the time, they relentlessly made me try harder, redo work, and encouraged me to ask for help from the teacher when I was having a difficult time. Since then, I have demonstrated more of a growth mindset in school and life by working hard at things I want to achieve, and staying persistent despite a nagging urge to give up when things get more difficult than I would like.

An example of my growth mindset that I have seen play out in life has been in most of my math classes in high school and in college. I noticed that each of these teachers had different teaching styles, and after becoming adapted to one of their styles, I struggled a bit at the beginning of each new semester to learn from a new teacher. While part of me wanted to blame inconsistent methods for math teachers, I noticed the pattern that even though I struggled at the beginning of each new semester, I still ended up with a good grade at the end of the semester. So rather than blaming my short term struggle on the teachers, I encouraged myself to keep trying, pay close attention to what the teacher does that I learn well from, and do the assignments whether I found them easy or hard. This ties along with attribution theory from the week two outline. People with a fixed mindset tend to blame their short comings on internal factors like intelligence, and on external factors like a teacher not having a good style. People with growth mindsets look towards behavioral factors, and understand that they may need to change to achieve the desired outcome.

While I do believe I hold more a growth mindset, I do see that I have remnants of a fixed mindset. I do hope that through effort to maintain and grow a growth mindset, my fixed mindset does not, "spring back" into place as Ricci puts it (Ricci, Mindsets in the Classroom, 2013). I also believe that these readings have been helpful for both my personal reflection, and my future as a teacher.