

# Mindset

by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D.

## The Mindsets

Carol Dweck uses the first chapter to explain the basic differences between “Fixed” and “Growth” Mindsets. She opens the concept of Nature vs. Nurture to lay the tracks that a Growth Mindset can be developed. She strengthens her argument with a concept developed by Alfred Binet, . . . It’s not always the people who start out the smartest who end up the smartest.

She fills the chapter with stories of each mindset and brings up the idea of “empathy” as it will be a key factor in the book.

She delves into each mindset to show each view’s accuracy (or inaccuracy) in regard to “limitations” and closes the chapter with questions to address which mindset the reader might have.

## Inside The Mindsets

Benjamin Barber (Political Theorist): “I divide the world into learners and non-learners.”

Dweck here begins to compare more and less successful CEOs, leaders, athletes, coaches, etc. with a focus on “Fixed” vs “Growth” Mindsets.

Mia Hamm: “ All my life I’ve been playing up, meaning I’ve challenged myself with players older, bigger, more skillful, more experienced - in short, better than me.”

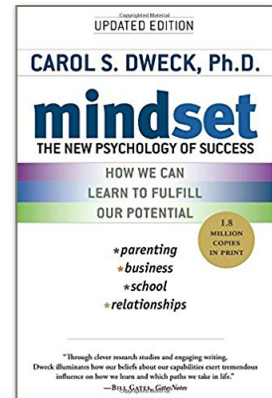
(Pg. 23) The Author shares the first few stories of research with young children rooted in each mindset. One story in particular discussed children’s reactions to challenging puzzles, some were happy to be done, others wanted to know the names of the puzzles they didn’t get to so their parents could buy them.

Dweck introduces the idea of adding “yet” to the end of statements from people who say they cannot do something and shares a popular 1960’s phrase: “Becoming is better than being.”

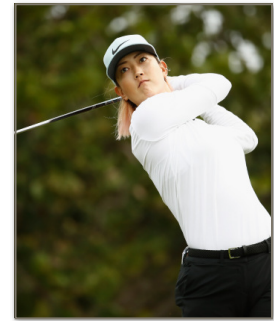
Jackson Pollack, Elvis, Ray Charles, Lucille Ball, Charles Darwin and many others were considered, from a young age to have no potential in their respective fields. NASA often looks for individuals who’ve experienced failure and recovered over people who’ve aced exams and completed studies with no setbacks.

John McEnroe and his status as someone who is/was special is discussed here. His mindset is then compared to that of Jim Marshall, who, while playing for the Minnesota Vikings once scored a touchdown by running into his opponent’s End Zone. His second half however, was one of the best periods of play in his career. She even compares the two to Bernard Loiseau, a French Chef who suicided after one of his restaurants was downgraded slightly from an exceptional rating.

Depression is then discussed, among college students and common periods where struggles occur, and the populations as a whole, when reactions show a “Fixed” or “Growth” bias.



The next few pages are used to compare the risks taken by people who give “High Effort” and “Low Effort.” She then introduces the idea that people can bounce back and forth between each mindset. Here, she also introduces the concept of individuals arguing success as coming from either Talent or Effort.



Michelle Wie (Golf) is an excellent example of a Growth Mindset, . . . especially in comparison to players (ex: Vijay Singh) who think differently.

### **The Truth About Ability and Accomplishment**

To get to the truth about misconceptions, Dweck opens this chapter with stories of the teams of experts behind the invention of the lightbulb and the origin of species versus the commonly believed idea that Edison and Darwin came up with these revelations. To strengthen the argument of long / challenging periods of learning, she shares Mozart labored for over ten years before producing any of the pieces we know today.

The transition to middle school is discussed here and how effective a Growth Mindset can be in this period.

Testing is considered in the middle of the chapter and the Author reminds the reader that a test will show “where a student is, but they don’t tell you where a student could end up.” She follows this claim with a story of what many believe to be a fixed trait, artistic ability. Here she even show pictures of self-portraits drawn at the beginning and the end of a five-day drawing course.

Dweck now gets into “labels,” negative and positive and how they impact people who are labeled. Adam Guettel (Musical Theater Composer) was the son of Richard Rogers who wrote *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*. He was quoted as having said: “I wish I could just have fun and relax and not have the responsibility of that potential to be some kind of great man.” She even shares research that proves simply checking off a box indicating gender or race before a math or science test can subconsciously trigger stereotypes and lower the score or someone viewed to be of a group that struggles with such topics.

