



Developing a Growth Mindset

What it is and how it can help you gain more confidence


According to research conducted by Stanford Professor Carol Dwek, there are typically two mindset approaches that people use to deal with perceived failure or new situations: a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. **A growth mindset means you believe that you can change, grow, and develop despite challenges and setbacks.** Whereas a **fixed mindset may mean you believe that your talents and skills have a capped progression** and that any setback can be perceived as a major one. (Dwek, Carol. *Mindset: Changing the way you Think to Fulfil Your Potential*. 6th edition, Robison, 2017).

Fixed and growth mindset examples

To get a better idea of both mindsets in a practical sense, imagine that you're interested in attending a workshop on developing your accounting skills.

With a fixed mindset, you may not even sign up for the workshop. You know that you've struggled with accounting and maths in the past and think that the workshop will be of no use. You may think that you'll just embarrass yourself anyway, and there's no point in going. If you do attend, you might be reluctant to participate or ask questions for fear of being judged for your lack of knowledge. After the workshop, when you feel like your skills haven't improved, you'll reaffirm to yourself that you've always been bad at accounting and that you knew there was no point in going to the workshop.

However, if you approach the situation with a growth mindset, the experience might be very different. You attend the workshop with curiosity and an eagerness to improve your skills. When asked to participate or answer questions, you lean into the opportunity, even if you aren't yet confident in your knowledge. This allows you to learn more and gain feedback from the workshop and other participants. When you leave the workshop, you feel that your skills aren't where you want them to be yet, but you feel more confident than you did before and are looking for more opportunities to further grow in this area. You understand that not knowing is a part of learning, and you're excited to see how far you can develop this new skill.



With these examples in mind, it's important to note that **nobody just has a fixed or growth mindset, but a combination of both**. A fixed mindset is an inherently human way of thinking about challenges that's meant to protect you from perceived damage to your ego and self-esteem in the short term. However, this means that **you may often miss out on opportunities for growth and improvement by avoiding minor setbacks**.

How can a growth mindset improve confidence?

So how can developing your mindset more towards growth improve your confidence? Having a mindset that inherently opens you up to challenges and new opportunities may feel uncomfortable when you're stepping into the unknown, but by reframing these situations you can adapt your approach and improve your outlook. A growth mindset will mean you see failure as an opportunity for learning and growth, you'll learn to appreciate your efforts and journey rather than hyper-fixating on goals and outcomes while improving your well-being.

Overall, you turn away from insecurity and fear of failure by embracing them as opportunities for growth, improving your confidence in yourself and the way you adapt to situations.


How to develop a growth mindset

If you've noticed already that you have habits that lean slightly further towards a fixed mindset, there's no need to panic. Remember that everyone has a mixture of both mindsets and that you can **cultivate a growth mindset by following some of the steps below**:

1. Push yourself to try new things and step out of your comfort zone.

If there's something that you've always wanted to try or learn more about, **actively push yourself towards it**. When you find the opportunity, try to embrace it with a **healthy expectation of learning and development**. Encourage yourself to make mistakes and approach them with curiosity instead of frustration at yourself or the activity.

If we go back to the example of the accounting workshop, this may mean assuring yourself before attending the workshop that you don't have to know everything, that you're going to learn and develop, and that you're looking forward to being able to find out more about yourself and this new skill.



2. Learn to tune into and separate yourself from your internal monologue.

The voice inside our head doesn't always have our best interest in mind and is often motivated by fear rather than confidence and opportunity for growth. Try **listening to the voice in your head consciously and making note of when you find yourself turning back to a fixed mindset**. By doing this, you can start to become more aware of your mindset and what triggers it. Do you find yourself riddled with self-doubt when facing a new situation? Or maybe when you feel unknowledgeable or challenged? What do you find yourself saying to yourself in these situations and how do you find that you act or feel? **Tap into these fears and what they mean to you.**

3. Replace negativity.

Once you've become more conscious of your mindset and when fixed thinking creeps into the background, you can begin to **replace these thoughts with ones that affirm a growth mindset**. You can do this by questioning your thoughts, or by reassuring yourself. Some examples of how to do this are:

"I may not be good at this yet, but I have lots of opportunity and ability to learn and grow".

"I can't expect myself to be perfect at this right away, I'm learning and that's brave of me".

"Why do I think that about myself? What evidence do I have?"

"Would I say this to someone else who was facing the same challenge or situation?"

A fixed mindset is a natural response to new situations or failure, **but it can hold you back from your full potential and new opportunities**. By developing your mindset to be more growth focussed, you can increase your skills, expand your comfort zone, and become more confident in all aspects of yourself and your business. By consistently following the guidance above, and doing some more research, you may look back further down the line and realize that **your confidence, knowledge, and comfort zone have grown.**