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Chapter 1: What is Growth Mindset?

Growing up, did you ever quit activities which you didn't excel at?

Maybe it was at school, and you decided that sports wasn't for you because you weren't as fast as the other children. Or maybe it was in college, when you chose to stay away from the theatre group because you were scared of making a fool of yourself.

The mindsets we nurture from childhood affect us when we are adults. They influence how we look at life. They determine whether the decisions we take leave us feeling empowered or powerless. These mindsets have the power to build or destroy our personal and professional lives.

But the good thing is, our mindsets can be changed. With effort and discipline, you can transform your self-doubting, pessimistic & fearful mindset to one that is positive, proactive, and open to change.

Such a positive mindset that focuses on learning and growth is called a "Growth Mindset."





WHY DO WE NEED A GROWTH MINDSET?

There are two types of mindsets that people adopt - Fixed mindset and Growth mindset. A person with a fixed mindset tends to look at life with the same tinted glasses. This fixed mindset makes him believe that his skills will remain static and that he will never change or grow in his life. This way of thinking leads to avoidant behavior, where the individual actively avoids all those activities where he may be put outside his comfort zone. When this happens, he fails to catch hold of opportunities for advancement.

However, when you have a growth mindset, you look at life as an endless string of opportunities. You believe that you are capable of growth and change. When you start to believe that you can learn to be better, you are willing to try, fail, try again and then succeed.

A growth mindset helps you feel self-confident, empowered and courageous. You become more resilient and perseverant. You learn to forgive yourself for mistakes and use them as a springboard for success.





Chapter 2:

Role of Growth Mindset In the Workplace

A growth mindset is instrumental for gaining career advancement in the workplace. Here is how a growth mindset benefits the employee:



1. It makes employees more open to learning

When you have a growth mindset, you are more open to new experiences and challenges. You are willing to learn from all sources. You will benefit from new life lessons and perspectives, which will help you add value to your job.



2. It makes employees amenable to feedback

A person with a growth mindset always seeks to improve himself. So, when you nurture a growth mindset, you will learn to take criticism and feedback positively and will use it to improve the way you work. In fact, you may proactively ask for feedback from your supervisors and peers so that you can improve.





3. It helps employees drive away professional jealousy

A growth mindset not only helps you become better at your job, it allows you to appreciate others for their success too. You can use others' professional victories to learn how to make improvements in your own work-life. Additionally, you won't be afflicted by petty professional jealousies and insecurities.



4. It helps employees experience a higher degree of achievement

A growth mindset encourages you to not remain satisfied with the bare minimum. You develop the perseverance to work towards bigger goals. Additionally, your growth mindset will help you look at challenges in a new light and will help you become a creative problem solver.

At the end of the day, you will feel more satisfied with your accomplishments.



5. It helps employees focus both on the granular and the big picture

A very important feature of a growth mindset is that it allows you to see every experience from a 360-degree perspective. You are able to see the granular details of your task, while not losing focus of the long-term objectives.





Chapter 3:

Best Practices To Nurture Growth Mindset

In her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Stanford psychologist Carol Dweck writes, “In this [growth] mindset, the hand you’re dealt is just the starting point for development. This growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts.”

With a bit of effort and perseverance, you can nurture a growth mindset and get rid of your fixed mindset. Here are 12 easily-implementable ways you can do so:



1. Develop awareness about yourself

Turning a fixed mindset to a growth mindset can be very difficult. To ensure success, you need to understand how you may react to the pressures, insecurities and effort that is associated with the task.

To do this, acknowledge your imperfections, strengths, weaknesses and debilitating behaviors & beliefs. Think about how these traits affected your decision making and actions in the past.

Ask yourself these questions - *Will I encourage myself? Will I self-sabotage*





my chances of success? How can I ensure that I give it my all? Use this information to plan your next steps.



2. Look for learning opportunities in every encounter

The only way to develop a growth mindset, is to look for opportunities where you can grow. So actively start learning from each and every encounter/experience you have. For example, you see your colleague using a shortcut in Excel which you didn't know about. You can use this experience to learn this trick for yourself.

Collectively, all your learnings will help you develop a growth-oriented mindset.



