

How to teach

GROWTH

MINDSET

to kids



THE 4-WEEK GUIDE

THE 4-WEEK GUIDE TO TEACHING A **GROWTH MINDSET**

Introduction

Developing the right mindset early on is crucial for a full, big life. When kids learn putting forth effort and using the right strategies can make them smarter, they try harder and achieve more. When they know their brains are capable of growing, amazing things can happen!

So how do we TEACH this simple and incredible concept to children? To start, we would like to make sure you understand the basics.

WHAT IS GROWTH MINDSET?

We all have beliefs about our own abilities and potential. These beliefs are part of our mindset which is so powerful it can fuel our behavior and predict our success. Mindset shapes our everyday lives, helping us interpret our experiences and future possibilities.

In her research at Stanford University, Dr. Carol Dweck identified two different types of mindsets. **Growth mindset** occurs when we believe our intelligence and abilities can be improved upon with effort and the right strategies.

A willingness to confront challenges, a passion for learning and viewing [failure](#) as a springboard for growth are all characteristics associated with a growth mindset. Not surprisingly, this type of mindset is strongly linked to greater happiness and achievement in life.

In contrast, those with a **fixed mindset** believe their intelligence and abilities cannot be altered in a meaningful way. As a result, mistakes are often seen as failures rather than opportunities to grow and learn. When stuck in a fixed mindset, we may fear new experiences, avoid risks, and feel the need to repeatedly prove ourselves over and over.

ABOUT THE 4-WEEK GUIDE

Teaching a growth mindset to children is not an easy task but it could become one of the greatest contributions you make towards their success and happiness.

In this 4-week guide, you will find the KEY elements for establishing a growth mindset at home or in your classroom. Each week offers a variety of suggested [activities](#) and **resources**, as well as suggested **scripts** to facilitate easy and fun discussions with your child or students.

THE 4-WEEK GUIDE TO TEACHING A **GROWTH MINDSET**

Week One: Introduce It

This week, children will learn about the concept of mindset and how the two types, growth and fixed, differ. We will also discuss the BRAIN and how it can grow and strengthen in response to challenges.

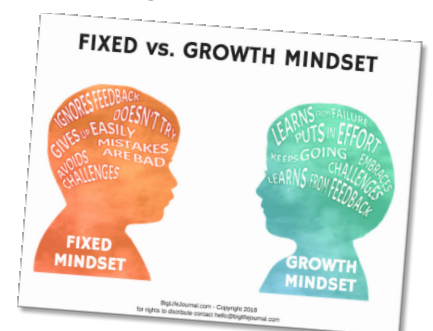
As you introduce these new ideas, keeping the tone fun and light will go a long way towards engaging kids.

Step 1: Building The Foundation

Have a family or classroom discussion about the following questions:

1. **What does it mean to GROW?** What kinds of things grow? Answers will vary. Growth means to develop, change, mature, evolve. Living things grow - plants, animals, and people. Even our brains can grow!
2. When you think of the brain or minds, **what do you think MINDSET means?** Mindset is the way our brain thinks about things we do. Our mindset helps us look at [problems](#), as well as mistakes, in a positive way!
3. **Let's put those words together: growth and mindset.** When we combine them, it means something really important. What could growth mindset mean? A growth mindset is believing in the power of yourself and your brain! We know our intellect and abilities develop when we try hard things, use the right strategies, and [don't give up](#). So a growth mindset is when we know, with practice, we will get better at something.
4. If fixed is the opposite of growth, **what does it mean to have a FIXED mindset?** A fixed mindset means you think you can't get better at things, even if you practice. Wanting to quit, give up, or deciding we're just not good at something are all clues we have a fixed mindset.

You can use the [Mindset Poster](#) to help your child visualize the difference between the two mindsets.



THE 4-WEEK GUIDE TO TEACHING A **GROWTH** MINDSET

Week One: Introduce It

Use the **suggested script** below to discuss mindset.

"Everyone in the world has a way of seeing things. We call this a mindset. You have a mindset, your friends have a mindset and your teacher has a mindset. Let's start talking about the way we see things using our mindset."

We can choose to look at the world in a way that makes us feel strong and happy, or in a way that makes us feel frustrated and we can't improve.

People with a growth mindset know they can get better by working hard. They keep trying even when things are tough and they say things such as, 'I can't do this...yet' or 'Mistakes help me learn.'

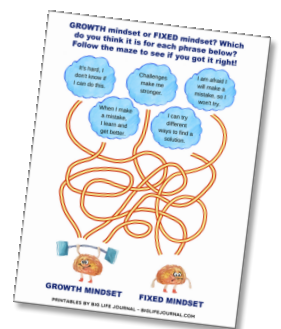
People with a fixed mindset feel differently, as if they are stuck with the way things are. A fixed mindset can happen to anyone at some time or another but it's important we choose to have a growth mindset, keep trying and stick with challenges."

