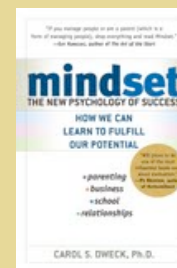




# THE MAIN IDEA

*current education book summaries*



File: Student  
Motivation

## Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

By Carol Dweck, Ph.D. (Ballantine Books, 2008)

### S.O.S. (A Summary of the Summary)

*The main ideas of the book are:*

- ⇒ This book describes how your *mindset* – your beliefs about yourself and others – has a powerful impact on your life.
- ⇒ However, your mindset isn't fixed. This book shows people that they have a choice and that they can change it.

*Why I chose this book:*

The acclaimed psychologist, Carol Dweck, has done decades of research and has found that our mindset affects whether we can learn to our full potential. If we can help our students develop *growth* mindsets this will impact their experience in school dramatically. Dweck's work has shown that with a growth mindset, students' motivation and grades both improve.

Many educators put everything into teaching their students. However, this effort is wasted if students don't have the right attitude – that is, if they don't believe they can learn and therefore don't put the effort into learning.

Mindsets also affect us – teachers and administrators – and whether we believe our students and staff are capable of growth and learning.

The book explains the mindsets and the accompanying PD ideas can help you develop a growth mindset in yourself, your staff, and your students. This is a perfect book for a teacher (or parent!) book group and The Main Idea has questions you can use for this.

NOTE: This summary does not include Chapter 4 (about sports) and Chapter 6 (about love) since it is for school leaders.

### The Scoop (In this summary you will learn...)

- ✓ *Why students with a growth mindset are more likely to study harder, put in more effort, and achieve more in school.*
- ✓ *Why students with a fixed mindset often give up at the first sign of failure.*
- ✓ *Why praising students for their ability ends up preventing them from achieving.*
- ✓ *Why it is so important for an organization to have a leader with a growth mindset.*
- ✓ *Workshop ideas to help you, your teachers, and your students develop the growth mindset. (From The Main Idea)*
- ✓ *A set of discussion questions to use with a staff or parent book club. (From The Main Idea)*

## **Chapter 1 – The Mindsets**

Carol Dweck, as an experiment, gave students a set of increasingly challenging puzzles. When one ten-year-old boy got to the harder ones he relished the opportunity, rubbed his hands together, and said, “I love a challenge!” Dweck has researched why some people, just like this boy, are not discouraged by a challenge or even a failure.

What she has found is that it depends on whether you believe that your skills can be cultivated through *effort* or whether these skills are *carved in stone*. If you believe the former, then you see a challenge as an opportunity to work hard and learn. If you believe the latter -- that either you are smart or you’re not -- then you think failure just reveals that you’re not smart.

### ***Why do people differ?***

People have always been different – some are smarter and some are more moral than others. Why is this case? Some experts have claimed that there are physical reasons for these differences – differences in the skull’s size, shape, and bumps, and differences in genes. Others have attributed people’s differences to their different backgrounds, experiences, training, or ways of learning. This is an age-old argument -- which is stronger, nature or nurture? Most experts today believe that it is a combination of both. However, scientists are finding that the brain has a much greater capacity for learning and growing than they had ever expected.

### ***What does all this mean for you? The Two Mindsets***

While you might not be concerned what the experts think, what *you* (or your students) think about intelligence and how you acquire it can profoundly influence the way you lead your life!

A *fixed mindset* is when you believe that human qualities are carved in stone. If you believe you only have a certain amount of intelligence, a certain personality, and a certain moral character, then all you can do is prove that you have the traits you have and hide your deficiencies.

A *growth mindset* is when you believe that through your own efforts you can cultivate your personal qualities. If you have this belief, then you are more likely to have a passion for learning because you believe you are developing your qualities. Also, rather than seeing a challenge as something to avoid because it will reveal your weaknesses, you welcome it because you see it as an opportunity to grow and learn.

For example, one day you go to a class that you really enjoy and the professor returns your midterm paper with a grade of C+ on it. While people with either mindset would feel upset, they are likely to react in different ways.

Those with a *fixed mindset* might say the following:

“I’m a total failure.” “I’m an idiot.”

