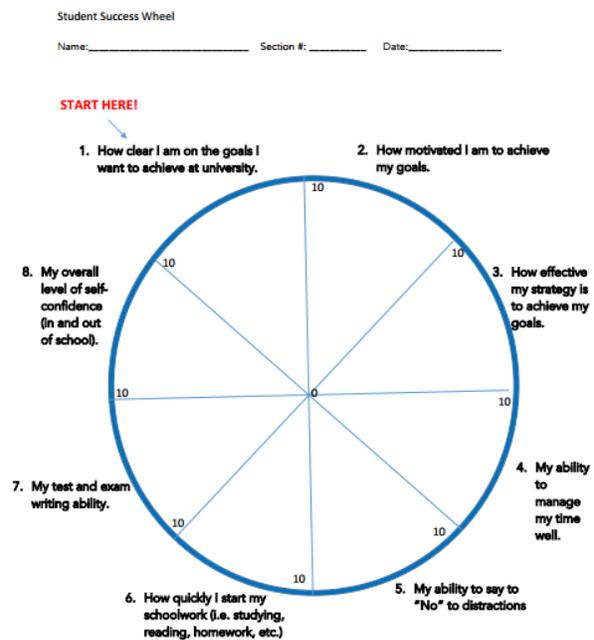


# The Benefits of Changing Your Mindset

Is changing a person's mindset necessary to be successful in school and is it necessary that all people change their mindset? If we do intend on changing our mindset, what changes must we make? I suppose to address this issue, it is first necessary to explore what mindset really encompasses. Changing one's mindset can change one's self and to promote success. To prove this I will explain how changing my mindset has affected me.

Cato (2011) explores the subject of mindset and identifies two types of mindsets: "a fixed mind set and a growth mindset" (pg. 60). Cato (2011) suggests in his article, that a fixed mindset is an unwavering position where, I can't do it or I'm smart enough I don't need to study, suggesting that they don't need to change (pg.60). Wallace (2015), elaborates by suggesting a fixed mindset includes fixed beliefs about a person's own existing abilities, which would include their intelligence, skills, and that which could prevent future development of their full potential (2 ed.). In contrast is growth mindset, which implies that people are more open to making change to be successful. Wallace suggests that it is growth mindset which learners should be aiming for and that it is the perception that one's ability can be evolved through a person's hard work (2 ed).

On the day of January 13<sup>th</sup> 2016, my effective learning university class completed a success wheel. A success wheel measures 8 general aspects; how clear you are on your goals, how motivated you are to achieve your goals, how effective your strategy to achieve your goals is, your ability to manage your time well, your ability to say no to distractions, how quickly you start schoolwork, your test and writing ability, and your overall level of self-confidence. This graph allows you to scale yourself in these categories out of 10.



March 24<sup>th</sup> 2016, we filled out another success wheel to witness our change in mindset over the timespan of a couple months. With changing my mindset, I have drastically changed my school grades in all of my courses, and with that have increased my overall confidence. Upon completing the success wheel a second time, the one observation that I have made is that it does not emphasize that success is closely related to ones mindset. The one characteristic that is not graded is the degree of ones mindset. In my personal opinion, I do not believe that mindset has a qualitative number; instead, it is you either have a fixed mindset or you have a growth mindset, of which I see as being tied into also being open minded. The wheel does provide some important indicators in terms of what one must address to improve their lives, with that, it does bring attention to one's need for personal growth. If a person can recognize that there is a need for personal growth, there is more of an opportunity to embrace change and with that, develop a growth mindset.

With my experience, changing your mindset and attitude can increase your daily performance. With a positive mindset you will be more determined, put in more effort, and have more self-confidence as your success will improve. With a negative mindset you will be unmotivated, provide low effort, constantly procrastinate, and be doubtful of all decisions. A positive mindset is important to develop as you will feel more confident and notice the results to support it, just as I have. In my personal experience, I believe that your mindset can be split into three major elements. The first is your general attitude, for example if you are disappointed in your results you can increase your motivation. The second is your beliefs, if you believe that you can learn by your mistakes, then you will face failure head on. The third element is your expectation, always have confidence when approaching obstacles and challenges.

