

15 Benefits of the Growth Mindset

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Followup to: [Why Your Mindset is So Important](#)

Want to have more fun in life? Enjoy learning? Have better relationships? Improve your business? A growth mindset is associated with all of these benefits plus more. This simple attitude impacts your success, health, happiness, careers, and relationships.

Your mindset is the view you adopt of yourself—whether your abilities and characteristics can change (the growth mindset), or whether they are set in stone (the fixed mindset).

The benefits of having a growth mindset over a fixed mindset are vast. Here are **just a few benefits of the growth mindset** that I extracted from Carol Dweck's book [Mindset: The New Psychology of Success](#).

1. Enjoy Life, Even When You're Not Good At It

"This is a wonderful feature of the growth mindset. You don't have to think you're already great at something to want to do it and to enjoy doing it." – Dweck¹

Since your focus is on doing and learning cool stuff, while not caring about success or achievements, it is much easier to enjoy doing whatever it is you're doing. Never painted in your life? Who cares! Drink a bottle of wine with some friends, pick up a paint set at a nearby dollar store, and give it a try. The fixed mindset would make you shun from doing this, knowing that your painting will 'suck' and be 'embarrassing'. The growth mindset says "who cares?" and lets you enjoy yourself.

"The growth mindset does allow people to love what they're doing – and continue to love it in the face of difficulties. ... The growth mindset allows people to value what they're doing regardless of the outcome." – Dweck²

2. Improve Your Self-Insight and Self-Esteem

Many studies show that people are terrible at estimating their abilities.³ But, as additional work performed by Dweck (and others) has shown:⁴

"[It] was those with the fixed mindset who accounted for almost all the inaccuracy. The people with the growth mindset were amazingly accurate." – Dweck⁵

This result is also reflected in *Extraordinary Minds* by Howard Gardner (1997), who concluded that exceptional individuals are especially talented at identifying their own strength and weaknesses. As Dweck points out, this overlaps with the growth mindset.

3. Improve Your Relationships

Those with a fixed mindset want an ideal mate to put them on a pedestal, make them feel perfect, and worship them. A fixed mindset can cause partners to think they should be able to read each other's mind, or that the two of them should never disagree on anything (which is very unlikely).

Those with a growth mindset, however, want an ideal mate to see their faults and help them to work on them, challenge them to become a better person, and encourage them to learn new things. This makes for a *much* healthier and happier relationships.

4. Never Feel Stupid When Learning

When do you feel smart? Think about your answer for a minute.

"We asked people, ranging from grade schoolers to young adults, "When do you feel smart?" The differences were striking." – Dweck⁶

People with a fixed mindset gave answers like "It's when I don't make any mistakes." In other words, you're supposed to be perfect.

People with a growth mindset, however, gave answers like "When I work on something for a long time and I start to figure it out." In other words, when you're learning.

5. Never Stress About Being Perfect

If you believe that any test, at any time, will measure you for your whole life, you will feel the need to be perfect, all the time.

For example, Dweck and colleagues told fifth graders they would be taking a test that measured an important school ability. They were then asked two things: *Does this test measure how smart you are? Does this test measure how smart you'll be when you grow up?*⁷

The kids with a growth mindset didn't think the test measured how smart they were, *or* how smart they'd be when they grew up. The kids with the fixed mindset, however, thought the exact opposite. They gave a single test in fifth grade the power to measure themselves as an adult!

6. Strengthen Your Confidence

Those in a fixed mindset do not have less confidence than those in a growth mindset. The problem is that their confidence is more fragile and easily undermined by setbacks and effort.

For example, in a study by Joseph Martocchio (1994), employees taking a computer training course were either put into a fixed or a growth mindset. Before the course, confidence in

their computer skills was equal. After the course, those in the fixed mindset lost much of their confidence in their computer skills, while those with the growth mindset *gained* confidence.

7. Lower Your Risk of Depression

In a study performed by Baer, Grant, and Dweck (2005), students in the fixed mindset had higher levels of depression because they ruminated over problems and setbacks.

In another report from researchers at Duke University, there was a strong link found between anxiety and depression among females who aspire to “effortless perfection.”⁸

8. Be Better at Taking Responsibility For Your Life

A fixed mindset tries to repair self-esteem after a failure by assigning blame and making excuses.

“John Wooden, the legendary basketball coach, says you aren’t a failure until you start to blame. What he means is that you can still be in the process of learning from your mistakes until you deny them.” – Dweck⁹

A growth mindset helps you take responsibility for your actions and decisions because you don’t blame others for them.

9. See Single Events As Just That

A fixed mindset can cause you to measure your whole self-worth on single events—your SAT score, your college application, your divorce, or your IQ. This is ridiculous. A growth mindset realizes that these are single events that do not define you.

10. Increase Your Resilience to Labels and Stereotypes

“[In] the fixed mindset, both positive and negative labels can mess with your mind. When you’re given a positive label, you’re afraid of losing it, and when you’re hit with a negative label, you’re afraid of deserving it.