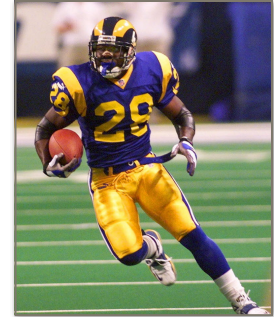
A Growth Mindset can help people view prejudice as what it is, . . . someone else’s view. This is similar to the concept: “What people say about you is a reflection of them, . . . not you.”

### **Sports: The Mindset of A Champion**

Billy Beane (Moneyball) and his relationship with Lenny Dykstra is used to compare the two mindsets. This is followed by stories of the work ethics of Muhammad Ali and Michael Jordan. To contrast the two, Dweck discusses Babe Ruth, but although he was viewed as someone who didn’t take care of himself, he was also known as someone who practiced relentlessly.

Wilma Rudolph earned the title of the fastest woman on earth after the 1960 Olympics, but was born prematurely, was constantly sick as a child, and came out of double pneumonia / scarlet fever / polio with an essentially paralyzed left leg. Even Jackie Joyner-Kersey often finished last in races in the beginning of her career.

Marshall Faulk (St. Louis Rams) was heavily into learning everything he could about football, every play, why certain plays are run, etc. He even worked as a ballpark vendor to learn about the game.



“Character” is now brought into the discussion sharing stories of the Yankees after 9.11 and (in contrast) rival Red Sox Pitcher Pedro Martinez.

John Wooden: “I believe ability can get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there.”

What is Success? What is Failure? You can see two differing views by comparing Michael Jordan’s commercial sharing that his many failures are the reason he succeeds to John McEnroe’s twenty year departure from mixed doubles after a loss in three straight sets.

The concept of “Stars” is discussed in this chapter. The stories are boiled down to an idea Dweck shares that she has recognized some star players (after big wins) say “we,” where others say “I.”

(Pg. 105) In a comparison to the focus of Brett Ledbetter’s *What Drives Winning*, Dweck begins to discuss common phrases heard from each mindset, including: “If I win, I’ll be somebody. If I lose, I’ll be nobody.”

### **Business: Mindset and Leadership**

The author uses this chapter to compare Growth and Fixed Mindsets through stories of various business leaders. She touches on the differences of each leadership type, attitudes and egos. She also covers employees thoughts on these leaders.

CEOs of Scott Paper / Sunbeam, Enron, AOL, Time Warner and more are portrayed as having “Fixed” Mindsets and compared to Jack Welch (GE), Gerstner (IBM) and Anne Mulcahey (Xerox).

Dweck shares beliefs on groups processes and the concept of “Group Think.” To avoid individuals inside groups simply agreeing with each other to keep harmony, many leaders have employed a variety of efforts to ensure every aspect of an idea is covered. General Motors (former) CEO, Alfred P. Sloan once said: “Gentlemen, I take it we are all in agreement on the decision here. Then I propose we postpone further discussion of this matter until our next meeting to give ourselves time to develop disagreement and perhaps gain some understanding of what the decision is all about.”



The author now touches on what she has described as “The Praised Generation.” She shares: “Well, these children of praise have now entered the workforce and sure enough, many can’t function without getting a sticker for their every move. We now have a workforce full of people who need constant reassurance and can’t take criticism. Not a recipe for success in business, where taking on challenges, showing persistence, and admitting and correcting mistakes are essential.”

## Growth Mindset Workshop

- Present that skills as learnable.
- Convey the organization values learning and perseverance, not “talent” or even “genius.”
- Give feedback in a way that promotes learning and future success.
- Present that Managers as a resource for learning.
- \* “Create an organization that prizes the development of ability - and watch the Leaders emerge.”

Culture of Genius vs Culture of Development is an idea where Dweck claims a business itself can have a mindset.

## Relationships: Mindset in Love (or Not)

Here, the author looks at each mindset’s view of love and relationships from stories of being stood up at the altar to working toward long lasting relationships.

“Fixed” views include believing someone is “the one,” that things are “meant to be,” that if it’s right, there shouldn’t be any need to work at it, etc. Fixed mindsets believe people in a relationship should be able to read each other’s mind’s and anticipate what the other needs. They also believe they should agree on everything and that disagreements point to character flaws in the other. The Growth Mindset, focuses on communicating feelings and working on change.

Dweck does warn, just because someone has the potential for change, doesn’t mean s/he will.

She opens the discussion to friendships next and delves into communication. She focuses an important point around the idea that some people need to knock another down to build themselves up. This is obviously dangerous for the one being knocked down. She asks the reader to not only consider who you might go to when things are bad, but when things are good.

