

Motivating Children by Developing a Growth Mindset

“Motivation is the most important factor in determining whether you succeed in the long run. What I mean by motivation is not only the desire to achieve, but also the love of learning, the love of challenge, and the ability to thrive on obstacles. These are the greatest gifts we can give our students.” – Carol Dweck

Parents often ask how they can help their child become more motivated to learn, especially material that is above grade level. Stanford University Professor of Psychology, Carol Dweck demonstrates that communication to children about their effort, successes, and setbacks often shapes a child’s mindset and motivation. Here is how it works. The author of *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Dweck postulates that people have either a “fixed mindset” or “growth mindset” that influences our perspective and communication. When we believe that success is based on innate ability, we are said to have a fixed theory of intelligence, otherwise known as a fixed mindset. When we believe that success is based on hard work, learning, and perseverance, we are said to have a growth theory of intelligence, also called growth mindset.

Parents and Instructors are most effective when they praise effort and results equally. Praising effort means recognizing errors as learning opportunities that lead to improvement and success. The brain is a muscle that becomes stronger through hard work and learning from our mistakes. We can motivate children to develop a growth mindset and achieve their goals through communication about effort, learning, and persistence.

Here are different ways of communicating that can drive your child’s motivation and mindset.

“I’ve got to have a growth mindset, man. That’s what it’s about, me still trying to improve even at 30 and (after) 12 years in the league.” – LeBron James

HOW TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS

Growth Mindset

What to say:

“When you learn how to do a new kind of problem, it grows your math brain!”

“If you catch yourself saying, ‘I’m not a math person,’ just add the word ‘yet’ to the end of the sentence.”

“That feeling of math being hard is the feeling of your brain growing.”

“The point isn’t to get it all right away. The point is to grow your understanding step by step. What can you try next?”



SOURCE: Carol Dweck

Fixed Mindset

What not to say:

“Not everybody is good at math. Just do your best.”

“That’s OK, maybe math is not one of your strengths.”

“Don’t worry, you’ll get it if you keep trying.”*
*If students are using the wrong strategies, their efforts might not work. Plus they may feel particularly inept if their efforts are fruitless.

“Great effort! You tried your best.”**
**Don’t accept less than optimal performance from your students.



(hyperlink

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/09/23/carol-dweck-revisits-the-growth-mindset.html>)