

GROWTH MINDSET AND WHY IT MATTERS

Activities and Assignments Linked to Videos

[From the online presentation at <http://portal.sliderocket.com/DAJZE/Copy-of-Growth-Mindset-and-Why-It-Matters>]

Carol Dweck: Discovering the Importance of Mindset (1:41) and the Impact of Praise (3:26)

In these two brief interviews, Stanford University psychologist Carol Dweck describes how she discovered the growth mindset and her research into the impact of praise on student learning.

Activity: Carol Dweck remembers how her sixth grade teacher seated students by their IQ (their presumed intelligence): "smartest" in front, "slowest" in back. Thankfully, teachers don't do this anymore. Still, it's common practice in high schools to sort students into "honors" and "regular" classes. The honors classes are "open" only to students with strong grades and test scores. In some schools, though, any student who commits to working hard can "get into" an honors class. A few schools have abolished "honors" classes entirely, believing all students are capable of doing challenging work.

Working together, make a chart that lists the pros and cons of each option. Then decide and tell which option you personally favor.

Assignment: Describe in writing a time when someone (a colleague, teacher, parent) praised you for something you did and it made you feel uncomfortable. What made you squirm? Then write about a time when you put a lot of effort into something and no one seemed to notice. What do you wish someone had said or done? Share your reflections with your colleagues or classmates.

The Power of Belief: Mindset and Success (10:53)

In this popular TEDxTalk, Eduardo Briceño (CEO of MindWorks) draws on social science research and real life examples to explain how our understanding of intelligence and abilities deeply impacts success.

Activity: Make a list of the things you feel you are good at and some of the things you aren't; for each item, explain why. Share your list and reasons with a partner. Pick two items on your "not good" list and discuss what it would take for you to become better at each.

Assignment: Imagine that you have been asked to give a 1-2 minute TEDxTalk on the growth mindset and why it matters. Create your speech (be as creative as you want), practice it until you are satisfied with the results, and then perform it for classmates or colleagues.

Why You Need to Fail (14:55)

Musician and author Derek Sivers explains the importance of failure--for effective learning, growth mindset, and quality through experimentation.

Activity: Take a few minutes and think about a time when you made a really bad mistake. Write down what happened: what was the mistake, why did you make it, how did you feel, what could you have done differently? Reflect a bit more and write down what you learned from making the mistake--maybe about what you were trying to accomplish or about yourself. Divide into small groups and share your experience with others.

Assignment: Be an investigative reporter and ask as many different people as you can to tell you about a bad mistake they made and what they learned from it. Write down their answers. Be sure to get their first name, age, and what they do. Type up all the answers you collect and share them with colleagues or classmates.

Will Smith: Mindset Wisdom (5:26)

In this collage of talk show interviews, actor Will Smith describes his fierce work ethic, practice versus talent, the importance of making a difference, and more.

Activity: Will Smith says skill is only developed by "hours and hours and hours of beating on your craft." Take a few minutes and write down a time when you worked really, really hard on a project or skill, surprising even yourself with your "grit." What made you work so hard? Did you ever feel like giving up? What kept you going? How did it turn out? What did you feel when it was all over? Divide into small groups and share your reflections.

Assignment: Pick a skill you'd like to learn or improve at. Draw up a seven-day plan for how you'll practice the skill for an hour a day, including ideas and tips from friends, colleagues, teachers. Then DO IT! Keep a daily journal on how it's going. When the seven days are over, share your journal with colleagues or classmates.

Pushing Your Limits (6:47)

In these video clips from the WKCD series "Just Listen: Students Talk About Learning," six high school students speak straightforwardly about the potential their teachers see in them and the ways they push their limits.

Activity: Farhan talks about the potential his teachers see in him now and later in life. Rashaun recalls how his band teacher pushed him to sing a note he believed was beyond reach. Carla describes her struggles as a failing student and her determination to catch up.

Working together, make a list of the ways teachers can show students that they truly believe in their potential--more than just saying every student can succeed. Then make a list of the ways teachers, perhaps without knowing it, can cause students to be discouraged, to feel like a failure. (Transfer the lists to a big poster and put it up on a wall in the school . . .)

Essay Assignment: What makes it so hard to believe in ourselves and keep believing in ourselves?