The author then progresses through discussion of “shyness” to the topic of “bullying.” She shares that schools need to intervene and be proactive when dealing with kids who are bullying and kids who are being bullied. Often times, kids who are being bullied are considered misfits. The consequences of these actions and likelihood of revenge are presenting a growing problem across the country.

## Parents, Teachers, and Coaches: Where do Mindsets Come From?

Here, the idea that best intentions might be misunderstood opens the chapter. Messages of success and failure from parents and teachers can often be confusing. Praising a child’s intelligence actually harms their motivation and performance.

Columbia Student: “I remember being praised for my intelligence rather than my efforts, and slowly but surely I developed an aversion to difficult challenges.” Dweck: “If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, seek new strategies, and keep on learning.

Haim Ginott (Teacher, Psychologist): “Praise should deal, not with the child’s personality attributes, but with his efforts and achievements.”



“Constructive Criticism” is discussed in a couple ways. One, in that this is often an excuse to share negative comments and two, because of this view, some parents will withhold constructive criticism, which in the end is more harmful.

Dweck shares research on how children pick up hidden messages, including a story where one to three-year-olds show signs of aggression when put in the same room with crying babies. They’ve learned that children who cry are meant to be punished and even become abusive in response to the crying.

The Author then covers ideas comparing children who grow up competing to make the “first team,” earn admission to the top schools, etc. to children who are participating in hobbies, sports, and such because it makes them happy.

Setting healthy “ideals” are a powerful motivator for students, athletes, employees, etc.

In discussion of setting high standards, research has shown very strict environments where high standards are set, but love is clearly shown, are very effective.

Bobby Knight (Indiana) and John Wooden (UCLA) are compared as coaches of “Fixed” vs “Growth” Mindsets. Wooden believed “by applying yourself to the task of becoming a little better each and every day, over a period of time you will become a lot better.” Bill Walton said of Wooden: “the real competition he was preparing us for was life. He taught us the values and characteristics that could make us not only good players, but also good people.”



Pat Summit (Tennessee Women’s Basketball) developed, in Dweck’s words, a love-hate relationship with losing after realizing that “it forces everyone, players and coaches, to develop a more complete game.” It was success that became her enemy.

Alex Rodriguez addressed development by stating nobody can stay the same, “you either go one way or the other.”

Dweck’s research on praise insists it must be focused on the process, but tied to the outcome. “Children need to understand that engaging in that process helped them learn.”

### **Changing Mindsets**

The final chapter of the book opens with a description of “Cognitive Therapy.” Described as the outcome of 1960’s Psychiatrist Aaron Beck’s realization that “beliefs” are causing problems for his clients. He taught people to listen to their beliefs and how to change them.

The idea of Mindset Workshops is introduced. These are based on the idea that our brains grow stronger with practice and Dweck introduces a program she helped develop, called Brainology.

To continue the discussion of making changes and developing, Dweck shares a story about the challenges of publishing papers. The process includes a review that returns brutally honest

critiques of the work. If these reviews are viewed with a Fixed Mindset, an author will struggle much more with revisions than if the process is viewed with a Growth Mindset.

Dweck then discusses the idea of “vowing” to make a change and how much more likely follow-through will happen if concrete plans are made. It’s the idea of saying “I’ll bring my workout clothes so tomorrow before lunch I can start my workout program” versus saying “I’ll start working out tomorrow.”

Next comes the discussion of people un-willing to change due to “entitlement” or “denial.” This is followed with helping others change. Here she focuses on ensuring “effort” is properly guided. It is important the reasons for studying (for example) are based on learning and not trying to prove one’s self to a parent, teacher, coach, etc. The most healthy students value learning for the sake of learning, not as a means to getting good grades (showing their ability).

Maintaining change can be difficult since once people see the effects of change they can sometimes stop doing the things that got them there. Dweck claims: “Once you feel better, you stop taking your medicine.” She goes on to say: “Mindset is not about picking up a few pointers here and there. It’s about seeing things in a new way.”

The author then details a plan for the “Journey to a True Growth Mindset.”

- Face the knowledge that you have a Fixed Mindset (at least to some degree).
- Recognize the “triggers” that enact your Fixed mentality.
- Give your Fixed Mindset Persona a name.
- Educate your alter-ego on the Growth Mindset journey.

Dweck insists you plan for setbacks to prevent future flare-ups of a Fixed mentality. She then closes by encouraging the reader to share the Growth Mindset mentality with others.

