

Notes on Growth Mindset or how to use praise effectively to help our children be better learners

I have tried to put a fairly long presentation in to a digest form – I hope that this helps!

Broady and Kenning, 1996 found that successful learners have common traits: they

- ask thoughtful questions
- look for links and connections
- make the most of resources at their disposal
- share ideas and offer suggestions
- listen to the views of others
- recognise their own strengths and weaknesses
- want to know how to improve
- like to be challenged
- are not afraid to make mistakes
- overcome difficulties and setbacks
- reflect on their learning

Unfortunately, many learners find dealing with setbacks difficult and give up. There are many examples of successful people who have persevered through setbacks:

David Beckham “...practiced with discipline to achieve an accuracy that other players wouldn't care about.” *Sir Alex Ferguson*

Thomas Eddison – At school, “Too stupid to learn anything.” He had 1000 attempts at making a light bulb before succeeding.

Henry Ford – 5 failed businesses before Ford Motor Company

Sidney Poitier – At his first audition was told, “Why don't you stop wasting people's time and go out and become a dishwasher or something?”

So, how can we help our children to become more robust learners?

Carol S. Dweck, PH.D, Professor of Psychology, Stanford University has produced some research that has led to two types of learners: Fixed Mindset and Growth Mindset.

- In a **growth mindset**, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment. Virtually all great people have had these qualities.

Watch the YouTube clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWv1VdDeoRY>

Students who have a fixed mindset are more likely to not try something that they think they might fail at, or give up when they hit a snag. We have all heard of people who have flown through GCSEs, but have then had a crisis during A levels, or at University.

Fixed mindset	Growth mindset
Intelligence is fixed "I must look clever!"	Intelligence is expandable "I want to learn more."
Emphasis is on ability and competition	Emphasis is on achievement and growth
Avoids challenges	Embraces challenges
Learning is finite "I can..."	Learning is a continuum "I am learning to..."
Likely to plateau early and achieve less than full potential	Reaches ever higher levels of achievement

So, (again) how can we help our children to become more robust learners?

Praise

It is important to praise learners, but to praise the traits that will encourage them to develop a growth mindset.

Try not to say things like : *Aren't you clever, You're so smart! You didn't make one single mistake; Gosh! You must be one of the brightest in your year group; Wow! You got them all right without even trying.*

Certainly try not to praise work that doesn't really deserve it!

Do try to encourage effort and perseverance: *This was difficult and you really stuck at it! Well done for having a go at the harder tasks; You were determined to improve and you have; It's great that you're so positive about mistakes.*

⊗ 'Bart, you're so clever! You know so much about castles.'

⊙ 'Bart, you have tried really hard to use the correct words and terms to name different parts of the castle.'

You get the idea. But what do you do if they say they are stuck? Try not to jump in too soon – suggest strategies. Where can they find the information? What did they do that worked last time they were stuck?

Which bit can't you do yet?

If they say, "I can't do it." say

Remember (and remind your child) that making mistakes can be really useful. If you never make mistakes, you are not stretching yourself and will not learn more.

- You can use this mistake. Think about why it didn't work and learn from it.
- You made this mistake because you are pushing yourself hard. It shows you are close to making a breakthrough.
- Don't worry! If you could already do it, you wouldn't be learning anything.
- This mistake is useful because it shows me what I need to teach you next.

Parents, 10 things you can do:

- Praise hard work, effort, determination.
- Praise resilience, resourcefulness, collaboration.
- Be clear about what deserves praise.
- Talk together about what being clever means.
- Talk together about hard work v easy work.
- Talk together about embracing challenges.
- Try not to jump in and help too quickly – encourage self help techniques.
- Help your child to see mistakes, setbacks and failures as valuable for learning.
- Model growth mindset by talking through your own experiences of learning difficult things.
- Try and avoid denigrating your own intelligence (I was always rubbish at maths!).