



Building a Growth Mindset Culture at Home

Soleado is committed to developing a growth mindset school environment—a place where all students believe that with effort and perseverance, they can succeed. Dr. Carol Dweck, a researcher at Stanford University, has identified two belief systems about intelligence.

A **fixed mindset** is one where we believe that our children's innate abilities, talents, and intelligence are fixed. They are either "good" or talented at something or they are not. They can certainly learn new things, but this particular skill or subject is not really their "thing."

How many of you have ever thought to yourself (or said out loud), "My daughter probably isn't very good in math because I was not very good in math." Or, "I was not good in high school English, so I guess my son takes after me." These are examples of fixed mindset thinking. Even a perceived positive statement like, "He has a God-given talent in _____" or "He is a born leader" demonstrates fixed mindset thinking.

As a parent, you may have fixed mindset thinking about your own abilities; you may think, "I can't cook", "I can't dance; I have two left feet", "I leave that to my wife/husband, I can't figure it out."

A **growth mindset** is the belief that intelligence, skills, and talent are malleable, and they can change with effort, perseverance, and practice. Neuroscience explains this as neuroplasticity. We can all get "smarter."

So, we never want to say things like this to our children:

- Some people are just not science (or fill in the subject of choice) people.
- Writing (or art, math, etc.) comes naturally for you.
- Look at that, you did that without even trying.
- You have a God-given talent.

These are all fixed mindset statements. We need to focus feedback on what a child does, not who he or she is.

One of the most frequently used words in your vocabulary should be the word *yet*, such as, "You are not quite getting it yet, but with practice, you will."

Learning From Failure

From the moment our children are born, we want to protect them. Our instincts are to catch them before they fall. It is not easy seeing our children not have success in whatever goal they are working toward—from learning to walk to getting into their first choice of college. But in order to raise resilient, confident, optimistic children, we must learn to be comfortable when they make mistakes and/or fail. When children are given opportunities to struggle, it builds resiliency. Without struggle it is difficult to develop coping skills, grit, and resiliency. As parents, we must model this as well; let your kids see you being persistent and overcoming challenges—not quitting because something is “too hard.”

When you see a less-than-desirable score or grade on an assignment, assessment, or report card, do not freak out. Look at the grade as data, look at failure as data, and talk with your kids about some things that can be done to improve and grow. If your child put a lot of effort into the assignment or prepping for a test, then talk about some new ways that may help him or her understand the content. Reinforce that it is not about the grade—it is about the learning that takes place. Remind your children that the word *fail* stands for:

First Attempt In Learning.

**It is essential that we all work together
toward building a growth mindset for our children.**

Fixed to Growth Mindset Thoughts/ Statements for Students

Possible ways to use these thoughts/statements:

- Present one statement each day and brainstorm with the students some growth mindset statements that could replace the fixed mindset statement.
- Use these statements for journal writing. Ask students to choose one of these (or one of their own) fixed mindset statements that they tend to think or say. Then tell students, "In your journal reflect about when you tend to think in a fixed mindset way, then set a goal for reacting in a growth mindset way when you are in a similar situation in the future."

Fixed Mindset Statement	Possible Growth Mindset Replacement Statements
I am never going to understand this!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I need to change my strategy or the way I approach this. ➤ What question can I ask (e.g., of the teacher, Google, etc.) that may help me understand?
This is so easy for me.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I wonder what I can do to make this more challenging? ➤ Even though I think this is easy, I need to think carefully about it so I understand it completely.
I am not good at this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I am not good at this yet but if I keep practicing or try a different strategy, I know I will improve.
She is the smart one; I will never be like her.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ If I consistently put forth effort, I know that I will have more success. ➤ Her neurons must have strong connections; I need to get my neurons going!
I am really good in art.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I need to continue to work on my technique in art so that I will improve.
Math is just not my thing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I need to put more time into practicing these math concepts. ➤ My neurons are not connecting in math yet, so I need to figure out some ways that will help.
Ugh! I keep messing up!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ That was an epic failure! What can I learn from it for my next try?
I have a green thumb.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Learning about and experimenting with growing things has really helped me have success.

Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment at Home

Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment at Home Part 1: Parents Work Toward a Growth Mindset for Themselves

- We can't expect our children to have a growth mindset if we don't have one ourselves. Recognize fixed mindset thinking in yourself and talk yourself into a growth mindset. This can also be done out loud so that your child can hear how you are changing your mindset. For example, you might catch yourself saying, "I can't figure out how to fill out this document." Then quickly rephrase it to add, "I think I need to check on the website or call the bank so I can ask some questions. Then I am sure I will be able to fill it out accurately."
- Be aware of your own fixed mindset statements such as "I am a terrible cook," "I was never good at math either," or "I wish I could play the piano like you do." (You can, with practice and perseverance!)
- Be aware of blaming genetics for anything—both positive and negative.
- Be careful about comparing your kids to their siblings or other kids.
- We want our children to enjoy the process of learning—not just be successful. Model this concept at home. For example, after a less than desirable outcome trying to bake something challenging, you might say "I really learned a lot making those cookies" rather than "Ugghh, what a waste of time. That was an epic fail. I will never try that recipe again."

Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment at Home Part 2: Using Growth Mindset Praise and Feedback

- Praise what your child does, not who he or she is. Instead of saying, "You are so smart/clever/brilliant," say "I can see you really worked hard/put forth effort/tried hard." Praise perseverance and resiliency when you see your child struggle or face challenge. Avoid praising grades. Focus on praising work ethic and effort—not achievement.
- Adopt the word "yet" into your vocabulary. If your child proclaims that he doesn't understand something, can't dribble a basketball, or can't play a song on his guitar, remind him that he can't "yet" but with hard work he will have success.
- Avoid comparing your child's success with that of siblings or friends—achievement is not a competition. There is enough success for everyone.