3. Make your brain more plastic

The biggest excuse that people give when they don't want to change, is that they're incapable of changing. They claim to be too old, too unskilled or too stupid to learn new things. But that's not true.

Although it's challenging to transform the way you think, it is possible. The way to do this, is to increase your brain's plasticity – its ability to adapt and change – through mental stimulation.





Some of the things you can do to improve your brain plasticity are:

- Read books & newspapers.
- Play puzzles, quizzes and other mental/memory stimulation games.
- Get 7-9 hours of sleep every night.
- Meditate and reduce stress.
- Exercise every day for at least 30 minutes.
- Engage in conversations that make you think.
- Eat brain-friendly food – like eggs, fish, turmeric and greens.



4. Find your purpose

It's been found that people with a sense of purpose in life are more motivated than people who don't have a purpose.

Purpose will help you uproot your fixed mindset and adopt a new mindset that will help you achieve your goal. For instance, your purpose could be to complete a project before a deadline or get a coveted promotion by the end of the year.





5. Have a tenacious hold over your goals

When you're tenacious about achieving something, you won't let anything get in your way of succeeding. You will be open to implementing new strategies which will help you be victorious. You won't allow the prospect of failure to get you down. This is an indication that you're nurturing a growth mindset.

So, showcase tenacity towards your goals.



6. Focus on the process and not the end result

The truth is, a person with a fixed mindset may still be able to achieve successful results on-the-job. However, this is purely due to his past experience with the task, than any changes to his mindset.

The only way to transform your fixed mindset to a growth mindset is to completely change the way you implement each individual task. So its important to focus on each step of the job process and to tweak it.

Don't consider the result as an indication of a growth mindset.



7. Reward yourself for exhibiting positive & empowering behaviors

In order to nurture a growth mindset, you need to start implementing more proactive and positive behaviors. The best way to encourage





yourself to stop negative behaviors and adopt positive ones, is to reward yourself for every positive thing you do.

For example, let's say you hate working on a particular software because you're bad at it. But one day you help your colleagues by learning how to use that software and working on it. Give yourself a chocolate/ice cream/book as a reward for this.

In psychology, we call this positive reinforcement.

Every time you reward yourself for doing activities which affirm your creativity and skills, you associate positive feelings with such activities/behaviors. You are then more-likely to repeat such actions/behaviors because they feel good. You do so until they become a habit.



8. Don't view the need for improvement as failure

A lot of us automatically assume that the need for improvement is a sign of failure. When we do so, we set ourselves up for actual failure because we're constantly discouraging ourselves. This type of discouragement is debilitating to the development of a growth mindset.

So, learn to distinguish between the need for minor improvements and the need for major overhauls.





9. Share your experiences with someone else

While every person's journey of nurturing a growth mindset is unique, there may be a few lessons that you could take away from their experience.

When you speak to others, you will become aware of mistakes that you can avoid or practices which you can implement, to successfully nurture a growth mindset.



10. Take the time to reflect on your journey

One key step in the process of nurturing a growth mindset, is acknowledging that you've made progress.

It's important to take the time to acknowledge and praise yourself for the mental, emotional and physical transformations you've undergone. This will make you feel better and it will give you a bird's-eye-view of your achievements. You're more-likely to continue working on yourself now.



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11. Change the way you speak

As we've seen, one way to adopt a growth mindset is to actively learn something new. But it takes time to gain mastery over a skill you've recently picked-up. You may even feel hopeless or frustrated while trying to become adept at this new skill.

But, don't let this get you down.

One way to stay motivated, is to become more affirmative and empowering in your speech. So, instead of saying, *"I don't know how to use this machinery/software"*, say *"I don't know how to use this machinery/software yet."* When you use words like "yet", you acknowledge that you will soon achieve what you've set out to do.



12. Force yourself outside your comfort zone

You can grow only if you try something which you haven't already done before.

That's why it's important to force yourself out of your comfort zone. Do things which you've never tried before or implement tasks using tactics you've not used before.



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It's true that a lot of people feel less confident about their skills when they are out of their comfort zone. The best way to handle this situation is to "fake it till you make it". Proactively try to display your confidence and talk to yourself using positive words. This will help you tremendously.





Chapter 4:

Things Employers Can Do To Encourage Growth Mindset In The Company

Let's face the facts. Not all employees will proactively nurture a growth mindset. Many require external motivation by the employer to get started on this path.

