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Growth vs. Fixed mindset

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In recent years, research has been done on the effect that the beliefs a student has about his/her abilities in a specific subject have on the success the student has in that subject. The two categories are called fixed mindset and growth mindset. A quick google search of “fixed vs growth mindset” will give you more information, but it can be summarized that your beliefs shape your outcome. If you believe that your brain is wired a certain way and you “are not a math person”, then you are less likely to have success in math class. Now this does not mean that if you believe you will make a 100 on a test even though you did not study you will, but your belief, along with the proper preparation, can impact success or failure in a subject.



A person who has a growth mindset believes that his/her abilities can grow. They believe that talent and intellect are a starting point but can be grown and developed to attain greater success through dedication and hard work. This mindset creates a love for learning. Failures are seen as an opportunity to learn and to try other methods to obtain the same goal.

A fixed mindset is one that believes that intelligence and talent are fixed traits. They do not believe that intelligence can be improved and that talent and intelligence alone yields success. This mindset can lead to students believing that they are not good in certain areas (such as math) and no matter what they do they cannot improve.

Most people are not completely fixed mindset or growth mindset but vary their mindset from area to area. Many lean toward a fixed mindset in some areas (such as specific academic areas) and a growth mindset in others (such as strength).

Below are three ways that educators and parents can play a role in creating a growth mindset for children (summarized from this video).

1. Be aware of your own mindset. Adults are a significant influence on children, especially younger ones. Understand what message your words and actions send to students.
2. Praise the process. Praising children for their effort instead of the outcome suggests that effort affects success.
3. Model learning from failure. If children hear and see adults talking in a positive manner about mistakes, then mistakes become something natural instead of failures.

I encourage all of us to strive to create a growth mindset in all of our children. Our belief in Christ as our Savior determines how we view the world around us. Our beliefs about the abilities He has given us also affect our growth and what we can do for His Kingdom. We all have limits. Our God-given abilities play a role in the outcomes, but our willingness to struggle through circumstances, try multiple ways to overcome a difficulty, and learn from mistakes will allow us to be better equipped to handle the difficulties that we face in the future. I encourage each of us to help equip our children for the difficulties that they will face in the future. Developing a growth mindset in students is a part of that preparation.