Step 2: Reflection

Share a personal story about when you were stuck and used hard work or help from others to overcome a challenge.

Ask your child or class to share similar examples from their lives. In the classroom, this could be done with everyone together or in smaller groups.

Use the **Growth Mindset Maze** printable (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#)) as a fun activity for kids to practice their knowledge about the mindsets.



Step 3: Growth Mindset and The Brain

Discuss the brain and its remarkable ability to change and grow. Use our suggested script below.

"Now that we know what growth mindset is, let's talk a little more about our brain and the amazing things it can do! Did you know you can grow your brain when you try new things and don't give up when something is tough?"

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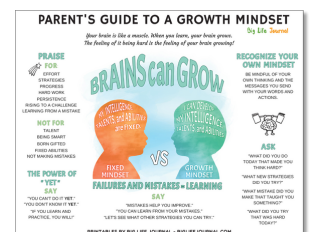
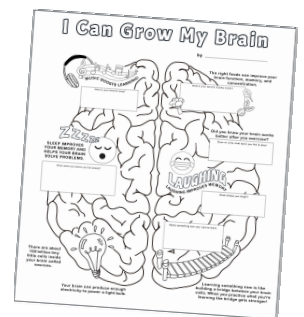
Week One: Introduce It

Learning something new is hardest the first time, but your brain behaves like a muscle and gets stronger every time things are repeated. Let's watch a video [see suggestions below] to help us understand this even better."

Use the ["I Can Grow My Brain" poster](#) for this step. It's a great way for your kids or students to learn more about how their brain works and have fun along the way.

Suggested Resources for Week One

1. [Mindset Poster](#) (PDF) is a visual representation of growth and fixed mindsets and helps children understand the difference between the two.
2. **"I Can Grow My Brain" Poster** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#)) is a fun activity where kids learn about the power of their brain.
3. **Growth Mindset Maze** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#)) is a fun activity where kids decide whether a statement belongs to a fixed or a growth mindset.
4. **Parent's Guide to a Growth Mindset** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#)) provides specific examples of what to say/ask to help your children develop a growth mindset.
5. [Big Life Journal](#) is a growth mindset journal broken down into 26 weeks. Use Week One to discuss how having a growth mindset can help us positively impact other people and the world around us.



READ

1. [Fantastic Elastic Brain](#) by JoAnn Deak (ages 4-8)
2. [The Ultimate Guide to Praising Your Kids](#) (article for adults)
3. [The Brain is Like a Muscle](#) (article for adults and older kids)

WATCH

1. [Growth Mindset Video](#) (2.5 minutes)
2. [Learning and the Brain](#) (3 minutes)

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Week Two: Notice It

This week, we begin to identify growth and fixed mindsets in ourselves and others. Everywhere we look, we can find examples of others either quitting or working through their problems.

Step 1: Reflecting on Definitions

Go back to the definitions of growth and fixed mindset from Week 1. Did anyone notice a time he/she was using either mindset? Discuss how we can change from fixed to growth mindset with simple words and phrases that, we can begin practicing TODAY.

Use the **suggested script** below:

"Last week we talked a lot about growth mindset and how our brains get stronger when we stick with hard things. Have you noticed a time you had a growth mindset in the last few days? Did you feel your brain growing? What about a time you felt stuck?"

Step 2: Growth Mindset Statements

Ask your child/class to think of some FIXED mindset phrases commonly used in home/school ("I give up", "I can't do this") and write them down.

Next, create a list of alternate phrases that reflect growth mindset ("I'm not good at this **yet**"). Above the fixed mindset column, write "Instead of" and on the Growth mindset column, "I Can Say..."

Use the **suggested script** below:

"Let's think of things we say when we're stuck in a fixed mindset and write them down. We can then come up with other words to change the fixed mindset into a growth mindset. I'm sure we can come up with lots of ideas!"

Alternatively, you can use the **Growth Mindset Statements** printable from the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](https://www.biglifejournal.com/growth-mindset-printables).



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Week Two: Notice It

Step 3: Using Visuals

Display visuals around your home/classroom as constant reminders of new vocabulary and ideas. Have the child/class locate their favorite spots to hang posters and refer to them frequently throughout the day.

Then, when you hear a child making a fixed mindset statement, you can simply point to a positive quote and have him/her repeat it.

You can use the printable posters: [Growth Mindset Poster](#), [Success Iceberg Poster](#), and [You Can Learn Anything Poster](#).