Those with a *growth mindset* are more likely to say:

“I need to try harder in class.” “I’ll start thinking about studying harder, or in a different manner, for my next test.”

What is important here, and what is new, is that having a certain mindset leads to a host of other thoughts and actions. People who focus on permanent traits begin to fear challenge and devalue effort while those who believe that traits can be developed welcome challenge and put in a great deal more effort. An important first step is to be aware of the mindsets and this connection.

### ***The Mindsets and Knowing Your Strengths and Weaknesses***

You would think that those with a growth mindset would have an overly inflated view of themselves and try to do what they are not capable of. However, Dweck studied this and found that people with the growth mindset were amazingly accurate in knowing their abilities. *If* you believe that you can develop yourself, then you are more likely to be open to accurate information about your current abilities, even if they are weak. In fact, if you want to learn, you *need* accurate information about yourself. In contrast, people with a fixed mindset have a more distorted view of their strengths and weaknesses.

## Chapter 2 – How the Mindsets Affect Your View of Success, Effort, and More

In learning about the two mindsets it is crucial to remember that *you have a choice*. Because mindsets are just beliefs, and you can change your mind, then you can change your mindset. This is important because the mindsets affect many aspects of life – how you view success and failure, the effort you put into what you do, how you approach a challenge, and more.

### ***Views of Success, Interest, and Intelligence***

Everyone is born a learner, that is, with a growth mindset. Babies push themselves to do incredibly challenging tasks – like learning to walk and talk – and yet they don't give up; they plow ahead. So what stops these children from following their natural desire to learn? When they develop a fixed mindset and become afraid of not being smart. Dweck has given four-year-old children a choice to redo an easy jigsaw puzzle or try a harder one, and those who have already developed a fixed mindset chose the safe and easy puzzles. Children with a fixed mindset want to ensure they succeed since they believe that smart people always succeed. They opt for success over growth. However, those with a growth mindset have a different view of success – it's about stretching yourself and learning.

Mindset also affects how much people are interested and attentive. Dweck tested people with both mindsets and found that people with a fixed mindset only paid attention when they were told whether their answers were right or wrong. They had no interest in *understanding* the information that could help them learn the answers to the questions they had gotten wrong. However, those with a growth mindset paid close attention to the knowledge that could help them stretch their learning. To them, the *learning* was the priority, not whether they had answered questions right or wrong.

When do people with a growth mindset thrive? When they are stretching and challenging themselves. However, people with a fixed mindset thrive when they continue to work on what is safe and within their grasp. In her study of pre-med students, Dweck found that in a challenging chemistry course, the students with the fixed mindsets were interested *only* when they did well right away. Once they found the material difficult, their interest and enjoyment dropped dramatically. If the course proved that they weren't intelligent, then they couldn't enjoy it. On the other hand, students with a growth mindset maintained the same high level of interest even when the material became increasingly challenging.

Your mindset also affects when you feel smart. Dweck asked people when they feel smart and she found that those with the fixed mindset felt they had to be flawless right away. They gave answers like, "When I don't make any mistakes" or "When I finish something fast and it's perfect." In contrast, people with a growth mindset felt smart, "When it's really hard, and I try really hard, and I can do something I couldn't do before." Rather than immediate perfection, they see intelligence as something you get when confronting a challenge and learning over time. Those with the fixed mindset expected their ability to show up on its own without any learning taking place.

Those with a fixed mindset often believe that all it takes is one test to determine your abilities forever. They believe that your entire potential can be read from one assessment. However, many extraordinarily accomplished people were believed by experts to have no future. There is a long list of accomplished individuals, from Jackson Pollock and Ray Charles to Charles Darwin, who were initially believed to have no potential. But people with a growth mindset understand potential as a person's ability to *develop* skills, with effort, over time. They believe both *effort* and *time* to be key ingredients in reaching one's potential.

Malcolm Gladwell says that as a society we disdain effort. We believe success should come naturally and effortlessly. However, people with the growth mindset believe differently – even geniuses have to work hard to achieve. In contrast, those with the fixed mindset often fear putting in the effort and then failing. If you never put in the effort, you can have a ready excuse. Nothing is harder than saying, "I gave it my all and it wasn't good enough."

### ***The Mindsets and Failure***

The mindsets also affect how people view failure. When you have a fixed mindset failure becomes something that defines who you are. Failure gets transformed from an action (I failed) to an identity (I am a failure). Of course failure can be painful if you have a growth mindset as well, but it doesn't completely define you. It's a problem or a setback to be faced and learned from. Those with the growth mindset often *use* the failure to improve themselves.

So, how do you respond to failure when you have a fixed mindset? If failure just shows that you lack ability, then what do you do? In one test of seventh graders, those with the growth mindset said if they received a poor test grade they would, not study harder for the next one. However, the students with the fixed mindset said they would study *less* because what's the point of studying if you don't have the ability? Others said they would consider cheating or they would look to repair their self-image by looking for students who were worse off than they were. Another way people with a fixed mindset respond to failure is to assign blame or make excuses. If it's not your fault that you failed, then it's not an accurate assessment of your ability. Other people with a fixed mindset respond to failure with depression. To them, failure leaves them with no route to success. In fact, they often fall prey to a downward spiral in which the more depressed they are, the less they do about their situation. Then the more they let things go, the further behind they fall on their assignments and the more depressed they become. However, Dweck found that when her group *taught* people the growth mindset, it changed the way they reacted when they got depressed. Mindsets are an important part of who you are, but you can change them.

## **Chapter 3 – How the Mindsets Affect Ability and Achievement**

There are many myths about ability and achievement. This chapter is about the *real* ingredients of achievement and what makes some people achieve less and some people achieve more. Many people think achievement comes effortlessly to talented people. In fact, Thomas Edison did not wake up and invent the lightbulb instantaneously. His inventions were the result of a long series of failed inventions that he relentlessly conducted because of his drive and curiosity. Mozart worked diligently for ten years before producing anything worthwhile.

### ***Mindset and Achievement***

The mindset of students has a great deal of impact on their achievement in school. Dweck studied the mindset of students making the transition from the benign environment of elementary school to the challenges of junior high school. Students with the *fixed* mindset had more trouble with the challenges of their new school and made comments such as, “I suck in math” or blamed teachers for their problems, “Because the teacher is on crack.” Adolescence is a time when students question themselves, *Am I good-looking? Am I cool?* and the *fixed* mindset made them worry that their flaws would be unmasked. Rather than expending energy to learn, they use this energy to protect their egos. They simply stop working and aim to put in as little effort as possible in school.

The students with a *growth* mindset also saw the new school setting as challenging, but they mobilized their resources to be able to learn. For them, it doesn’t make sense to stop trying. Once Dweck taught the students the growth mindset, one student looked up with tears in his eyes and said, “You mean I don’t have to be dumb?” He now understands that working harder can make you smarter, not more vulnerable.

Dweck also studied students entering college, another challenging time for students. She found that mindset also affected the ways that students *studied*. Those with the fixed mindset read the textbook and their class notes. If the material was hard, they would read it all again. If they failed a test, they concluded that they had done all they could. However, those with the growth mindset took more ownership over their studies. When reading through their notes they actively looked for themes and principles. They looked over previous errors and worked to understand those errors. They studied as a way to learn, not just to pass the test. Those with a growth mindset are more oriented toward learning and therefore know how to create learning. In contrast, although those with a fixed mindset also want a good grade, they end up doing everything except actually taking charge of their learning to ensure that they will succeed.

So, does this mean that all students can do well and the only difference is whether they have the right mindset? It’s not that simple, but what is clear is that with the right mindset and the right teaching, students are a lot more capable than you would think. One famous example is the teacher Jaime Escalante and his work in one of the worst schools in Los Angeles (chronicled in the movie *Stand and Deliver*). He was able to get his students to score extremely well on the Advanced Placement Calculus test because of his *growth* mindset. Rather than asking “*Can I teach them?*” about his inner-city students, he asked “*How will I teach them?*” and “*How will they learn best?*” Rather than serve as a judge, he acted as the students’ allies. His work stood in stark contrast to what usually happens when students are behind and the teacher has a *fixed* mindset: “Since these students are dim-witted we should give them dumbed-down material.” So, can any student learn anything? While there are exceptions such as the 2 to 3 percent of students with severe impairments or extreme abilities, as Benjamin Bloom concluded, “What any person in the world can learn, *almost* all persons can learn, *if* provided with the appropriate prior and current conditions of learning.”

To help fully understand the impact of a fixed mindset, think about artistic ability. Even those who generally have a growth mindset may still hold a *fixed* belief when it comes to artistic ability. If you ask yourself right now whether you are good or bad at drawing, it wouldn’t be surprising if you had a fixed-mindset answer. However, drawing also can be learned and the book has amazing examples of before and after pictures to make this point. On p.69 there are a series of “before” self-portraits by people who think they can’t draw. These are mostly very simple stick figures. Then, after taking a five-day course based on the book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain* by Betty Edwards, they drew incredibly sophisticated self-portraits that appear as the “after” pictures. While this may not relate directly to academic achievement, it really shows the power of the *growth* mindset even on something that most of us assume you inherently have or don’t have – artistic ability. It shows that although some people can do things with little training, there is no reason to believe that others can’t also accomplish that skill *with* training.

### ***The Danger of Praise and Labels***

If people have so much potential to achieve, shouldn’t we praise them to encourage them? In fact, 80% of parents said it was necessary to praise children’s ability. However, those with the fixed mindset already focus too much on ability. Praising ability would show that we value it even more. Dweck conducted studies about this. In one study some students were praised for their *ability*, “Wow, you got eight right. That’s a really good score. You must be smart at this.” Other students were praised for their *effort*: “Wow, you got eight right so you must have worked really hard.” Dweck found that praising ability pushed students toward a fixed mindset. They then rejected challenging new tasks because they wanted to maintain the image that they were smart. Those praised for effort welcomed new challenges, and also *enjoyed* them more. The burden of talent for the ability-praised students simply killed their enjoyment of the activities. The more the effort-praised students put in effort, and enjoyed that effort, the better and better their academic performance became. There was another shocking outcome of this study. The students praised for their ability *lied* about their scores. By praising the abilities of ordinary children, the adults had turned them into liars!

Negative labels also have a role with the different mindsets. We already know that negative labels and stereotyping are bad. When stereotypes are used, people's minds are filled with doubts and concerns that the stereotype is true. However, these negative messages don't impact everyone equally. For those who believe in fixed traits, negative labels reinforce feelings of inferiority. However, those with the growth mindset are better able to resist the effects of stereotypes because they don't believe that certain groups are inherently inferior. Even in a threatening environment, those with a growth mindset can take what they need from it and move on.

Overall, it is the growth mindset that allows people to develop their minds fully by helping them to avoid limiting and negative thoughts which might hold them back.

## **Chapter 5 – Business: Mindset and Leadership**

When Enron, the company that was supposed to be the company of the future, failed what exactly happened? It was mindset. According to Malcolm Gladwell, American companies had become obsessed with talent. They were spending whatever it took to recruit and retain the most talented business minds. Enron followed this path. In doing so, they created a culture that worshipped talent and this forced people into the *fixed* mindset. Employees needed to show that they knew a lot and never admit or correct their errors. When a company like this faces difficulties, there is no way for them to reform their ways and survive.

If the above suggests that companies with a *fixed* mindset are doomed to fail, then can we assume that companies with a growth mindset will succeed? Jim Collins studied what it takes for a company to rise above being merely 'good' to become 'great.' What he found in all of the successful companies was that the leader was *not* a charismatic egotist. Rather, the successful companies had more self-effacing leaders who constantly asked questions and were willing to face the brutal realities of their company's performance. These leaders possessed a *growth* mindset. Rather than trying to prove they were better than others, they focused on trying to *improve*.

Alan Wurtzel, the CEO of Circuit City, was a leader with this type of *growth* mindset. Instead of trying to impress his board of directors, he held debates with them and used them to learn. He was called "the prosecutor" because he was unrelenting in his questioning, "Why, why, why?" until he understood. Those with the growth mindset keep on learning. Rather than fearing their mistakes, they use them as feedback to improve their strategies. With this approach, Wurtzel took a company close to bankruptcy and turned it into a company that delivered one of the highest total returns to its stockholders.