When people are in the growth mindset, the stereotype doesn’t disrupt their performance. The growth mindset takes the teeth out of the stereotype and makes people better able to fight back.” – Dweck¹⁰

Work by Steele and Aronson (1995) has shown that the simple act of checking a box indicating your race and sex can trigger stereotypes in your head and lower test scores (e.g. “I’m a woman and men are better at math, so I won’t do well on this test.”).

“Aside from hijacking people’s abilities, stereotypes also damage by making people feel they don’t belong. Many minorities drop out of college and many women drop out of math and science because they just don’t feel they fit in.” -Dweck¹¹

This problem is worse in those with a fixed mindset. With a growth mindset, stereotypes are not seen as permanent qualities, and therefore have less negative influence on performance. As Dweck says:

“The women with the growth mindset—those who thought math ability could be improved—felt a fairly strong and stable sense of belonging. And they were able to maintain this even when they thought there was a lot of negative stereotyping going around.

...

But women with the fixed mindset, as the semester wore on, felt a shrinking sense of belonging. And the more they felt the presence of stereotyping in their class, the more their comfort with math withered.” -Dweck¹²

11. See Setbacks As Useful

What? Useful?

It’s easy to be frustrated by setbacks. Yet they are *useful* because they provide information in the form of feedback. A setback indicates that something went wrong, and you now have the opportunity to figure out *why*, learn from it, and prevent it from happening again.

The growth mindset sees setbacks as useful, whereas a fixed mindset sees them as annoying hurdles and cause motivation and effort to drop.

12. Ditch the Stress From Constantly Trying to Prove Yourself

In a fixed mindset success is a top priority. But succeeding once isn’t enough, you are *always* being measure by others, and you must *always* be perfect. In a growth mindset you don’t care about proving yourself to others, you only care about improving and growing.

13. Enjoy Putting In Time and Effort, Rather Than Fearing Them

If you’re constantly interested in learning more and improving, then putting in time and effort to do so seems *enjoyable*. In a fixed mindset, effort looks like it will be fruitless or worse.

Of course, those with a fixed mindset may still put in a whole lot of effort. A workaholic with a fixed mindset may do lots of hard work and take on a lot of challenges. It is possible to be free of the belief that high effort equals low ability, but a workaholic may still have the other parts of the fixed mindset.

14. Improve Your Company

“CEO disease” arises in situations where CEOs get stuck in their current ways and resist change. They did things a certain way to achieve their status or to build up their company. It made them successful. They resist changing anything, because it may take away their success. They exile or ignore the critics, and try to surround themselves with worshippers instead. They may choose short-term strategies over long-term gains to boost a company’s stock and their approval on Wall Street.

Growth-oriented businesses look for ways to improve the quality of their products and services. Long-term growth strategies matter more than short-term achievements.

15. Avoid Feelings of Superiority

The fixed mindset creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over. The very act of ‘succeeding’ requires that you show yourself to be better than others. So if you focus on succeeding and ‘achieving’ things, you’re always in a frame of mind where you compare yourself to others—often by applauding yourself for being superior.

The growth mindset doesn’t care about being superior. In fact, the success of others can be inspiring and a source for learning, whereas a fixed mindset sees the success of others as a threat.



To be clear, the growth mindset doesn’t guarantee success or makes things effortless. Changing your mindset isn’t a magic pill for solving all your problems; but if Dweck’s book and research has shown anything, it’s that a growth mindset can give you *a much richer and more fulfilling life*, all while improving your abilities and chances of success.

Want to be an influential painter, an effective manager at your company, or a professional gamer? How can you say it’s obvious this will never happen? Who knows!?

The above 15 reasons, plus more in Dweck’s book, give me a strong incentive to figure out exactly *how* to change my mindset.

I’m *far* from always having a growth mindset, though I think I have been getting better. **How about you?**



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1. Dweck (2006), p. 53. [[↗](#)]
2. Dweck (2006), p. 48. [[↗](#)]
3. "Research from numerous corners of psychological inquiry suggests that self-assessments of skill and character are often flawed in substantive and systematic ways." Dunning et al. (2004); Kruger & Dunning (1999); Dunning et al. (2003). [[↗](#)]
4. Ehrlinger (2008), Ehrlinger & Dweck (2007). [[↗](#)]
5. Dweck (2006), p. 11. [[↗](#)]
6. Dweck (2006), p. 24. [[↗](#)]
7. Dweck (2006), p. 26.; Stone & Dweck (1998). [[↗](#)]
8. "Report of the Steering Committee for the Women's Initiative at Duke University," August 2003. [[↗](#)]
9. Dweck (2006), p. 37. [[↗](#)]
10. Dweck (2006), p. 75. [[↗](#)]
11. Dweck (2006), p. 77. [[↗](#)]
12. Dweck (2006), p. 77. [[↗](#)]

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