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You are listening to Supporting Supporters, a ChangetoChill podcast. This is a free mental well-being resource offered by Allina Health. My name is Tonya Freeman. I'm a licensed psychologist and regional lead psychologist with Allina Health.

These podcast episodes are aimed with the goal of providing quick, tangible resources and information from Allina Health mental health providers on a range of mental health topics relevant to day to day lives of the listener. We invite you to join us in any way you please, whether you sit back and kick your feet up, or as you engage in movement, your daily commute, or as you prepare for your day. However you choose to join us, we welcome you and we honor your time.

--- Episode ---

Hi there, I'm Heather Crabtree and I'm a psychologist who works primarily with children, adolescents, and their families. In my work with clients and families, I often partner with schools and I also hear a lot from my clients about the impact that school personnel have on their lives. This is such an important and valued contribution to these children's lives and society as a whole. By listening to this podcast, it is obvious how much you care about your students and that you want to continue to develop your understanding and skills. Thank you for all you do, I hope this will be helpful to you.

Today we will be talking about the value of growth mindset. The concept of having a growth mindset has been something that has been talked about in education and other settings for quite some time. Talking about this concept is important for many reasons. Shifting our mindset can shift the way that we, including our students, think about success and failure. Having a growth mindset means that you believe that your intelligence, talents, and abilities can improve with effort. However, having a fixed mindset means that you believe that your intelligence, talents, and abilities are fixed and will not change. Therefore, having a growth mindset would be saying "I will ask for help and practice" whereas a fixed mindset would be saying "I will never get". A growth mindset empowers people to believe they can develop their abilities with effort and gives people the love of learning and resilience that are essential for many aspects of life. It shows others that their brain and talents are just a starting point and not an endpoint.

Carol Dweck, professor of psychology at Stanford University, has done extensive research and writing on "fixed" versus "growth" mindset. She differentiates them this way: "To briefly sum up the findings: Individuals who believe their talents can be developed (through hard work, good strategies, and input from others) have a growth mindset. They tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset (those who believe their talents are innate gifts). This is because they worry less about looking smart and they put more energy into learning.

Fixed mindset triggers occur when students face challenges or criticism or perform poorly in comparison with others. You'll know this is happening if you feel insecure or defensive. Moreover, students for whom performance is paramount, looking smart is critical, even if they don't learn a thing.

On the other hand, if you are in a growth mindset, you will find yourself collaborating, sharing information, seeking feedback, and admitting errors. A growth mindset encourages risk-taking without worrying about failure because mistakes represent a chance to learn."

So, since we've established that working towards a growth mindset can have many benefits for ourselves and students, it is helpful to figure out how to spot growth mindset versus fixed mindset. Here are a few ideas:

- When students have more of a **fixed mindset**, they see challenges as risky. With this way of thinking, encountering obstacles or criticism becomes “proof” that they don’t have the abilities needed to succeed.
- When students adopt a **growth mindset**, they view challenges as ways of progressing toward their desired outcomes. Students who believe they can develop their talents and abilities see roadblocks and critical feedback as methods to gather information they could use to help themselves learn.
- **Fixed mindset:**
 - Their goal is to look smart.
 - They tend to avoid challenges.
 - They give up easily.
 - They do not see the point of effort.
 - They ignore feedback.
 - They feel threatened by the success of others.
- **Growth mindset:**
 - Their goal is to learn.
 - They embrace challenges.
 - They persist when there are setbacks.
 - They see effort as the path to mastery.
 - They learn from feedback.
 - They find inspiration in the success of others.

It's important to keep in mind that even as we work towards having more of a growth mindset, we should not expect perfection. It will not happen 100% of the time. That is why these signs can be helpful, so we can be self-aware of when it's time to practice growth mindset strategies.

Now that we know how to spot growth versus fixed mindset, let's spend a few minutes talking about how we can implement strategies in the classroom (or for ourselves, too!) to foster growth mindset. I will first discuss a few general ideas, and then we will discuss a few specific activities. There are many lesson plan and activity examples online as well. Research has given us several main ideas to go on for implementing growth mindset. Here are a few things to consider:

1. Acknowledge and embrace imperfections.

Hiding from your weaknesses means you'll never overcome them.

2. View challenges as opportunities.

Having a growth mindset means relishing opportunities for self-improvement. Learn how to “fail well”.

3. Try different learning tactics.

There’s no one-size-fits-all model for learning. What works for one person may not work for you. Try out different learning strategies until you find what works for you (or for the student you are working with).

4. Follow the research on brain plasticity.

The brain isn’t fixed; the mind shouldn’t be either.

5. Replace the word “failing” with the word “learning.”

When you make a mistake or fall short of a goal, you haven’t failed; you’ve learned.

6. Stop seeking approval.

When you prioritize approval over learning, you sacrifice your own potential for growth.

