

# LEARNING GUIDE:

# Shifting Mindsets

Teachers, educational staff, families, and children alike may all benefit from learning about the strength of mindsets and how to shift them. This learning guide is intended to facilitate understanding and conversation after viewing the video clip *Shifting Mindsets*.

**GOAL** | To learn how we can facilitate success in all children with the right perspectives and supports

## We will cover the following key points:

1. Defining Mindsets
2. Mindsets & Brain Science
3. Mindsets, Strategies, Goals

## GENERAL SYNOPSIS:

Mindsets are the beliefs we hold about ourselves and others. Adopting a *growth* mindset allows for children to overcome setbacks by believing they can, setting goals, finding the right strategies, and practicing them. The brain is a muscle – the more you exercise it, the stronger its connections become. When we practice a growth mindset alongside children, they can learn to establish a framework of problem solving that persists through failure.

This resource was developed to support implementation from and Alberta Education grant. It is freely provided in support of improved teaching and learning under the following Creative Commons License:



Alberta Regional Consortia



Learning Network  
Educational Services



Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium  
Partners to make learning for students' sake  
www.erc.ca

# 1.

## Defining Mindsets

### What are mindsets?

the specific beliefs that we hold about ourselves and other people

Mindsets can be about personality, intelligence, talent, skills, potential, etc.

According to Dr. Carol Dweck, a leading mindset researcher, there are two types of mindsets we can hold:

#### Fixed Mindsets

- Setbacks are due to low ability
- Hard work or practice will not make a difference
- “If I fail, it’s because I just can’t do it”
- Makes it difficult to self-motivate, recover from setbacks, & achieve at school/work

#### Growth Mindsets

- Traits are capable of changing (e.g. effort, strategies, support)
- All people are capable of achieving success
- “If I fail, I can work harder next time”
- Emphasis on learning, willingness to confront challenges, and use effort to achieve goals

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION:**

In what ways do you already encourage a growth mindset in your classroom?

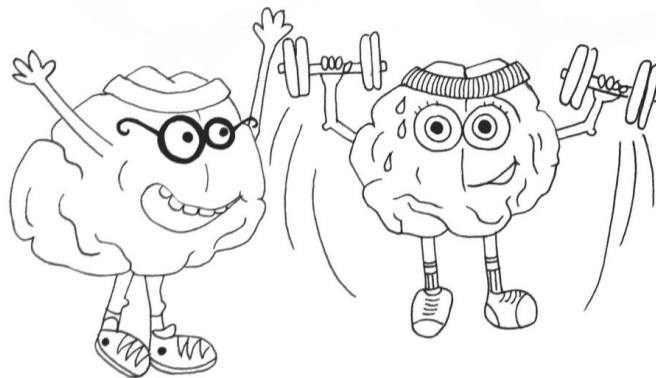
Are the mindsets you hold about yourselves and your students similar?

How might a growth mindset influence your classroom environment?

## 2.

# Mindsets & Brain Science

- Brains are wired for *growth*. They can change and grow in response to strategy, use, and practice (i.e. experience-dependent neuroplasticity).
- We can add new connections (e.g. learning a new language) and change existing connections (e.g. learning to stop chewing our fingernails).
- Like other muscles in our body, the more we exercise our brain the stronger the desired connections become.
- To do this we must support others towards *growth* and believe in *growth* ourselves.



### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION:

How might you explain the concept of *experience-dependent neuroplasticity* to your students?

What are some ways in which you could encourage your students to exercise their brains? (i.e. practice a growth mindset)

# 3.

# Mindsets, Strategies, Goals

## **ALL BEHAVIOUR HAS A FUNCTION**

If a student knows that a specific behaviour will meet their goal (e.g. goofing off to avoid doing math), they will choose this behaviour even if it is undesirable.

This behaviour will usually stem from a belief that they are unable to do a specific task and will serve as an attempt to avoid discomfort.

### **To adopt a growth mindset with children we must:**

1. Understand the **function/goal** of the behaviour
2. Apply **strategies** to elicit change
  - Set goals that are appropriate for children
  - Seek out feasible strategies that the child can pull from their “tool kit” when needed
  - Encourage practice so they can strengthen the ability to *use* these strategies and accomplish their goals

### **Fixed Mindsets**

give children no alternative way to reduce feelings of discomfort

VS.

### **Growth Mindsets**

provide space for effort to meet goals & encourage a positive belief that one can learn and grow

Although applying a growth mindset all the time can be challenging, it is important that at least one person is doing so. Even if a child is applying a fixed mindset, we can meet them with a growth mindset.

## **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION:**

What are some strategies you might put in your own tool kit?

How do you know that a goal is appropriate for a particular student?

What are examples of functional yet undesirable behaviour in your classroom?

## TAKEAWAYS:

## Shifting Mindsets

- We can make a huge impact on our own lives as well as the lives of our students, simply by shifting to a *growth* mindset.
- When we believe that everyone is capable of changing, learning, and growing through hard work and effort, amazing things can happen.
- We need to shift our focus away from only looking at the challenges and move towards emphasizing strengths and encouraging opportunities for learning.
- We also need to be persistent in finding the right strategies that will be successful with each individual.
- A *growth* mindset can be applied everywhere, such as school, home, work, therapy, sports, or any other domain.
- It might not be easy at first to change how we think, but adopting a *growth* mindset can have incredible outcomes, and we owe it to ourselves and our students to make this change.