Some of the attitudes that I have been exposed to are that some students are approaching their first year in university with fixed beliefs. Having been successful in high school, they are using similar approaches to homework, writing, and even so much as dealing with their peers and professors with a high school mentality. In my opinion, this approach is detrimental and limiting. The mere idea of going to university is for personal growth. We are met with professors that are meant to challenge us and the way that we think. How we convey ourselves is just as important in oral form as it is in written form, and to do it effectively, we need to be open minded. Being open minded is crucial to developing ones mindset. Should we not be open

mindset we have little to contribute and little to grow within the context of the university environment.

My personal opinion of fixed mindset is that similar to being stubborn, I don't have to change because what I have been doing works, and you're not going to change me because what I have been doing is working. I will be successful in the future whether it will be in school or business, because what I have done in the past, will work in the future. Naturally, I believe this to be narrow minded. I believe to be successful in school, or of learning in any capacity, be it that of a working environment, a school environment, or personal environment, we need to be of a growth mindset. Wallace emphasizes that to be successful, we need to be of a growth mindset (ed. 2). We as a species need to grow, we need to have challenges and we need to accept failure and embrace it for its learning opportunities. Through my experience, university is the midpoint between the elementary learning of high school, and the professional career that awaits us after graduation. Developing a growth mindset during secondary education will most certainly prepare oneself for a successful career. Having a growth mindset, prior to a career, will also allow the individual to foster similar opportunities to others, that won't have the chance to pursue a university education but still would allow them to be successful in their own right.

To qualify my position in this, we have to look at what comprises a university. We have professors that are highly qualified in their disciplines. Their tasks are to challenge the way that we, as students, think. We can only be challenged if we are open to growth. University is more than just reciting what someone else has said, either verbally, or in text. University intends on contributing to independent thinking and leaders of future industry. If one's intent is to recite someone else's thoughts, there is no real reason to pursue independent university education, as all we are doing is training students to mimic others. University provides an environment of collaborative thinking, independent thinking certainly plays a role and there are occasions where that does apply; such as, an event that is to be proven successful in ones past in terms of problem solving. However, universities provide opportunities for collaborative thinking in which fixed mindsets do not work. Students must be open to suggestions and open to the solutions of other people in order to solve problems. Sometimes these other peoples are your peers and sometimes they are the teachers. Regardless, this collaborative thinking provides opportunities for personal growth when someone embraces open mindedness towards your peers or professors contribution.

Naturally, we can expect that through personal growth there are obstacles that will be confronted. One of the obstacles that I think students are faced with is that we do not know enough about a growth mindset. For students, our comfort zone is what we know best, and we do not want to take chances that will embarrass ourselves or risk a failing grade. Personal growth makes us take chances and to go out of our comfort zones. This is where having knowledgeable and aware instructors is important to help develop a growth mindsets with the students. Cato (2011) states that, recognizing and understanding mindsets helps him to become a better teacher. He acknowledges that as a teacher “we must understand how our students think if we are truly going to teach them, and therefore we cannot underestimate the power of their mindsets” (pg. 60).

I think it’s acceptable to presume that there will be students that will have fixed mindsets when arriving at university. As Cato (2011) identifies in his article, fixed mindsets provide limited opportunity for personal growth and learning (pg. 60). Cato (2011) found that students with fixed mindsets would struggle when the class became difficult and would simply give up (pg.60). In my opinion I think the role that professors play in recognizing these situations is very important with identifying students with fixed mindsets, they may be the students struggling the most and it may not be based on intelligence. It is my opinion to have an open mindset, the responsibility does lie within the fact that professors may be able to encourage open mindedness and personal growth mindset, it is redundant if the student is not inclined to change. It is a necessity for the individual to want change and to want personal growth; otherwise, the student will accomplish very little in the university environment. Therefore, a successful growth mindset will involve a positive, prepared individual, and a willing professor or instructor that is willing to capitalize on the opportunity. Hochanadel (2015) acknowledges Dwecks assertions that, “individuals with a fixed mindset believe that their intelligence is simply an inborn trait- they have a certain amount and that’s that. In contrast, individuals with a growth mindset believe that they can develop their intelligence over time” (pg. 48).