### ***Leadership and the Fixed Mindset***

Leaders with a fixed mindset believe that some people are superior and others are inferior. They see their companies as a reflection of their own superiority and are concerned with preserving that reputation at all costs. Because they don't believe their employees can grow, they don't bother building a strong management team. Instead, they see themselves as great geniuses who just need little helpers to implement their ideas. They want to be the only ones to shine in the spotlight. This type of leader is likely to fire critics and place the blame elsewhere when things go wrong. Some companies, because they have taken their *fixed* mindset to the extreme, have actually lost billions of dollars. These leaders placed their own importance over everything and ended up putting their companies in jeopardy as a result. Unfortunately, when the leader possesses a *fixed* mindset, they often become abusive and controlling. Everything starts to revolve around pleasing the boss and this puts everyone into a *fixed* mindset.

One of the problems of a fixed mindset is that it often leads to *groupthink*, a term popularized in the 1970s. This is when everyone in a group starts thinking alike. It happens when a group places too much stock in a talented leader or when a leader punishes those who criticize. However, when an important decision needs to be made, it is vital to have a full and open discussion – that is, to be in a growth mindset -- before any decision is being made. As one growth-mindset CEO of General Motors said when a group of policy makers reached consensus, "I take it we are all in complete 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." Groupthink prevents this type of disagreement to surface.

### ***Leadership and the Growth Mindset***

One leader, Andrew Carnegie, captured the essence of the growth mindset for leaders when he said, "I wish to have as my epitaph: 'Here lies a man who was wise enough to bring into his service men who knew more than he.'" Dweck describes the success of three growth-mindset leaders in this chapter who were able to transform their companies by rooting out the fixed mindset and replacing it with a culture of growth and teamwork. Below is an overview of one of them. Jack Welch took over GE in 1980 and turned it from a company worth 14 billion dollars to one worth 490 billion. He was the kind of leader who, rather than staying in his pristine office, went straight to the workers on the assembly line to hear what they had to say. He learned a lot from continually visiting and listening to his workers. He also worked hard to replace the culture of "I" with one of teamwork. It is important to note that he did not come by his growth mindset naturally. Initially, he did not take criticism well and depended mostly on his own talent. If he wanted to change the fixed mindset of his company, he would first have to root it out of himself. He had to learn to be a different kind of manager. He realized that to be a growth-minded leader he would have to develop the courage to be open to new ideas and to support his workers as a guide, not a judge. He opened up lines of communication and allowed honest feedback. He rewarded team effort rather than individual genius. He also learned that it was more important to hire people based on their capacity to grow than on their fancy academic degrees. He shut down elitism and made it clear that the company was about growth, not self-importance.



In addition to the leader developing his or her own growth mindset, it is important to develop a growth mindset in your workers as well. In the same way that praising children for their talent fosters the fixed mindset, the same thing happens with employees. In order to give the kind of feedback that will lead to the growth mindset, leaders should not reward the smartest ideas or best performance. Instead, they should reward people for taking initiative, seeing a challenging task through to the end, and for struggling and learning something new.

### ***Can leaders develop the growth mindset?***

A lot of money is spent trying to teach leaders and managers how to give effective feedback to employees. However, much of this money is wasted if the leaders do not *believe* that employees can change – that is, if they don’t have the growth mindset. Leaders with the growth mindset are much more committed to their employees’ development. But can the growth mindset be *taught* to leaders? Yes it can. Peter Heslin has developed a workshop to promote the growth mindset outlined below. It includes:

I. An introductory video and scientific article about how the brain actually changes with learning and how change is possible throughout life

II. A series of exercises in which leaders:

- (a) learn why it’s important to understand that people can develop their own abilities
- (b) think of areas they once had low ability but now perform well
- (c) write to a struggling protégé about how this person’s abilities can be developed
- (d) recall times they have seen people do things they never thought they could do

For each of these exercises they reflect on why and how change takes place.

## **Chapter 7 – Where Do Mindsets Come From?**

This chapter focuses on the people – parents, teachers, and coaches -- who impart, often inadvertently, a certain mindset to children and students. Because this summary is for educators it will skip the section on coaches. Every day adults send messages to children about how to think of themselves. These can be growth-mindset messages: *you are developing and I am interested in your growth*. Or they can be fixed-mindset messages: *your traits are permanent and I’m going to judge them*. Of course no one sets out to do the latter. No adult thinks, “I wonder what I can do today to undermine my children, subvert their effort, turn them off learning, and limit their achievement.” This is why it’s important to learn to distinguish between these two types of messages.