Step 4: Daily Routines

Consider daily routines and how growth mindset can be easily embedded. Set aside at least several minutes each day to discuss and reflect on them.

As a family: Consider how growth mindset LOOKS, FEELS, and SOUNDS at home. Discuss specific ways we can help each other when we're "stuck" and need help shifting our perspective from a fixed to a growth mindset.

In school: Consider how growth mindset LOOKS, FEELS, and SOUNDS in class. Make Growth Mindset Monitor one of your classroom jobs. End the school day with time for students to share their mindset experience.

Use the printables "We Are a Growth Mindset Class/Family" from the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#).



Step 5: Book and Movie Characters

Identify growth and fixed mindsets in favorite book and movie characters. Pay attention to how the characters FEEL depending on their mindset and discuss ways persistence, love of learning, and resilience are portrayed.

Point out when a character does the hard work of shifting from a fixed to a growth mindset too!

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Week Two: Notice It

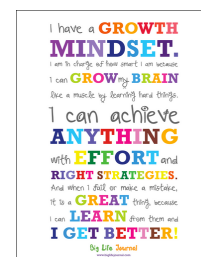
Use the **suggested script** below:

"In so many of your favorite books and movies, the characters are learning to have growth mindsets too. Let's pick one now and try to find all the ways we see it happening!"

Use our **Book Review Printable** from the Growth Mindset Printables Kit, as a fun activity for kids to practice noticing growth mindset characters in books.

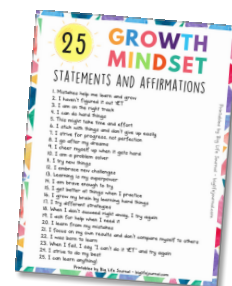
Suggested Resources for Week Two

1. **5-Day Growth Mindset Challenge** (in the [Challenges Kit](#)) will help your child practice growth mindset concept and vocabulary.
2. **Posters:** [Growth Mindset Poster](#), [Success Iceberg Poster](#), and [You Can Learn Anything Poster](#) can be hung in a bedroom or a classroom.
3. **Growth Mindset Statements** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#))
4. **We are a Growth Mindset Family/Class** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#))
5. **Book Review Printable** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#))
6. **Big Life Journal:** In Week Two, continue discussing how having a growth mindset can help us positively impact other people and the world around us.



READ

1. [Top 85 Growth Mindset Books for Children and Adults](#) is a list of our favorite and most popular books for you and your kids!
2. [25 Growth Mindset Statements and Affirmations](#)



WATCH

[Top 50 Growth Mindset Movies for Children](#) is a list of movies with characters who demonstrate a growth mindset and qualities such as grit, perseverance, courage, and determination.

THE 4-WEEK GUIDE TO TEACHING A GROWTH MINDSET

Week Three: Model It

Your ability to MODEL a growth mindset can make the difference between a child understanding the concept and actually *living* it.

Let them see your growth mindset in action.

Step 1: Being Open

Be honest when something is tricky for you. Tell kids when you're discouraged, share your fixed mindset thoughts and brainstorm solutions aloud. Show them we're ALL learning this growth mindset thing together!

Step 2: Mindset and Feelings

Explore how positive feelings such as pride and happiness come from persisting through challenges. When stuck in a fixed mindset, share how you felt sad, [anxious](#), or even hopeless. Negative feelings may serve as clues that you need to shift your thinking.

Step 3: Learning Something New

Set a goal for yourself to learn something new and share your learning process. How did you feel at the start? How did you set that [goal](#) for yourself and go about achieving it? Review ways children can set and meet their own goals!

Use the **Goal-Setting Printables** from the [Self-Esteem & Confidence Kit](#) as a fun activity for you and kids to practice setting new goals.



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Week Three: Model It

Step 4: The Power of YET

With one simple word, any fixed mindset phrase can be transformed into a statement of hope. “I can’t do this...yet.” It’s all about the FUTURE, and not giving up until we get there.

Make a “YET” bulletin board or designate a wall at home for all the things you can’t do...yet!

You can also use **My Power of YET** printable from the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#) as a fun activity for you and kids.

Use the **suggested script** below:

“Even though I know about growth mindset, I still have to work at it. Especially when something is hard for me. I can tell I’m in a fixed mindset when I have thoughts about quitting and start to feel sad. When I feel that way, I know I need to change my thinking to a different mindset.

One way that works is just using the word ‘yet.’ We can add it onto the end of almost any sentence to change our thinking. For example, when I get frustrated by a challenge and think ‘I’ll never get it,’ I just say, “I don’t get it...yet.” Or if I think I can’t do something, I’ll say, “I can’t do it...yet.”