As has been discussed throughout this text, attitude plays a crucial role in developing a proper growth mindset. Having a negative disposition does not set the foundation to acquire independent thinking and knowledge. A negative attitude will not result in success, as it may find you challenging what the university is trying to provide. It would directly prevent personal growth. It would be difficult for your peers and professors to find you approachable as their belief would be that you are not open to change or new ideas. In contrast, being positive will have you being more approachable. Professors and teachers will challenge you more as they see more potential in you. Hochanadel (2015) references Duckworth's research and emphasises that faculty should not just focus on academic scores, but on how to challenge students and encourage problem solving (pg.49). Additionally, Hochanadel (2015) states that, "teaching a growth mindset and grit facilitates long term goals and how to achieve them" (pg.49). It is both the student and teacher who are believed to be on the same mindset, where by both of you are open to growth that will render success. Having said that, it appears that those with fixed mindsets find themselves ostracized and are not perceived to be open minded, collaborative or a team player.

Uncomfortably, as one might suggest, could it be possible that professors and teachers alike, could prevent the failure of students if they spend more time emphasizing growth mindset. As discussed, growth mindset changes a person's attitude, it provides an open mindedness to learning, to be positive, to make mistakes, but when doing so motivate themselves to do better. Education is important, however, so is personal attention. Granted, the task seems overwhelming when you have a collective class of over 150 students, there is no reasonable expectation that a professor can give the time and commitment to an individual student to set them up for growth and success. If we encouraged our teachers at the more elementary levels to pay more attention to a growth mindset, we can presume that by the time students have reached the secondary level of education, that they will all have an growth mindset and be better equipped to do well at the university level.

There are those that are in a teaching environment that have recognized the importance of a growth mindset, and not only identifying it at an early stage, but also addressing the need to deal with fixed mindsets. In an example provided by Hochanadel (2015), seventh grade math students were examined by the teacher who could not understand why those students with the

highest IQ were not getting the highest marks. The teacher, Angela Duckworth, returned to graduate school to begin research into motivation in order to determine who is successful and why. She determined that students face numerous challenges and ultimately those that succeed and persevere are those who possess what Angela Duckworth describes as possessing grit. Duckworth defines grit as, “passion and perseverance for long term goals” (pg. 47). Upon further examination of Duckworth’s research into West Point military training, results of the national spelling bee, determining sales representatives’ early departures and analysing data from elementary school teachers, Hochanadel (2015) identified one predictor of success, that characteristic was grit (pg.47). It is my feeling that we do not possess sufficient grit to prepare us for success in university and beyond. Although there are numerous articles citing the potential for growth mindset, I could not locate one that had a definitive solution other than that of faculty, parents, teachers, all should promote growth mindset. It also appears that encouraging the skill of grit is also applicable but how to effectively achieve this is questionable given people’s individual personalities. Perhaps people’s introvert versus extrovert may play as a contributing factor.

In today’s developing and progressive world, university education is a necessity for success. To be successful in any career, it begins with you learning how to be successful, and that starts at school. To be successful at school, you must abandon a fixed mindset, and adopt a growth mindset. Upon examination, it is apparent that to have a growth mindset, you have to have an open and positive attitude towards learning, there is most certainly responsibility placed onto the individual to be open to change, and to be challenged to pre-conceived ideas. But admittedly, for personal growth, we need to have teachers and professors with the experience and willingness to help educate and develop independent thinkers. Growth mindset involves, attitude, belief, and expectation that you will do well. For many, they do not know how to prepare themselves to develop personal growth. Perhaps it is the shared responsibilities of our teachers to take a more active role in identifying those with fixed mindsets and to encourage or assist in developing a growth mindset. To promote a growth mindset, we must begin to educate teachers and promote change in the elementary levels of education. Growth mindset must be reinforced by parents and employers as we continue to evolve. At the university level, faculty need to encourage more pronounced growth mindset and to challenge individuals with the way they think. Those with a fixed mindset need to be encouraged to change. This is necessary for any form of success.

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