# Growth Mindset Research Summary

In the nature vs. nurture debate, *do you believe that who we become is predetermined by our genes (nature) or is a consequence of how we are raised (nurture)? Are leaders born or made?* Research suggests that a person's belief in whether intelligence and talent comes naturally or is developed over time dramatically impacts their performance at work. This is defined as having a "Fixed" versus "Growth" Mindset.

## FIXED MINDSET   VS.   GROWTH MINDSET
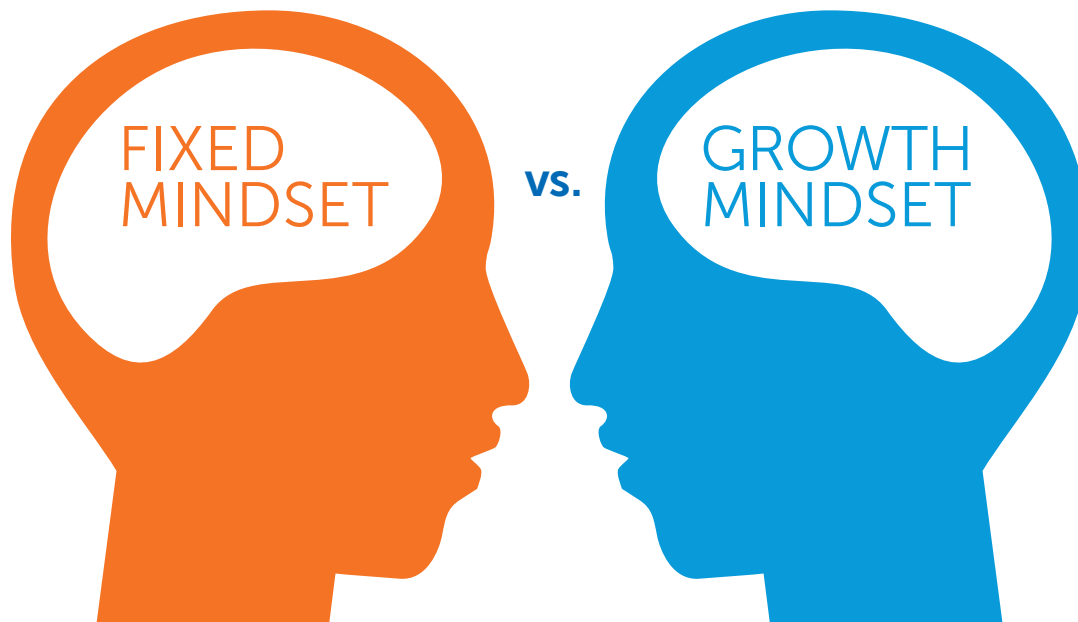
People with a **FIXED MINDSET** focus more "often unconsciously" on proving that they have a lot of ability, and already know exactly what they are doing. They see their performance as a test of their competence and worth. When faced with a challenge, fixed mindset individuals often expect to be able to somehow do the work flawlessly, no matter how complex and unfamiliar it might be. Having a fixed mindset can undermine performance, interfere with development, and increase self-doubt.

People with a **GROWTH MINDSET** focus more on developing their ability than validating it. They are more likely to see gaps in their knowledge as opportunities to learn something new. Even though people with different mindsets do not necessarily start out with different levels of skill or self-confidence, over time, having a growth mindset can lift your performance and resilience.

HABITS TO DEVELOP TEAM GROWTH MINDSET

1 Focus your team on progress over time

2 Experiment publicly and share mistakes

3 Role model being an active learner

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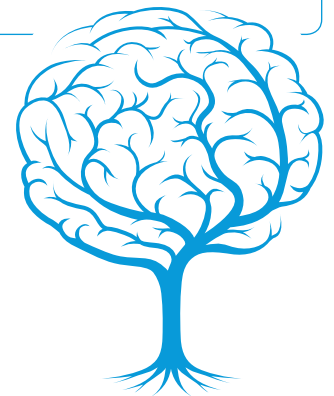
Growth Mindset Research Summary continued

1. FOCUS YOUR TEAM ON PROGRESS OVER TIME

It's typical for teams (and managers) to focus only on "snapshots" of their performance – on what's happening now. This makes whatever is happening in that moment – whether it's good or bad – take on more importance than it should, and keeps everyone from seeing the "big picture." It's also a symptom of fixed-mindset thinking, with its emphasis on perfection over progress. To foster growth-mindset thinking, encourage your team to focus on performance over time. *Are they improving? Are they happy with their rate of progress? Do they feel they are getting closer to their goal, or are they feeling stuck?*

Try using the "**rule of three**" when discussing any performance: **where they were before, where they are now, and where they are going**. Research shows that when people are evaluated (and evaluate themselves) across time, they are more likely to adopt growth mindsets and perform at their full potential.

2. EXPERIMENT PUBLICLY AND SHARE MISTAKES

To experiment simply means to try out a new procedure, idea, or activity. Studies show that employees with growth mindsets are more likely to experiment with new and alternative approaches to solving problems, resulting in more innovative and effective solutions.

Of course, people only experiment when they feel safe to do so – when they believe that it is valued, and that they won't be penalized for the mistakes they will inevitably make when trying something new. The best way to create that sense of safety is to be public about, and draw attention to, your own experimenting. Let your team see you testing out alternatives, and share with them your successes and failures. Leaders who own up freely to their mistakes and what they've learned from them not only inspire more growth-mindset thinking, but are more respected and trusted by those they lead.

3. ROLE MODEL BEING AN ACTIVE LEARNER

Seeking knowledge and guidance from experts is an essential part of your team's professional development. But studies show that people with fixed mindsets often shy away from asking others for information or admitting what they don't know, for fear that they will look inept or inexperienced. To encourage a more growth mindset approach, you need to role model what it means to be an active learner.

Role modeling is one of the most powerful ways to influence the behavior of those around you. Human beings naturally look to one another – and particularly to their leaders – to understand how they should think, feel, and act in response to the obstacles and challenges they encounter. More often than not, we do this completely unconsciously – never realizing the extent to which we are influenced by the behavior of those around us. Share your learning plan with your team and let them know how you are taking steps to develop your own skills and knowledge.

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