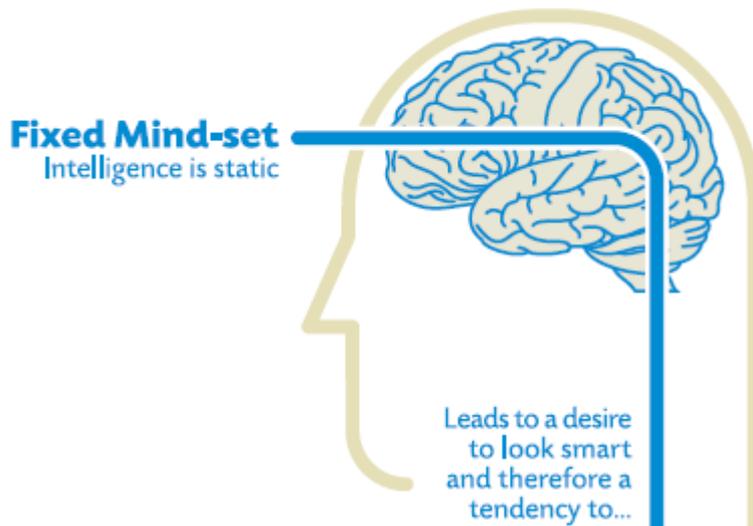


Fixed & Growth Mindsets

Through more than three decades of systematic research, [Carol Dweck] has been figuring out answers to why some people achieve their potential while equally talented others don't. **The key, she found, isn't ability; it's whether you look at ability as something inherent that needs to be demonstrated or as something that can be developed.**

Fixed Mindset



People who hold these beliefs think that "they are the way they are", but that doesn't mean that they have less of a desire for a positive self-image than anyone else. They still want to perform well and be seen by others as "smart".



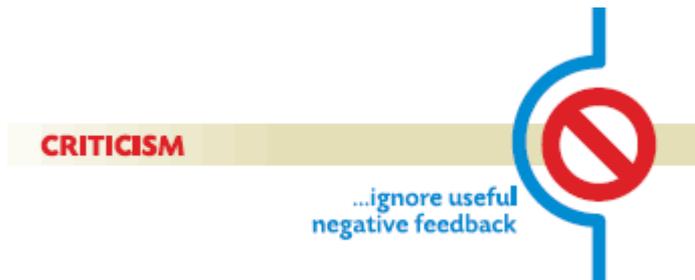
By definition, a challenge is hard and success is not assured, so rather than risk failing and negatively impacting their self-image, they will often avoid challenges and stick to what they know they can do well.



Same with obstacles. The difference here, is that challenges are things that you can decide to do while obstacles are external forces that get in your way.



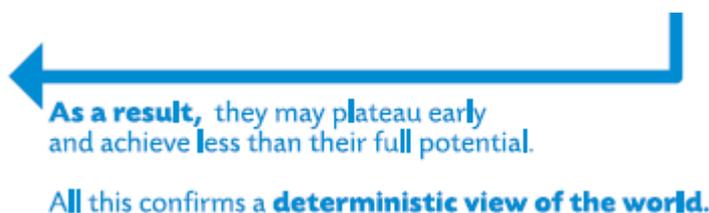
What's the point of working hard and making efforts if afterwards you are still on square one? If your worldview tells you that effort is an unpleasant thing that doesn't really pay dividends, then the smart thing to do is to avoid it as much as possible.



Useful negative feedback is ignored in the best of cases, and taken as an insult at other times. A **Fixed Mindset** logically leads you to believe that any criticism of your capabilities is criticism of *you*. This usually discourages the people giving the feedback, further isolating the person from external influences that could generate change.

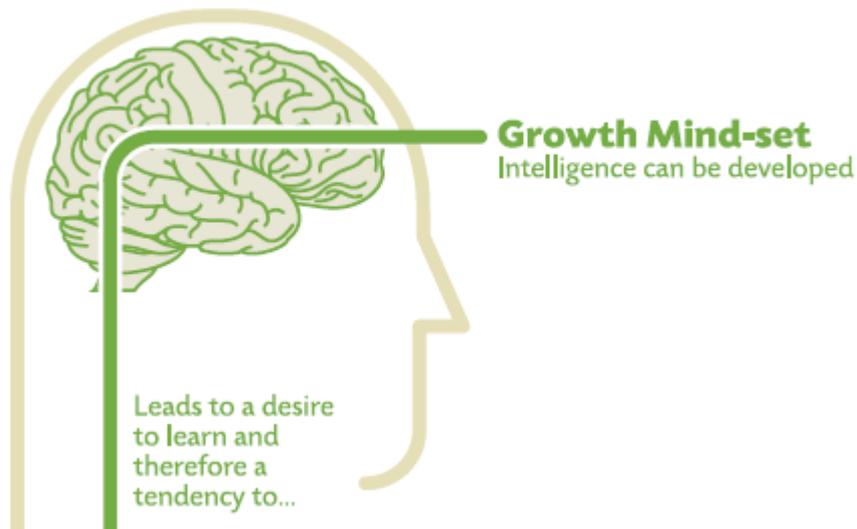


The success of others is seen as a benchmark against which the person looks bad. Usually when others succeed, people with a **Fixed Mindset** will try to convince themselves and the people around them that the success was due to either luck (after all, almost everything is due to luck in the **Fixed Mindset** world) or misleading actions.



As a result, they don't reach their full potential and their beliefs feed on themselves: They don't change or improve much with time, if at all, and so to them this confirms that "they are as they are".

Growth Mindset



People who hold a **Growth Mindset** believe that intelligence can be developed, that the brain is like a muscle that can be trained. This leads to the desire to improve.



And how do you improve? First, you embrace challenges, because you know that you'll come out stronger on the other side.



Similarly, obstacles – external setbacks – do not discourage you. Your self-image is not tied to your success and how you will look to others; failure is an opportunity to learn, and so whatever happens you win.



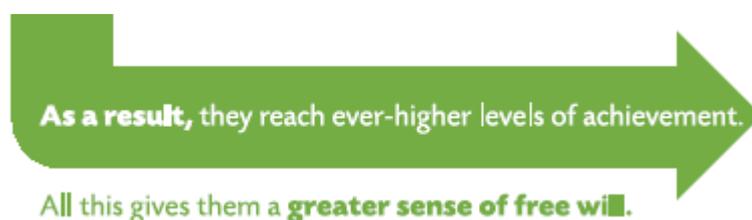
Effort is seen not as something useless to be avoid but as *necessary* to grow and master useful skills.



Criticism and negative feedback are sources of information. That doesn't mean that all criticism is worth integrating or that nothing is ever taken personally, but at least the **Growth Mindset** individual knows that he or she can change and improve, so the negative feedback is not perceived as being directly about them as a person, but rather about their current abilities.



The success of others is seen as a source of inspiration and information. To **Growth Mindset** individuals, success is not seen as a [zero-sum game](#) i.e. there is a finite amount of success in the world and the more successful other people are, the less success there is available for others.



And so, **Growth Mindset** individuals will improve and this will create a positive feedback loops that encourages them to keep learning and improving.

The good news is that a **Growth Mindset** can be taught and research by Dweck and her colleagues shows that this has a demonstrable effect on resilience and student outcomes.

Sources:

<http://michaelgr.com/2007/04/15/fixed-mindset-vs-growth-mindset-which-one-are-you/>

http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=32124

Original graphic by Nigel Holmes