

Fixed vs Growth Mindset

Step 1. Learn to hear your fixed mindset “voice.”

As you approach a challenge, that voice might say to you “Are you sure you can do it? Maybe you don’t have the talent.” “What if you fail—you’ll be a failure” “People will laugh at you for thinking you had talent.” “If you don’t try, you can protect yourself and keep your dignity.”

As you hit a setback, the voice might say, “This would have been a snap if you really had talent.” “You see, I told you it was a risk. Now you’ve gone and shown the world how limited you are.” “It’s not too late to back out, make excuses, and try to regain your dignity.”

As you face criticism, you might hear yourself say, “It’s not my fault. It was something or someone else’s fault.” You might feel yourself getting angry at the person who is giving you feedback. “Who do they think they are? I’ll put them in their place.” The other person might be giving you specific, constructive feedback, but you might be hearing them say “I’m really disappointed in you. I thought you were capable but now I see you’re not.”

Step 2. Recognize that you have a choice.

How you interpret challenges, setbacks, and criticism is your choice. You can interpret them in a fixed mindset as signs that your fixed talents or abilities are lacking. Or you can interpret them in a growth mindset as signs that you need to ramp up your strategies and effort, stretch yourself, and expand your abilities. It’s up to you.

So as you face challenges, setbacks, and criticism, listen to the fixed mindset voice and...

Step 3. Talk back to it with a growth mindset voice.

As you approach a challenge:

THE FIXED-MINDSET says “Are you sure you can do it? Maybe you don’t have the talent.”

THE GROWTH-MINDSET answers, “I’m not sure I can do it now, but I think I can learn with time and effort.”

FIXED MINDSET: “What if you fail—you’ll be a failure”

GROWTH MINDSET: “Most successful people had failures along the way.”

FIXED MINDSET: “If you don’t try, you can protect yourself and keep your dignity.”

GROWTH MINDSET: “If I don’t try, I automatically fail. Where’s the dignity in that?”

As you hit a setback:

FIXED MINDSET: “This would have been a snap if you really had talent.”

GROWTH MINDSET: “That is so wrong. Basketball wasn’t easy for Michael Jordan and science wasn’t easy for Thomas Edison. They had a passion and put in a lot of effort.

As you face criticism:

FIXED MINDSET: “It’s not my fault. It was something or someone else’s fault.”

GROWTH MINDSET: “If I don’t take responsibility, I can’t fix it. Let me listen—however painful it is— and learn whatever I can.” Then...

Step 4. Take the growth mindset action.

Over time, which voice you heed becomes pretty much your choice. Whether you:

Take on the challenge wholeheartedly

Learn from your setbacks and try again

Hear the criticism and act on it ...is now in your hands.

Practice hearing both voices, and practice acting on the growth mindset. See how you can make it work for you.