

A FIXED OR GROWTH MINDSET

A mindset is a belief that orients the way we handle situations; the way we sort out what is going on and what we should do. Our mindsets help us to spot opportunities, but they can trap us in self-defeating cycles.

Carol Dweck is one of the world's leading researchers in the field of motivation. In her book 'Mindset' she explains that our mindset is responsible for our self-awareness, self-esteem, creativity, ability to face challenges and our resilience to setbacks. Our mindset is the view that you have of your qualities and characteristics; where they come from, and whether they can change.

There are two extreme ends on either side of the spectrum:

- + A fixed mindset comes from the belief that you have qualities that you can no longer change. You are who you are. Characteristics such as intelligence, personality and creativity are fixed traits which can't be developed.
- + A growth mindset comes from the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through effort. Everybody can change and grow through practice and experience, knowing that human beings differ greatly in their talents, interests or temperaments.

You can of course find yourself somewhere in the middle of that spectrum or you can lean a certain way in one area of your life and a different way in other areas.

Your mindset influences a lot of things in life. For example, if you have a more fixed mindset when it comes to creativity, you believe that you can reach a certain level of creativity, but no more. Maybe you believe that you're not a creative person at all.

You don't believe that extra effort or learning will bring you to a higher level, and

this is reflected in your behaviour. If someone asks you for new ideas, you don't devote a lot of effort to come up with any because you believe they won't be good anyway. You avoid brainstorm sessions because they're just mumbo jumbo and you won't add any added value. In fact, what you are doing is depriving yourself from new creativity methods and the experience of generating new ideas. This results, of course, in the confirmation that you're not a very creative person, compared to others who you assume are better at generating fresh ideas.

Your whole personality can be influenced by your mindset. If you have a fixed 'negative' mindset about yourself (which can of course be caused by past experiences), then it's quite hard to break through these fixed thinking patterns. Because your brain is looking for situations that will re-enforce its belief system. You block opportunities even before they have started- (that new colleague won't like me, so I'll try to avoid her. Your strange behaviour may cause her to feel and look visibly uncomfortable, which you again interpret as confirmation that she doesn't like you). It's a spiral of negative thinking where the fixed mindset stands in the way of development and change.

A growth mindset is a starting point for change. But people still need to decide for themselves where their efforts toward change would be most valuable.

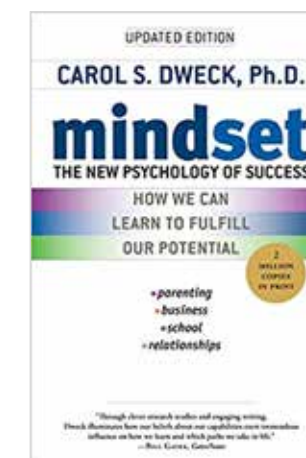
You can choose to change your mindset! It will of course take time and effort, but you have that choice at this moment.

The first step is being aware of your own mindset. How do you look at the world? Are you committed to embracing a different mindset? Do you want to change your own reality?

Mindsets are beliefs; beliefs about yourself and your most basic qualities. Think about your intelligence, your talents, your personality. Are these qualities simply fixed traits, carved in stone, end of story? Or are they things you can cultivate throughout your life?

People with a fixed mindset believe that their traits are just givens. They have a certain amount of intelligence and talent and nothing can change that. If they have this in abundance, they're all set but if they don't... People in this mindset worry about their traits and how adequate they are. They feel they have something to prove to themselves and others.

On the other hand, people with a growth mindset see their qualities as things that can be developed through dedication and effort. Sure, they're happy if they're brainy or talented, but that's just the starting point. They understand that no one has ever accomplished great things - not Mozart, Darwin, or Michael Jordan - without years of passionate practice and learning.



*Mindset
by Carol Dweck*

