DEVELOPING THE GROWTH MINDSET IN OUR CHILDREN AND OURSELVES

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JERICHO MIDDLE SCHOOL PTSA MEETING

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Self Esteem

SELF ESTEEM IS SOMETHING CHILDREN ARE IN CHARGE OF THEMSELVES, SOMETHING THEY EXPERIENCE WHEN THEY ARE TRYING HARD TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW OR MASTER SOMETHING INDEPENDENTLY.

“We as parents cannot GIVE our children self esteem by making sure that they succeed and simply telling them they are smart. We can, though nurture and facilitate positive self esteem by teaching them to meet challenges with high effort so that they will experience themselves in positive ways.”
And so it began...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Mindset</th>
<th>Growth Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If a child believes that failure is a result of not being smart enough or do not having enough ability, they often avoid challenges or give up easily.</td>
<td>If a child believes that failure is a reason to increase the amount of effort needed for success, they often embrace challenges and excel.</td>
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Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

PEOPLE WHO HOLD THE FIXED MINDSET BELIEVE:
• People “are the way they are” and that doesn’t change.
• Success and therefore a positive self image develops by performing well and looking smart

PEOPLE WHO HOLD THE GROWTH MINDSET BELIEVE:
• Intelligence can be developed, the brain is like a muscle that can be developed and trained.
• Success and therefore a positive self image comes from a desire to learn and grow through effort
Challenges

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<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Challenges" /></td>
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Rather than risk failing and negatively impacting their self-image, Fixed Mindsets will often avoid challenges and stick to what they know they can do well.

Growth Mindsets embrace challenges because they know that they’ll come out stronger on the other side.
**Criticism**

**Fixed Mindset**

- Fixed Mindsets ignore useful negative feedback or take feedback as an insult.
- They believe that any criticism of their capabilities is criticism of *them*.
- “Image maintenance” becomes the primary concern, often by becoming more competitive and needing to *win* instead of *accomplish*.

**Growth Mindset**

Growth Mindsets view criticism as a source of information. They do not always integrate or agree with the criticism, but believing they can always change and improve, they weigh the value of the criticism to see if it can help them grow.
Obstacles

Fixed Mindset

Obstacles do not discourage Growth Mindsets. They believe self-image is not tied to success and other’s image of them. Growth Mindsets believe failure is an opportunity to learn, and so whatever happens, they win.

Fixed mindsets give up easily. When faced with an obstacle, they decide that it is not worth the effort to overcome.
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<td>Fixed Mindsets believe effort is an unpleasant thing that doesn’t really pay dividends, and therefore avoid effort as much as possible.</td>
<td>Growth Mindsets see effort not as something useless to be avoided but as necessary to grow and master useful skills.</td>
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Success of others

**Fixed Mindset**

- Feel threatened by other’s success
- When others succeed, they will try to convince themselves and the people around them that the success was due to either luck or objectionable actions.
- In some cases, they will even try to tarnish the success of others by bringing up things that are completely unrelated (”Yes, but did you know about his...”).

**Growth Mindset**

See the success of others as a source of inspiration and information. They look to see what that person did to become successful to help them with their own success.
Can we intentionally develop a growth mindset in our children?

“Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable that they can control, they come to see themselves as in control of their success.

Emphasizing natural intelligence or ability takes it out of the child’s control, and it provides no good recipe for responding to a failure.”

- Carol Dweck
Repeated studies of all ages of children across all socio-economic status and all levels of intelligence show that “praise for effort has dramatically different results for kids than does praise for intelligence.”
The Research:

Round 1

Two groups of NYC 5th graders were given a relatively easy puzzle to solve. It was controlled that all students would be successful in completing this task.

"Intelligence" Group
"You must be smart at this"

"Effort" Group
"You must have worked really hard at this"
The Research

Round 2:

*Students were given a choice of puzzle to complete*

**Choice 1** would be more difficult, but, students were told, they would learn a lot

**Choice 2** would be easy, just like the first one

“Intelligence” Group

“Effort” Group
The Research

Round 3: Both groups were given tests as easy as the first round to complete

“Intelligence” Group

“Effort” Group
“Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable that they can control, they come to see themselves as in control of their success. Emphasizing natural intelligence takes it out of the child’s control, and it provides no good recipe for responding to a failure.”

- Carol Dweck
The TYPE of message we may be giving to our kids may be unintentionally developing a fixed mindset

SO WHAT DO THESE MINDSET MESSAGES LOOK LIKE? HOW DO I KNOW WHICH MESSAGE I AM SENDING?
## Praising Intelligence and Ability instead of Effort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>We say:</th>
<th>They hear:</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>“You learned that so quickly! You are so smart!”</td>
<td>“If I can’t learn something else quickly, I am not smart”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Look at that drawing! You must be the best artist in the whole school!”</td>
<td>“That was pretty good. I shouldn’t try drawing anything more difficult or I may no longer be the best in the school.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Wow! You got an A without even studying! You are so brilliant!”</td>
<td>“That was a very easy test for me. No reason to study anymore, I am brilliant!”</td>
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Real life....
Messages and Mindset

- Ella has been playing soccer (piano, dance, art, academics, acting) since she could walk. Her parents have instilled a love of the game from an early age and have been very involved in helping her to develop her skills.
- Ella and her family are proud of her talent, and she is often described by friends and family as the “sporty” (artistic, smart, social) type. She is used to hearing comments such as:
  - “You are such a natural athlete.”
  - “Your mom and dad are good athletes, so it is just in your genes to be good.”
  - “I’m sure we will see you playing Division 1 someday.”
  - “Great game, Ella, we can always count on you to win the game for us.”
Messages and Mindset

