

The Voice Inside Your Head

When your mind is fixed, talk back!

A FIXED MINDSET SAYS:	A GROWTH MINDSET SAYS:
I'm either good at this or I'm not.	I can learn this if I really want to work at it.
This is frustrating - it's time to give up.	This is frustrating; If I persevere I'll get this!
I don't like being challenged.	I want to challenge myself so I can grow.
Notice how smart I am!	Notice my determination!
If you succeed, I feel threatened.	If you succeed, I'm inspired.
My talent/ability determines everything.	It all depends on my effort and attitude.
I don't have the skill or talent to do this.	I don't have the skill to do this YET.
If I fail, I'm a failure	Failure is an opportunity to learn how to do better next time.
I want to be recognized for my successes.	Learning & helping others to learn IS success.
If I don't try, others won't see me as a failure and I can keep my dignity.	If I don't try, I fail automatically; where's the dignity in that?
I want others to see me as intelligent.	I want others to know that I'll keep trying until I get it right.
Test results tell me how smart I am.	Test results tell me what I still need to learn.
He's/She's a "natural" at that but my brain doesn't work that way.	I'll need a lot of practice to get my brain to work the way that his/hers does.
If I'm wrong, people will laugh.	I don't laugh when others are wrong, and I learn from my mistakes.
I can't change my brain.	My brain is constantly changing for the better or worse.

For an engaging and kid-friendly version, check out the five-part series of cartoon shorts, "Growth Mindset for Students": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zrtHt3bBmQ>

Fixed Mindset Fallacies

False Fixed Mindset Messages	Research Says:
We're born talented (or not) and you can never be as talented as someone born that way.	While innate talents are real, it is more than possible to train our brains (and often our bodies) to perform at the same level as a person who is naturally talented. The key is to identify the <i>critical skill</i> that underlies that talent. For instance, those who say, "I have no talent for drawing" discover that they can draw quite well once they've gained the skill of visualization. Inversely, unused or under-developed talents erode over time, meaning that the playing field eventually levels if you're willing to work harder than those who are "born with it."
Our brains are "wired" a certain way and we can't change that.	Neuroscience has proven that frequently-used portions of our brain grow in size, become more efficient, and create more connections with the rest of our brain. This "neuroplasticity" means that with enough effort, we can develop new talents, become more intelligent, and think and reason better and faster.
My child will thrive if I make them to feel smart or talented or gifted.	Emphasizing ability and intelligence de-motivates students from trying anything that they might not succeed at. Their goal becomes to "not look dumb", rather than to challenge themselves to become even smarter or to further develop their talents. Inversely, making students feel UNintelligent, UNTalented or NON-gifted has nearly the same demotivating effect.
Students should be funneled into focusing on what they're good at.	Focusing only on our strengths limits our ability to capitalize on those strengths; we lose motivation when we eventually rise to the level where we are associating with others who have the same strengths but have done the hard work of addressing their weaknesses as well.
Life is hard, kids need to understand that "the glass is half empty."	Life IS hard, but "glass half empty" thinking motivates kids to drain what's left in the glass and move on, while "glass half FULL" thinking motivates them to fill it the rest of the way. Positive messages about your and your child's ability to grow and succeed helps them accept new challenges and persevere despite setbacks.
Pressuring my child to perform better in school will help them be successful in college and in life.	Pressuring children to get better grades and test scores emphasizes those measures as indicators of the child's worth and identity. They develop an image of themselves as smart or dumb, talented or not. However, encouraging kids to work hard with learning and growth as the goal and to keep trying despite initial failures helps them identify as someone who - with enough effort - can do or learn anything worth doing.
Praise and rewards will motivate my child to do better and better.	The best way to get a child to stop doing something intrinsically is to bribe them to do it. For instance, research shows that when kids are given prizes for how many books they read, they stop reading when prizes are no longer offered - even if they were avid readers before!

