

How can I help my child to develop a Growth Mindset?

The exciting thing about the **growth mindset** approach is that it is not just about ability. It focuses on what people believe about ability – and there are lots of ways that we can help our children to develop a **growth mindset**.

Research has shown that Mindsets can be changed relatively quickly and there are plenty of things that parents and families can do to help. Below are a few tips and ideas that can help promote a **growth mindset** in children.

Set high expectations for your child:

It is commonly believed that lowering our expectations promotes self-esteem in children (e.g. “never mind, let’s try an easier one”), but this is not the case. Having high expectations works like a self-fulfilling prophecy. It shows that you believe they can do it, which in turn has a positive impact on their own beliefs, behaviour and outcomes.

Encourage children to be resilient and not give up, even when they find something difficult or frustrating:

We now know that the brain adapts to new information and practise by creating new connections, so help your child to believe that challenge is a positive thing because it means they are growing their brains! This can help them to be comfortable with the times that they struggle and means that they see this as a sign of learning.

Celebrate mistakes!

The fear of making mistakes and associated shame can stop children from giving something a go in the first place. We all make mistakes, so try to embrace these mistakes and use them as learning opportunities, rather than feeling embarrassed about them. If we are not making mistakes then we are not stretching ourselves.

Use inspirational role models:

Think about your child’s favourite athlete, musician or teacher and talk about their journey to success. We call this unravelling the talent myth. If someone has done well we have a tendency to think they were born that way. We need to show our children that this is not the case. Rather than focusing on somebody’s ‘natural talents’, focus on their early efforts, strong work ethic, and the mistakes and learning that led them to where they are now.

How can the way I praise my child help develop a Growth Mindset?

It’s natural to want to praise children when they do something well, but we need to do this carefully. Research suggests that the type of praise that we use can have a big impact. It’s all a matter of context in fact and even positive praise can encourage a **fixed mindset**.

Praising our children by saying things like “you’re a natural!” or “you seem to be able to turn your hand to anything!” without clarity of the process by which they got to that point can lead to the belief that being good at something is out of their control. In other words understanding how they got there is the key.

This focus on being good at something might lead to children feeling happy in the short-term, but confused when the reason they were praised is not evident. If children believe that they succeeded

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in something simply because they are gifted, they can end up re-evaluating their abilities if it doesn't go as well next time.

Instead the grown-ups around the child can focus praise on the **effort they've made** to get to that point of triumph, the **strategy they used** or the **outcome** itself, saying things like "you've worked so hard on this, well done!" or "you get better every time because of all the practise you've been doing" or "you have found a great way to do that, it worked out really well".

This kind of feedback helps to develop children's resilience to failure as it teaches them what to do when they are challenged or fail – try again, try harder or try a different way, all things that are within their own control.

This type of praise is sometimes called 'process praise' and Dweck's research found that children were more motivated when their parents used more of this kind of praise.

That's not how I've praised my child so far – is it too late to change?

It's never too late to change our mindsets. We've worked with children from the age of three, right up to university students and adults, and we've seen that anyone can develop a **growth mindset**.

It seems that the trick is to be open with children. If you are going to change the way you praise your child or the type of behaviours that you encourage, let them know why you are doing it. Tell them all about Growth Mindsets.

We're not saying that everyone is born with the same abilities, but what is clear is that practise, effort and finding the best strategy are crucial in determining how successful our children are in life, perhaps even more so than the natural abilities that they were born with.

Growth Mindsets : Further Reading

For grown-ups:

'Mindset: The New Psychology of Success', Carol Dweck

'Mindset: How You Can Fulfil Your Potential', Carol Dweck

'Growth Mindset Pocketbook', B. Hymer & M. Gershon

For sharing with kids:

'Your Fantastic Elastic Brain', J. Deak & S. Ackerley

'I Can't do This', K.J. Walton

'The Dot', Peter H. Reynolds

'Ish', Peter H. Reynolds

'Ryan the Spy and: The Superhero Secret', Jason Rago

'Rosie Revere, Engineer', Andrea Beaty