7. Value the process over the end result.

Intelligent people enjoy the learning process, and don’t mind when it continues beyond an expected time frame.

8. Cultivate a sense of purpose.

Dweck’s research also showed that students with a growth mindset had a greater sense of purpose. Keep the big picture in mind.

9. Celebrate growth with others.

If you truly appreciate growth, you’ll want to share your progress with others.

10. Emphasize growth over speed.

Learning fast isn’t the same as learning well, and learning well sometimes requires allowing time for mistakes.

11. Reward actions, not traits.

Tell students when they’re doing something smart, not just being smart.

12. Redefine “genius.”

The myth’s been busted: genius requires hard work, not talent alone.

13. Portray criticism as positive.

You don’t have to use that overused term, “constructive criticism,” but you do have to believe in the concept.

14. Dissociate improvement from failure.

Stop assuming that “room for improvement” translates into failure.

15. Provide regular opportunities for reflection.

Let students reflect on their learning at least once a day.

16. Place effort before talent.

Hard work should always be rewarded before inherent skill.

17. Highlight the relationship between learning and “brain training.”

The brain is like a muscle that needs to be worked out, just like the body.

18. Cultivate grit.

Students with that extra bit of determination will be more likely to seek approval from themselves rather than others.

19. Abandon the image.

“Naturally smart” sounds just about as believable as “spontaneous generation.” You won’t achieve the image if you’re not ready for the work.

20. Use the word “yet.”

Dweck says “not yet” has become one of her favorite phrases. Whenever you see students struggling with a task, just tell them they haven’t mastered it yet.

21. Learn from other people’s mistakes.

It’s not always wise to compare yourself to others, but it is important to realize that humans share the same weaknesses.

22. Make a new goal for every goal accomplished.

You’ll never be done learning. Just because your midterm exam is over doesn’t mean you should stop being interested in a subject. Growth-minded people know how to constantly create new goals to keep themselves stimulated.

23. Take risks in the company of others.

Stop trying to save face all the time and just let yourself goof up now and then. It will make it easier to take risks in the future.

24. Think realistically about time and effort.

It takes time to learn. Don't expect to master every topic under the sun in one sitting.

25. Take ownership over your attitude.

Once you develop a growth mindset, own it. Acknowledge yourself as someone who possesses a growth mentality and be proud to let it guide you throughout your educational career.

More specifically, there are questions to ask to cultivate growth mindset. These include:

What made you think hard today? How will you challenge yourself today? What can you learn from this experience or mistake? What would you do differently next time to make things work better? What else do you want to learn? What strategy can you try? Who can you ask for honest feedback? Did you work as hard as you could have? If it was too easy, how can you make it more challenging? Did you hold yourself to high expectations or did you accept "good enough"? Did you ask for help if you needed it? What can you do to manage distractions? Have you reviewed your work or logic for errors or flaws? Are you proud of the end result? Why or why not? What's the next challenge to tackle?

One of the most important things about growth mindset is actually changing how we THINK, which means helping students do the same. So activities to cultivate growth mindset should also focus on this. There are great worksheets online to help students recognize "fixed mindset" thinking and how to change those thoughts over to growth mindset. For example, instead of "I'm not good at this" – "I'm not good at this YET". Or changing "This is too hard" to "This will require effort and finding the right strategy". And instead of "I am not as smart as my friend" we will think "I am in charge of how smart I am because I can grow my brain by learning new things!" Essentially, we want to give students the power to change their mindset with their words and thoughts. Establishing a culture in our classrooms (and other environments) where we are open and realistic, praise the process and effort, discuss our mistakes, and facilitate positive self-talk is the goal.

Thank you again for sticking with us through this conversation about growth mindset. I think that there are really 3 main points that I hope you can use in your daily life.

1. The first take home message today is that growth mindset is important because it empowers students to believe they can further develop their abilities with effort and hard work. It helps them persevere with challenging tasks and has been shown through research to lead to greater achievement.

2. Secondly, we can recognize fixed versus growth mindset by noticing how students are reacting to challenging situations. Those with a fixed mindset tend to want to "prove" themselves, give up easily, and shy away from challenging situations. Whereas those with a growth mindset are always seeking out new ways to learn, look for new ways to solve problems, and admit mistakes or shortcomings as a way to improve themselves.

3. Finally, there are many ways we as adults can foster a growth mindset in the young ones around us. The most important principles are praising the process and effort (not the outcome), talking about mistakes as a way of helping our brains grow, and facilitating positive self-talk.

Thanks so much for sticking with us. I hope this has been helpful.

---Outro---

On behalf of Allina Health and Change to Chill, we thank you for taking the time to listen to our podcast. We do hope you enjoyed this episode and we hope that you join us in other episodes covering even more interesting topics with mental health providers. As always, you can find the show notes and any accompanying research and tools at the change to chill website at www.changetochill.org. In health and wellness, take care and see you next time!