

## 20 Guidelines for Developing a Growth Mindset

### Mindset

Overview

n/a

Client

No

Research in the field of implicit theories has shown that it is possible to change people's mindsets. Different interventions have successfully changed people's beliefs about the meaning of challenges (see, for instance, Aronson et al., 2002; Blackwell et al., 2007, Good et al., 2003). Instead of perceiving challenges as proof of one's inabilities (a fixed mindset), these interventions have helped participants perceive these challenges as a way to grow (a growth mindset).

This tool provides an overview of guidelines to assist clients in developing a growth mindset.



### Goal

The goal of this tool is to assist clients in developing a growth mindset by offering 20 concrete guidelines.



### Advice

- Clients may choose one or more of the guidelines that resonate most with them. Exposure to these guidelines may serve as primers or reminders for the client. Therefore, it is suggested that clients place the chosen guidelines somewhere they can see them every day (e.g., on the refrigerator or office desk). The guideline(s) should be accessible to ensure that clients will not fall out of the habit of looking at it.
- These guidelines may also be emailed to clients daily. For 25 days, clients receive one guideline a day, reminding them of their goal to develop a growth mindset.



### References

- Aronson, J., Fried, C., & Good, C. (2002). Reducing the effects of stereotype threat on African American college students by shaping theories of intelligence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 38, 113-125.



- Blackwell, L. A., Trzesniewski, K. H., & Dweck, C. S. (2007). Theories of intelligence and achievement across the junior high school transition: A longitudinal study and an intervention. *Child Development, 78*, 246-263.
- Good, C., Aronson, J., & Inzlicht, M. (2003). Improving adolescents' standardized test performance: An intervention to reduce the effects of stereotype threat. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 24*, 645-662.



## 20 Guidelines for Developing a Growth Mindset

### Instructions

The following guidelines may help you develop a growth mindset:

#### 1. Accept imperfection

Remember that everyone makes mistakes. Being imperfect is part of the human condition. You never signed a contract to be perfect.

#### 2. Lean into challenges

Sometimes the hardest times help us grow. Rather than looking at challenges as something you might fail at, try to consider them as opportunities for growth. Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn.

#### 3. Continue to learn

You are never too old to learn. Approach challenges with curiosity. Ask yourself, what can I learn from this? How can I use this experience to improve myself in the future?

#### 4. Stay current with research on neuroplasticity

As humans, whether we are aware of it or not, our brains are continually changing. Our brain is not hardwired. Just as weightlifting and physical exercise build your muscles, when you are learning, the nerve cells in your brain are growing with mental exercise, and these neurons are developing greater connectivity. The process of growth and rewiring of our brain cells is called neuroplasticity. As we learn, our brain remodels itself based on our new experiences. In sum, your ability to grow and learn is supported by research.

#### 5. Reframe perceived failure

Instead of calling something a “failure,” consider key takeaways and learnings from experiences. Reframe “failure” to “learning opportunity” or “growth opportunity.”

#### 6. Instead of seeking approval from others, seek it from yourself

Taking ownership of your experience allows you to be increasingly aware of yourself and the areas you need to develop.



### 7. Instead of focusing on the end, focus on the process

Learning occurs over time, so enjoy the ride.

### 8. Rejoice in growth with others

Sharing successes with trusted others can cultivate motivation and restore energy for learning. Share your success with others. Own your progress.

### 9. Be patient with growth

Learning doesn't occur overnight. Remember that learning often takes time and encounters bumps and mistakes along the way.

### 10. Genius takes challenging work

Those who are commonly defined as "geniuses" have not only talent but also commitment, drive, and persistence.

### 11. Avoid defensiveness when being criticized

In a not very eloquent way, the individual is giving you a positive learning opportunity. Take some time to identify the specific learning opportunities when given criticism.

### 12. Disassociate failing from being a failure

Because you fail at something, this does not mean you *are* a failure.

### 13. Take time for reflection

Take time to review learnings every day.

### 14. Place hard work before skill

Efforts should always be rewarded before inherent talent.



### 15. Practice regular “brain training”

Exercise the brain, just like you would the body. Figure out what exercises you like to do and then do them regularly.

### 16. Incorporate the word “yet” into regular vocabulary

This primes the mind for possibility and keeps the brain open. For example: “I don’t know how to do this yet.”

### 17. Learn from others

All humans make mistakes, so learn from those who made them already. This is not to say that mistakes cannot be repeated.

### 18. Make a new goal for every goal achieved

Learning is an endless, lifelong journey. Stay focused on learning and becoming better at things.

### 19. Take calculated risks, especially with trusted others

Sometimes risks lead to rewards, and other times, they don't. Either way, risk can be perceived as an opportunity for growth.

### 20. Own your attitude

Once you feel that you have cultivated a growth mindset, own it. Let it guide you.