### ***Messages About Success***

As parents or teachers we want to be able to simply bestow confidence on our children by praising their brains and talent. But as was mentioned earlier, Dweck found from her studies that praising children’s abilities actually *harms* their motivation and performance. Take a look at the comments we make and the different messages that students internalize instead:

Comments intended to praise intelligence or ability	How children internalize these comments
“You learned that so quickly! You’re so smart!”	<i>If I don’t learn something quickly, I’m not smart.</i>
“Look at that drawing. Martha, is he the next Picasso or what?”	<i>I shouldn’t try drawing anything hard or they’ll see I’m no Picasso.</i>
“You’re so brilliant, you got an A without even studying!”	<i>I’d better quit studying or they won’t think I’m brilliant.</i>

So if we’re not supposed to praise ability, what’s the alternative? As parents and teachers, the best thing we can do is to teach children to love challenges, see mistakes as opportunities to learn, enjoy effort, and keep on learning. How do we do this? By praising actions affiliated with the *growth* mindset: practicing, studying, and persisting. Below are some examples of this type of praise:

Praising students to promote the growth mindset
“You really studied for your test and your improvement shows it. You read the material over several times, you outlined it, and you tested yourself on it. It really worked!”
“I like the way you tried all kinds of strategies on that math problem until you finally got it.”
“I like that you took on that challenging project for your science class. It will take a lot of work – doing the research, designing the apparatus, buying the parts, and building it. Boy, you’re going to learn a lot of great things.”
“That homework was so long and involved. I really admire the way you concentrated and finished it.”

It's important to think about *what* exactly you are praising when you give a compliment. For example, when you say, "Wow, you got that so quickly and you didn't make any mistakes!" you are praising speed and perfection. So what should you say instead? "Whoops. I guess that was too easy. I apologize for wasting your time."

Sometimes adults praise intelligence in an attempt to make children feel confident before a test. "Look, *you* know how smart you are and *we* know how smart you are. You've got this nailed." Rather than being reassuring, this actually raises the stakes for the child. Instead, they could have said, "It must be a terrible thing to feel like everyone is evaluating you. We want you to know that we are not evaluating you. We care about your learning and we're proud that you've stuck to it and kept learning."

### ***Messages About Failure***

But what kind of messages should you use in times of failure? What comment would you use for a student who put in effort but didn't do well? For example, it was nine-year-old Elizabeth's first gymnastics meet. She did well, but not well enough to win and take home any ribbons. What would you say if you were Elizabeth's parents?

1. Tell her *you* thought she was the best?
2. Tell her that she was robbed of a prize that should have been hers.
3. Tell her that gymnastics is just not that important.
4. Tell her that she has the ability and will win next time.
5. Tell her she didn't deserve to win.

In our culture we try to protect our children from failure. While this may help initially, in the long run it will fail. Look at the messages the parents would send with the responses above. The first is insincere. The second teaches her to blame. The third teaches her not to value something that is challenging. The fourth is also insincere. While the final option seems cruel, it's the only growth-minded one that is honest and teaches her to learn from her failure. Here's what her father said, "Elizabeth, I know how you feel. It's disappointing not to win. But you know, you haven't earned it yet. There were many girls there who have been in gymnastics longer than you and who've worked a lot harder than you. If this is something you really want, then it's something you'll have to work for." He also let her know if she decided to do gymnastics just for fun, that was fine, too. Children need *honest* feedback in order to learn. Rather than being "protected," they need to learn that advice, coaching, and feedback are *positive* parts of growth.

It's important to be honest in order to give effective feedback. Even when praising students for effort, tell them honestly they have more work to do. For example, "I liked the effort you put in, but let's work together some more and figure out what it is you don't understand." Or perhaps for a student with a learning disability, "Everyone learns in a different way. Let's keep trying to find the way that works for you."

Rather than *judging* students when they make a mistake, we need to use these as opportunities to *teach*. Students need to learn that mistakes are not about judgment and punishment. Instead, mistakes are occasions for learning. When their parents talk to them about their poor performance in school, look at the different ways children interpret it:

Question: Suppose your parents discussed your performance with you when you did poorly on something in school. Why would they do this?

Fixed-mindset child: They thought it showed them what kind of student I was.

Growth-mindset child: They wanted to teach me ways to study better in the future.

### ***What Makes a Teacher Great?***

Some teachers think that if they lower the standards, their students will experience more success, and this will boost their self-esteem. However, this only leads to poorly educated students who get used to easy work and easy praise. However, simply raising standards without helping students reach them leads too many students to fail. What great teachers do is to set high standards *and* help their students reach them. Great teachers use a growth-oriented approach to work *with* students, as their ally, in order to reach those goals.

The chapter describes three great teachers: Marva Collins, Rafe Esquith, and Dorothy DeLay (Itzhak Perlman's teacher). These teachers worked with all students, not just those who were already achieving. They never said, "Oh, this child wasn't born with it, so I won't waste my time." They created environments of affection and concern that conveyed the message, "I'm going to teach you, not judge your talent." With this approach their students made unfathomable gains. Marva Collins extended her school to include four-year-olds and required that they all read to learn by Christmas. And they all did. By the end of elementary school they were reading *The Canterbury Tales*, Chekov, and Shakespeare. Esquith was distressed to see his school celebrating reading scores that were a point or two higher than the previous year because they were still twenty points below the national average. "Those who celebrate failure will not be around to celebrate their jobs flipping burgers... Someone has to tell children if they are behind, and lay out a plan of attack to help them catch up." Growth-minded teachers tell students the truth about the gap, but then provide them with the tools to close that gap. They spend hours teaching and demystifying the skills that students do not have. Along with the challenge, they nurture students, teach them to learn for themselves, and also teach them to love learning. It is when students understand that school is *for them* and that they have an ally, that they stop sabotaging their efforts to learn.

## **Chapter 8 – Changing Mindsets**

The growth mindset is based on a belief in change. In her work, Dweck has found tremendous satisfaction in seeing children and adults finding that they can use their abilities to grow by learning about the growth mindset. The first step is to make people aware of their beliefs. This comes from cognitive therapy and the idea that you can teach people to pay attention to their beliefs and then work to change them. Everyone keeps a running record in their brain to interpret what is happening to them, but sometimes that inner dialogue is guided by a fixed mindset that is focused on judging. Instead, we need to teach people to replace the judging that is going on in their heads with a growth mindset in which they ask, “What can I learn from this? How can I improve?” Part of what cognitive therapy does is to help people make their judgments about themselves more reasonable. When a student does poorly on a test and believes, “I’m stupid,” cognitive therapy would teach that student to look for evidence against this conclusion to see that it isn’t entirely true.

Simply teaching about the mindsets helps people to shift their thinking. For example, it helps to explain the new research that shows the brain does not have a fixed amount of intelligence. Instead, it is more like a muscle in that it changes and gets stronger when you use it. The brain “grows” when you use it because the brain forms new connections when you practice skills and learn about new things. The more you challenge yourself, the more the brain grows. When students learn this they end up feeling empowered to know that they can be in charge of the growth of their brain. Dweck and her colleagues have developed a series of workshops called the “Brainology” program to help students develop their growth mindset. After going through the program, the students benefited from learning how their brain works. Students learned that when they studied well, they transferred their knowledge from temporary storage (working memory) to more permanent storage (long-term memory). Afterwards, students used this new information, “I’ll have to put that into my long-term memory” and “Every time I thought about not doing work I remembered that my neurons could grow if I did do the work.”

Changing your mindset doesn’t happen by just learning a few tricks. To establish a growth mindset takes time, practice, and monitoring. The goal is for students to change from a *judge-and-be-judged* framework to a *learn-and-help-learn* framework. Students need help from adults who model this mindset, make comments that reflect the growth mindset, and who reward the students’ behavior when it is in line with a growth mindset. By regularly communicating this type of value system you can provide your own growth-mindset workshop.

In addition to this summary there are more suggestions from The Main Idea about ways to promote the growth mindset in teachers, students, and in your school’s culture.