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Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment at Home Part 3:

Redirecting Fixed Mindset Thinking

- Redirect your child's fixed mindset statements. If you hear your child say "I am no good in math" or "I just can't understand Shakespeare," point out the fixed mindset thinking and direct her to a growth mindset place. Remind her that she may not understand yet, but will by asking questions, finding new strategies, setting small goals, and working hard. Two examples of how to redirect such statements are included below.

If Your Child Says	Then You Might Say
"I am no good in math."	"You may not understand this yet, so let's practice some more."
"I don't need to study; I always do well on math assessments."	"Studying can help prime the brain for further growth. Maybe you should let your teacher know that these assessments don't require much practice for you and that you are willing to take on more challenge."

Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment at Home Part 4:

Struggle

- Help your child become curious about errors or lack of success. Remind your child that failure is important on the way to success. Model this!
- Show your child the Michael Jordan *Failure* commercial (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=45mMioJ5szc> and only 30 seconds long). Talk to your child about what the last line of the video means.
- Provide some puzzles and games that may create a little struggle for your child. Work together and discuss why struggle shows that you are learning and that you can build resiliency.
- Model and encourage resiliency—the ability to bounce back from errors and failures.



Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment at Home Part 5:
Flexibility and Optimism

- Model flexibility. Communicate that change is an important part of living life. Model this by taking a flexible mentality when things don't go as planned. Don't let frustrating situations get the best of you—make your children aware of your ability to adapt due to a change in plans. Praise your children for their flexibility and adaptability when plans change or success is not met.
- Model optimism. Adopt a “glass half full” mentality in your home. A person with “hope” believes there can be a positive side to most situations.
- Play a game with your kids: For every time something happens that is perceived as “bad,” try to find the good in every situation. This game can get a little silly but it gets a message of positivity across. For example, when a glass is accidentally broken, a possible response might be, “Now we have more room on our shelf!”

Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment at Home Part 6:
Learning and the Brain

- Talk about neural networking. Ask your child what he or she has learned in school about the brain.
- Whenever you hear your child say “I give up” or “I just don't get this,” remind your child to visualize neurons connecting every time he learns something new. Encourage your child to work hard and practice new skills and concepts so that he can develop strong neural connections in his brain.
- Share with your child some things that you have not yet mastered and your plan for practicing and building stronger connections in your brain.

Ideas for Creating a Growth Mindset Environment at Home Part 7:

Developing Important Psychosocial Skills

- A child's innate ability contributes to only about 25% of achievement. The other 75% are psychosocial skills that must be deliberately developed.

The important skills we can help our children develop include:

- perseverance,
 - self-confidence,
 - resiliency,
 - coping skills for disappointment and failure, and
 - the ability to handle constructive feedback.
- Choose books to read with younger students that highlight characters that demonstrate these skills. Discuss these with your child.
 - When watching TV or a movie with your kids, talk about a character's strength or lack of perseverance or resiliency. Ask your children how the situation or story would be different if the person did or did not have this skill.
 - Name the psychosocial skills words and use phrases that represent these around the house. For example, you might say, "My supervisor gave me some constructive feedback about how I can do my job better. I am grateful for that because she gave me some new things to try" or "I was watching you (climb that tree, play that video game, figure out the new cell phone, etc.) today. You really showed determination and perseverance!"

Growth Mindset Links

The following links can be included in school, district, or classroom bulletins.

Moving Toward Growth Mindset

The following link will help with your goals in moving toward a growth mindset:

- **Fostering Growth Mindsets** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsP43BqinQY>): This 4-minute video, *Fostering Growth Mindsets*, is part of a discussion series created by the Greater Good Science Center between Christine Carter (sociologist, mom, and happiness expert) and Kelly Corrigan (author and mom) about moving toward a growth-oriented mindset.

Growth Mindset Praise

The following links are centered on growth mindset praise:

- **How to Praise Children** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vUAxLi0Zo>): This is another part of a discussion series created by the Greater Good Science Center between Christine Carter and Kelly Corrigan about how praising your children can make them feel great and strive to be even greater.
- **Carol Dweck—A Study on Praise and Mindsets** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWv1VdDeoRY>): This is a great synthesis of Carol Dweck's research about the effects that praise has on our children. CEO and cofounder of the Championship Basketball School, Trevor Ragan, presents the data highlighting the differences in praising intelligence versus praising effort.

The Importance of "Yet"

The following are links about the importance of the word "yet":

- **Carol Dweck on the Power of Yet** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZyAde4nllm8>): This video contains a summary of the importance of the word "yet" in about 1 minute.
- **Sesame Street: Janelle Monae—Power of Yet** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XLeUvZvuvAs>): This is an engaging video with the Sesame Street friends learning about the power of "yet" through a song sung by R&B singer Janelle Monae.

Learning From Failure

To read more about learning from failure, consider these links:

- **The Importance of Mistakes: Helping Children Learn From Failure** (<http://www.bright Horizons.com/family-resources/e-family-news/2013-the-importance-of-mistakes-helping-children-learn-from-failure/>): This article provides ideas for parents for encouraging risk-taking and helping them learn from their errors.
- **Allow Your Children to Learn From Failure** (<http://www.thenownews.com/community/allow-your-children-to-learn-from-failure-1.1386910>): Parenting columnist Kathy Lynn explains why failure is not a bad experience for our children in this video.
- **How Children Learn From Failure** (<http://www.enannysource.com/blog/index.php/2014/01/22/how-children-learn-from-failure/>): This article, written for both parents and childcare providers, provides a list of strategies to try when your child is facing failure.