- This year, Ella had the opportunity to try out for a highly competitive travel soccer team.
- Before the tryouts, she was a little nervous, but she felt confident that she would do well. She knew some of the girls that already played on the team, and she was looking forward to playing with them.
- At the try outs, it was obvious that many of the other players trying out had been trained extremely well and had exceptional soccer skills, conditioning and stamina.
- Ella hung in there during the many, many drills, but she was often outplayed by the other players.
Messages and Mindset

- Two days after the tryouts, the coach called and notified Ella that she did not make the team.
- She came so close, the coach said, but her skills just needed to be a little more developed to play at this competitive level.
- The coach made it a point to tell Ella that he was looking forward to seeing her at tryouts next year.
What would you do if you were Ella’s parents?

<table>
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<td>Tell Ella she should have made the team and ensure her that you will do your best to see that she is in fact put on the team this season.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Tell Ella that she was “robbed” and the coach doesn’t know what he is talking about.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reassure Ella that soccer is not that important anyway.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tell Ella that she has the ability and will surely make the team next time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tell Ella that she was not good enough to make that team.</td>
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## What would you do if you were Ella’s parents?

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<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>What you should do</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tell Ella she should have made the team and ensure her that you will do your best to see that she is in fact put on the team this season.</td>
<td>Basically insincere. Ella was not the best, you know it and she does too. This offers her no recipe for how to recover or how to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell Ella that she was “robbed” and the coach doesn’t know what he’s talking about.</td>
<td>This places blame on others, when it was Ella’s performance that was not adequate, not the coach. This may teach her to blame others for her setbacks instead of perservering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reassure Ella that soccer is not that important anyway.</td>
<td>May teach her to devalue something if she doesn’t do well in it right away.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tell Ella that she has the ability and will surely make the team next time.</td>
<td>Dangerous. Does ability alone automatically take you where you want to go? If she didn’t make it this time, why should she the next time?</td>
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The Growth Mindset

Tell Ella she wasn’t good enough to make the team.

<table>
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<th>A little harsh to say it quite like this, but isn’t that the truth?</th>
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<td>• Ella’s skills were not at the same level as the girls who made the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ella did not have the same level of stamina and physical conditioning as girl’s who made the team</td>
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SO WHAT DO I DO NOW?

- Help her realize why she did not make the team
- Decide together if, now that she knows this, she still wants to try out for the team next year.
- Help her understand she will need to put in a lot of effort in order to make the team next year.
- Target the specific skills she needs to develop and set goals.
  - Call the coach and ask what Ella can work on to improve within the next year.
- **Look for ways to develop these skills:**
  - Continue playing on other soccer plan
  - Seek additional opportunities for practice (Mia Hamm played soccer with the boys in the neighborhood after school!)
- Encourage her persistence: help her to persevere when she feels discouraged.
- Praise her for her hard work and effort as she sees herself improving.
## Developing A Growth Mindset

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<th>When our children succeed as a result of sustained effort</th>
<th>When our children succeed with little effort or because of innate ability</th>
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<tr>
<td>• “I am so proud of the effort you put forth in order to improve your grade..” (make the team, get a good behavior report from your teacher, do your homework without complaining).”</td>
<td>• “Wow, you got another A on that test without even studying? Maybe you should ask your teacher for some advice on how to challenge yourself in (math, spelling, etc).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “You really put your mind to it. I guess the struggle was worth it!”</td>
<td>• “You scored the winning goal! What did you do to prepare to shoot like that? Can you teach that skill to your little brother?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “It was great to watch you work so hard to accomplish this.”</td>
<td>• “Addition and subtraction seem to come easily to you! What do you think you might do if you are taught a skill that you are confused about?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Going to extra help every day really paid off. It mustn’t have been easy to get up early every morning, the effort was obviously worth it.”</td>
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Developing A Growth Mindset

When our children face disappointment or failure

• “OK, so you didn’t do as well as you wanted to. Let’s look at this as an opportunity to learn.”

• What parts did you do well in? What parts were difficult for you? Let’s figure out why that part was difficult and then it may be more clear how to tackle the problem.”

• “What did you do to prepare for this? Is there anything that you could have done differently?”

• “Do you know anyone who does well in this area? Maybe we can find out what strategies they use to achieve this task.”

• “How can I help you to work this out?”

• “You really tried hard, I am sorry it didn’t work out the way you wanted it to. I bet you can figure out how to make it work next time. I’m here if you need someone to brainstorm with!”
Take Aways

Real self-esteem can only be developed the old fashioned way – by earning it. When you protect your child from struggling with difficult tasks, you prevent your child from developing a sense of mastery and competency.

Set a reasonably high expectation for your child with the reassuring belief that they can work through it to achieve it. Teach, model, and practice the necessary skills. Then give them the space to experiment – to discover for themselves what works and what doesn’t. Celebrate challenges and foster a “can do” spirit.

View failure not as a character flaw or a personal loss, but rather as a lesson to be learned from – a valuable clue or hint guiding you towards your ultimate success.

Praise effort, not ability. Research has proven that children who are praised for their efforts are more likely to accept challenge, overcome obstacles and persevere. This is a life skill that will help create a self motivated, positive lifelong learner.