If you're an employer who's managing people with fixed mindsets, here's what you can do to encourage growth mindset in your team:



1. Bring your team's attention to their fixed mindset traits

Are your employees:

- Avoiding tasks that are challenging or outside their comfort zone.
- Not taking criticism well.
- Not actively seeking feedback.
- Giving up mid-way through the project.





- Lacking direction/purpose when working.
- Displaying professional jealousy or lashing out when out-performed.

These are signs of a fixed mindset and they can have a very negative repercussion on your company's performance. It's very important to change this fixed mindset into a growth mindset.

But, your team will buy-into your plan of nurturing a growth mindset, only if they recognize the negative impacts of their fixed mindset. So, you'll need to show your team how their fixed mindset manifests and how its impacting the performance of the team.



2. Help each employee do a SWOT of themselves

Employers can make the process of growth mindset adoption much easier for employees, by helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses. So spend time to speak to each employee one-on-one and help them do a SWOT of themselves.

When your staff are able to recognize where they're going wrong and what they're doing right, they'll be able to make the necessary changes to nurture a growth mindset.





3. Set goals that support the development of a growth mindset

Often, corporate goals are driven by numbers and figures. Your team may be tasked with meeting a quota or completing a set number of tasks in a given time period. Such an approach to goal setting will never nurture a growth mindset.

Instead, managers should create specific goals meant for growth mindset adoption. For example, your team's goal for the week could be to learn how to use an automation tool perfectly and apply it on-the-job.

When they're tasked with this goal, your employees will push themselves to learn something new and become more creative.



4. Implement the habit of asking for feedback

Feedback is really helpful in nurturing a growth mindset. When your team is given feedback, they'll be able to identify which areas of their mindset and personality they need to work on.

Waiting for the quarterly/half-yearly/yearly feedback session isn't the answer. You need to get your staff to implement a habit of independently seeking feedback. You can do this by asking for feedback yourself.





When your team sees you proactively asking for feedback, they'll follow your example.



5. Change the way you talk about improvements & failures

Failures and improvements are a part of day-to-day business. But there's a way to talk about them, without discouraging your team.

When speaking to your employees about the need for improvements or re-work, phrase it the right way. Instead of saying, "You made a mistake. Change it.", say, "Good effort. But there may be a better way to do this. Why don't you give it a shot?"

Be empathetic and optimistic in the way you talk to your team about improvements & failures. This will help them adopt a similar positive mindset about these set-backs.



6. Push employees to do what they don't want to do

As a manager you'll be familiar with the job preferences of your employees. You'll also know who hates or hesitates to do what task. Use this information to push your team to go outside their comfort zone and work at new things.





Not only will this ensure your team's all-round development, but you're giving them the opportunity to think out-of-the-box and grow their skills.



7. Resist the desire to help

Seeing your employees struggle can be a challenge. You may even want to step in and help.

Don't. That's counterproductive.

When you allow your team to struggle, you give them the chance they need to access new learnings, nurture new skills and shift their perspectives.



8. Don't praise too often, but praise enough

People love to be praised. But there's something like "too much praise".

When you dole out praise too often, your employees may not be motivated enough to work on themselves. They may make minor improvements in the way they think or work, but may never go a step further.

You need to let your employees earn your praise. That way, you'll encourage them to nurture a growth mindset.





9. Share your own experiences with your team

Finally, open-up to your staff about your own experiences of nurturing a growth mindset. You can offer them advice, friendly tips and mentoring. Your insights will help them better-appreciate what you're doing for them and how you're helping them on their journey. It will also give them hope that its possible to achieve a growth mindset, if they just commit to the task.



CONCLUSION

A growth mindset is extremely important for an employee's personal and professional development. It's also essential for the company's success.

The task of nurturing a growth mindset is certainly time-consuming, but it's also possible. With proactiveness, perseverance, practice, and positivity, you can easily transform your fixed mindset into a fluid growth mindset.

For this exercise to yield positive results, employer support is essential. As managers and business owners, you must create an environment that empowers your team and which nurtures a growth mindset.

When you work together, you'll be unstoppable in your growth



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A few books that we recommend:

