



**YEW TREE  
PRIMARY ACADEMY**  
WADE DEACON TRUST

# **Growth Mindset**

*Advice for parents/carers*



# What is it?

We used to think that our intelligence was fixed – meaning we were either smart or we weren't. Scientists have proven again and again that simply is not true. Our brain acts like a muscle – the more we use it, the stronger (and smarter) our brain becomes.

## FIXED OR GROWTH MINDSET?

### Fixed

A person with a fixed mindset may do these things:

- afraid to make mistakes
- avoid challenges
- give up easily
- ignore feedback
- become threatened by other people's success try hard to appear as smart or capable as possible
- blame themselves for failure
- see intelligence and ability are fixed (born this way and cannot change)

### Growth

A person with a growth mindset may do these things:

- celebrate mistakes
- embrace challenges
- give their best effort
- learn from feedback
- become inspired by other people's successes believe their intelligence can change if they work hard
- no blame, seek how to get better next time
- see intelligence and ability can grow

# What does science say?

Think back to the first time you drove a car. It may have seemed like a hopelessly complicated process: position both hands on the steering wheel, brake at the right times, follow all traffic laws, *and* keep an eye on other drivers.

You could have said, “*I just don’t have it in me. Driving isn’t my thing.*” This would be a FIXED mindset way of thinking. But instead, you took the GROWTH mindset approach: you practiced, practiced, and practiced some more. Now, driving is probably second nature, something you can do while singing along to the radio.

Pretty impressive, right?

## **This is neuroplasticity at work.**

*Neuroplasticity* is the science behind growth mindset. It’s the reason we can develop skills and knowledge through effort, practice, and persistence.

Neuroplasticity is the brain’s ability to change and grow throughout a person’s life. Until recently, scientists thought that this was only possible in early childhood. After that, scientists believed that the brain “solidified” and became fixed in its habits. However, research has shown that the brain continues to change even into old age. Like a physical muscle, the brain gets stronger the more you use it. The brain is a “pattern-seeking device.” When the neurons in your brain are activated in a particular pattern, it’s faster and easier for your brain to follow that same pattern in the future.

This means when you use your brain to complete a task, the brain “remembers” the task, so next time it becomes a little easier. The time after that, it’s even easier, and so on.



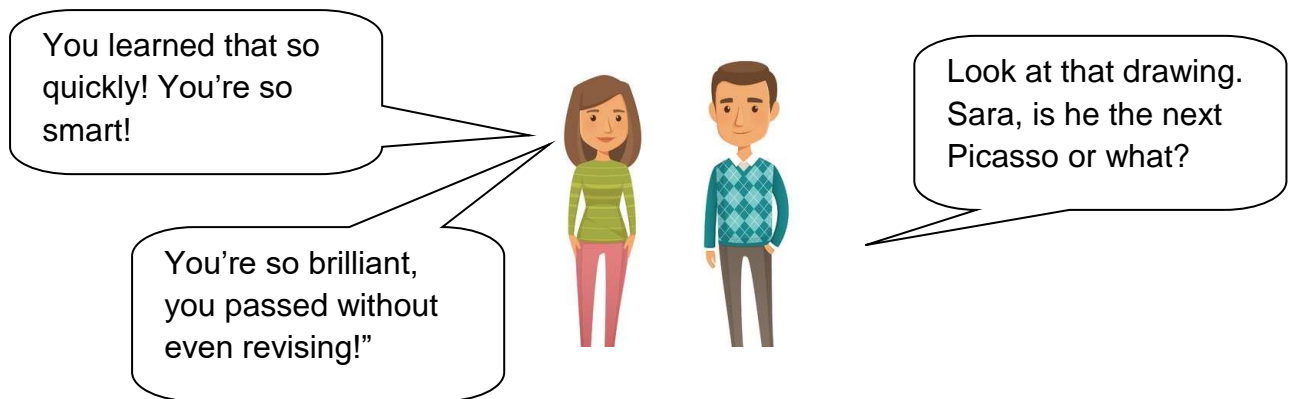
The bottom line is that our brains aren’t static. Through repeated practice and continual challenges, we can build pathways that make our brains stronger and smarter.

# Something to think about

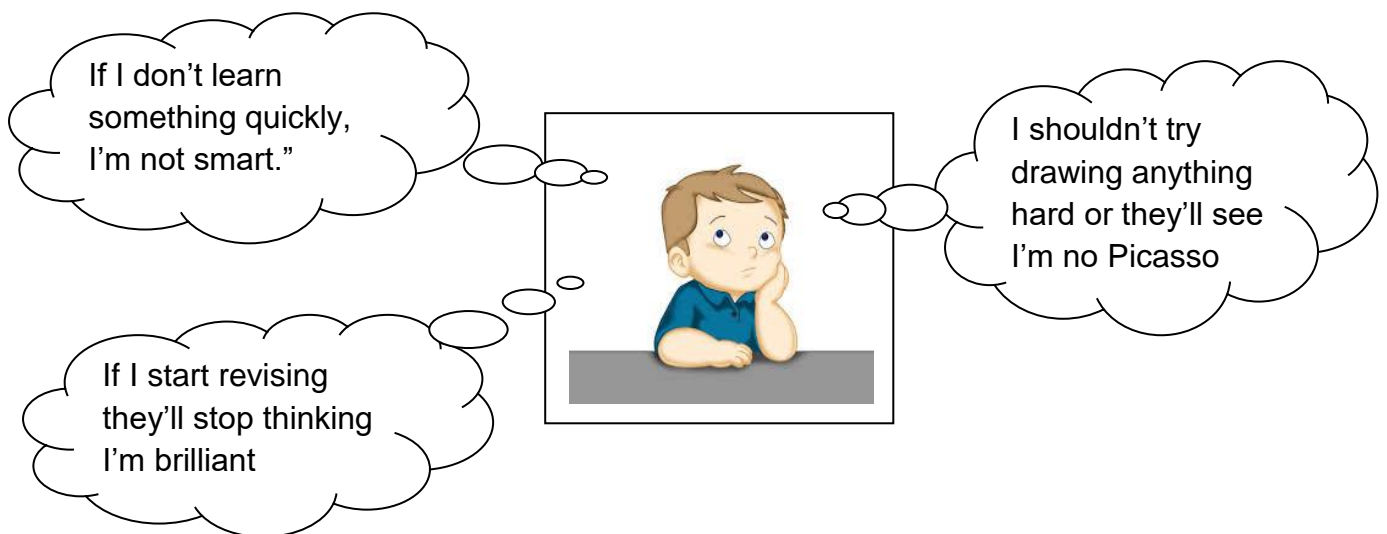
Parents and teachers want youngsters to be successful. However, often their helpful comments, examples and motivating techniques send the wrong message to their children. In fact, every word and action sends a message. It tells children how to think about themselves. It can be a fixed mindset message which says: "You have permanent characteristics and I'm judging them." Or it can be a growth mindset message that says: "You are a developing person and I'm interested in your development."

## Messages about success

Listen for the messages in the following examples:



If you're like most parents, you hear these as supportive, esteem-boosting messages. But, listen more closely. These are the messages many children may hear:



# Ways to help your child

## Talk to them

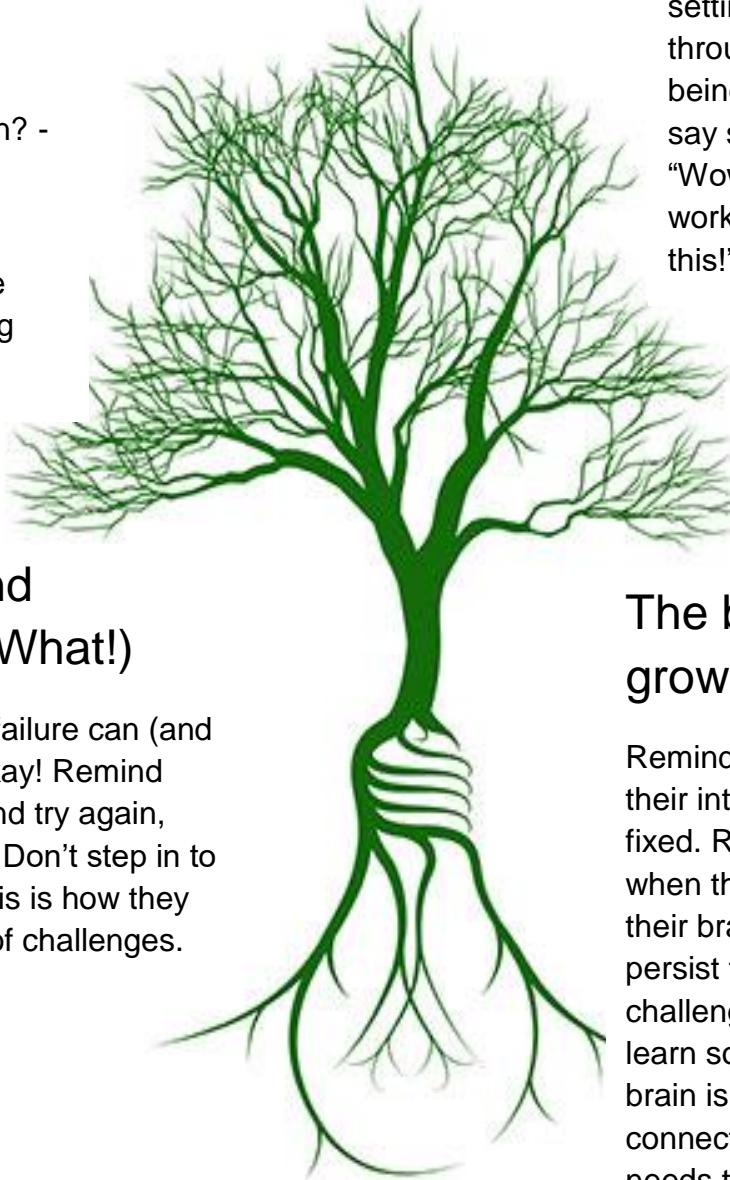
Talk with your child about their day, but guide the discussion by asking questions like:

Did you make a mistake today? What did you learn? -  
What did you do that was difficult today?

Tell them about a mistake you've made or something you found difficult today.

## Praise the effort

Instead of saying, "You're so smart!" praise effort, goal setting, persisting through challenges, or being creative. You can say something like: -  
"Wow! You must have worked really hard on this!"



## Encourage failure and celebrate mistakes (What!)

Your child needs to know that failure can (and often does) happen and it is okay! Remind them that each time they fail and try again, their brain is growing stronger! Don't step in to prevent your child's failure – this is how they learn to persevere in the face of challenges.

## The brain can grow!

Remind your child that their intelligence is not fixed. Remind them that when things are difficult, their brain grows if they persist through the challenge. Each time they learn something new, their brain is making new connections. Your child needs to know this is possible!

## Help them change their words

Your child's self-talk makes a huge impact on their mindset. If they say, "This is too hard!" help them change that to "I can't do this yet, but I will keep trying."

Give them the words to say when they are feeling defeated by modelling it yourself!

# Language tips to use at home

Encourage your child to change their words

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try thinking</i>
I'm not good at this	What am I missing?
I made a mistake	Mistakes help me learn
I give up	I'll use a different strategy
I just can't do this	I'm going to train my brain
This is too hard	This may take a bit of time
It's good enough	Is this really my best work
I can do this	My effort is paying off

Change your own words

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Try saying</i>
You're so smart	I can see you worked hard on this
You're a natural at this	I like watching you do this
That's great, you did that quick and easy, job done	It looks like that was easy for you, let's find you a challenge to grow your brain
That's too hard for you	I'm so proud of the effort you put in
Maybe this is just not for you	What strategies can we use to help get better?
That's wrong, have you been listening in school?	Great effort, what strategies did you learn in school to help you?

# Questions to answer

## Is a fixed mindset bad?

About half of society have a 'growth' mindset while the other half are 'fixed' and in reality many of us probably have different mindsets at different times of our lives. Having a fixed mindset is not a bad thing and developing a growth mindset is not meant to quash natural talent.

## What if my child already has a natural talent, high attainment, yet is fixed mindset?

Natural talent should always be allowed to flourish. Growth mindset allows pupils to maintain and increase academic achievement while developing a more rounded and resilient individual who is willing to try new approaches.

## What approaches will the school be taking to develop a growth mindset with youngsters?

We will be very open and frank about the approach. ie. making everyone aware of what they can achieve by adopting the mindset.

We will use feedback/praise designed to promote and highlight growth mindset.

We will show pupils that their brain and body can physically achieve more through training and effort.

We will give clear and inspirational examples of others who have used their growth mindset to great effect.

We will provide the opportunity for pupils to think about and write about their mindset.

We will focus on the language we use with the children to encourage a growth mindset approach to their learning.

Ideas of the type of language our teachers will use in school

<i>Instead of</i>	<i>Go for growth</i>
You're so clever	I can see you worked hard because...
I don't think you have got this, we will move on to something easier	You don't understand this yet, what do you know that can help you work it out?
If you don't want to join in the challenge we can find you something else to do	This is a new opportunity, coming out of your comfort zone and that's great!
Amazing, you did that super quick	Let's find you something to challenge and grow your brain
Just try harder, you'll get it next time	You've used some good strategies, let's see which ones worked and which ones didn't

# Something to finish

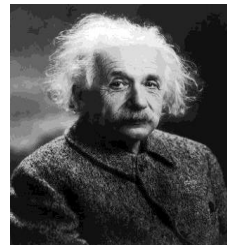
## Famous Failures

Despite being told that they were no good, these famous people became very successful.

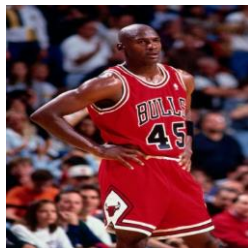
Their secret? Hard work and plenty of self belief!



Walt Disney's teacher wrote in his report.....  
"Walter has no real creative talent"



Albert Einstein could not speak until he was 4 years old. His teacher said he was "academically subnormal"



Michael Jordan's coach described him as having "no co-ordination and "an average sportsman"



Winston Churchill had to repeat a year in primary school and was placed in the lowest group of the lowest class.

## Further Information

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/help-your-child-try-new-things>

<https://www.mindsetworks.com/parents/>

<https://www.mindsetkit.org/growth-mindset-parents>

<https://www.weareteachers.com/perfect-read-alouds-for-teaching-growth-mindset/>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Fantastic-Elastic-Brain-Stretch-Shape/dp/0982993803>