Can you think of a sentence that ends with ‘yet’ which would make you feel better?

‘YET’ is kind of like a magic word. It shows we can keep trying and not give up on ourselves or our dreams.”

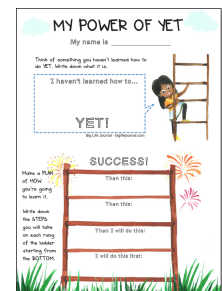


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Week Three: Model It

Suggested Resources for Week Three

1. **Goal-Setting printables** (in the [Self-Esteem & Confidence Kit](#)) will make goal setting more fun and effective.
2. **My Power of YET printable** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#))
3. **Famous Failures Kit** is a set of stories highlighting famous people from around the world who have failed and struggled on their way to success.
4. **Big Life Journal**: In Week Three, discuss how having a growth mindset can help achieve their biggest dreams.



READ

1. **Not Yet** by Lisa Cox (ages 4-8)
2. **Flight School** by Lita Judge (ages 4-8)

WATCH

1. **Janelle Monae "The Power of Yet"** (Sesame Street, 2015) (2.5 minutes)
2. **C.J. Luckey - The Power of Yet** by Andre Kahmeyer (4 minutes)

THE 4-WEEK GUIDE TO TEACHING A GROWTH MINDSET

Week Four: Practice It

Growth mindset is all about effort, so what better way to teach it than through practice, practice, practice?

Step 1: Praise

Praise for perseverance in [problem-solving](#) rather than being “smart” or talented. Connect positive results with effort rather than innate ability, and children will be more willing to take risks and value hard work. When you notice hard work or positive self-talk, make sure they know it!

The **Growth Mindset Praise** printable (part of the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#)) provides specific examples for you.

Step 2: Positive Reinforcement

This is especially helpful for younger children. For example, create a simple game where kids receive a sticker or a cotton ball for practicing a growth mindset. For every 10 cotton balls or stickers, the child gets to choose a game everyone plays.

Step 3: Productive Struggle

In the safe environment of your home or class, give children time to consider their challenges and ask you questions about them. Grappling with a problem builds [resilience](#), so give kids time for reflection before jumping in to help or “save” them.

Step 4: Reframing Mistakes

Get excited when opportunities for growth occur! In a challenging moment, say things like, “This seems like an opportunity to grow our brains!” Create an environment where setbacks are expected and even celebrated.

Have kids read our fun **Mistakes Poem** (the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#)) to get them excited about their mistakes and failures.



THE 4-WEEK GUIDE TO TEACHING A GROWTH MINDSET

Week Four: Practice It

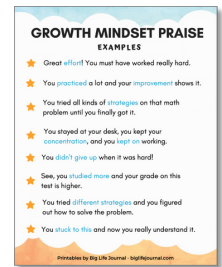
Step 5: Hitting Pause

Exercising the brain can be hard for kids. When your child (or you) becomes frustrated, it's okay to take a break. "It's time to give our brains a little rest. We'll come back to this tomorrow!"

Being watchful of your own fixed mindset "triggers" can help with this process.

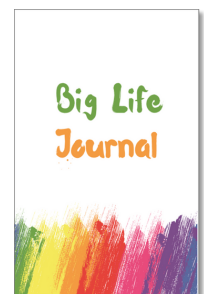
Suggested Resources for Week Four

1. **Growth Mindset Praise printable** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#)) provides specific examples of the praise.
2. **Mistakes Poem printable** (in the [Growth Mindset Printables Kit](#))
3. **Big Life Journal**: In Week Four, continue discussing how having a growth mindset can help anyone achieve their biggest dreams.



READ

1. [Mistakes That Worked](#) by Charlotte Foltz Jones (ages 8-12)
2. [The Most Magnificent Thing](#) by Ashley Spires (ages 3-7)
3. [How to Teach Problem Solving Skills to Kids](#) (article for adults)



PROJECT

Writing [affirmations on pencils](#) is a fun way to reinforce growth mindset statements and encourage your kids.

THE 4-WEEK GUIDE TO TEACHING A **GROWTH MINDSET**

Recap

In a few short weeks, children can establish a **foundation** in growth mindset and a new way of viewing challenges. We encourage you to go beyond the four weeks. Make the mindset the cornerstone of your child's learning!

Simple strategies such as praising effort, reframing mistakes as opportunities, and embracing “**YET**” are powerful methods for shifting their thinking, and ours! When we model a growth mindset by facing challenges and showing OUR persistence, kids know they have an ally on this journey.

Armed with a positive mindset and the knowledge that growth and change are always possible, kids will be ready to tackle their big, wonderful life ahead!

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