

solutions

CHANGING YOUR MINDSET

Parents have long searched for the approach to bring out the best in their children. For decades, parents had witnessed the heartache that could come to their children when a negative label “stuck.” Too often, labeling someone as clumsy, or lazy, or dumb had a lasting effect on their potential.

In the 1970's, to combat the impact of negative labels, psychologists championed efforts to increase self-esteem. Parents launched a mission to do whatever they could to protect their children from failure and boost their self-esteem. Positive labels replaced negative labels and parents lavished their children with praise for being intelligent, talented, athletic, etc. Unfortunately, this practice may have sent the message that if a child was “born” with certain attributes, they really didn't have to exert any effort to maintain or develop these areas. The notion that: “we are who we are” is defined as a fixed mindset. This belief has successfully been replaced by: “we can be who we want to be” if we persist in our pursuits. This thinking is central to a growth mindset and is an exciting alternative to a fixed mindset.

The latest research by Stanford University's Dr. Carol Dweck, which was conducted with hundreds of students, has demonstrated that students who learn about the growth mindset, show greater motivation in school, better grades, and higher test scores. When parents, students and educators have a growth mindset, they understand that intelligence can be developed. Students focus on improvement instead of worrying about how smart they are. They simply work harder to learn more and get smarter, regardless of their “IQ.” Their fear of effort, challenges and setbacks is replaced by accepting challenges, persevering and learning from mistakes.

Parents can be instrumental in reframing both their own and their children's thinking by embracing the following five steps toward a growth mindset:

1. Avoid applying labels to your child

Praising who they are, rather than what they do, deprives children of the rewards inherent in discovering what they can do on their own and deprives them from feeling the pleasure and power that comes from seeing themselves in control of their own success.

2. Be Curious About Mistakes

- Praise and value their acts of effort, practice and self-correction.
- Do not shelter them from a failed task.
- Explore what they learned and what they could try in the future.

3. Model a Growth Mindset

4. Get Curious

- Discuss a time you did not know an answer;
- How many times you tried to get the right answer;
- Who you asked for help; and
- How you finally learned the answer.

5. Help Your Child “Talk Back” to Negative Thoughts

- Give them the growth mindset language
 - “I am willing to learn new skills to improve and I know it will be hard at times”
 - “Practice makes permanent”

Resources:

Dweck, Carol, Ph.D. (2007) Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

Dweck, C. (2008). Can Personality Be Changed? The Role of Beliefs in Personality and Change *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17 (6), 391-394

Kinnikove, M. (Apr. 3, 2012). Intelligence and Other Stereotypes: The Power of Mindset. *Scientific American*

Steele, C. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52 (6), 613-629

PARENTS MATTER: Parents with a growth mindset can prepare their child to thrive without the fear of failing.