

Growth Mindset

The research by Dr. Carol Dweck et al has illustrated the brain is capable of developing with challenge; similar to muscles with weight training. One key to fostering this growth is the belief in this truth. Dr. Dweck's research around fixed versus growth mindset has been visible in the literature for several decades. However, socialization and personal habits around praise often continue to foster fixed mindset qualities in individuals. Therefore, it is important to self-assess, and where needed, adjust daily habits toward practices that foster growth mindset qualities. The following will highlight some of steps faculty can take to encourage a growth mindset for both themselves and their learners.

- **Acknowledge mistakes/ failure as a step in the journey to mastery.** Identify mistakes/failure as an important key to learning, not proof of inadequacy.
- **Seek challenges.** Compliment learners who step out of their comfort zone to take on challenging content or procedures.
- **Praise effort and perseverance.** Direct praise toward learners who seek to develop and master content and procedures. Try to avoid complimenting intelligence or talent.
- **Be mindful of goal setting.** Seek to foster mastery goals and try to avoid performance goals in yourself and your learners. Learners with mastery goals intentionally strive to **improve** their ability, cultivate their knowledge base, and actively develop skill sets. Whereas performance goals in learning only seek to **prove** ability, knowledge base, and skill set. While the distinction appears subtle, in the learning context it is critical. Performance goals interfere with quality learning because the brain is primarily occupied with trying to avoid mistakes/failure due to fear instead of developing robust memory formation. On the other hand, learners who are focused on mastery do successfully focus their brain on robust memory formation with reduced concern about mistakes/failure. To dislike mistakes/failure is common; to fixate on and/or be paralyzed by mistakes/failure at the expense of learning is problematic.
- **Manage emotion with constructive feedback.** An individual's ability to manage emotion in the face of feedback is important to fostering a growth mindset. Certainly, feedback needs to be delivered professionally, but it also needs to be received openly. Feedback can feel painful, but it is instrumental to learning data and procedures correctly. Therefore, a learner must focus their attention toward improving their ability and away from criticizing themselves or the individual who delivered the feedback. When attention is focused on improving, one is using a growth mindset. When attention is focused on minimizing feelings of inadequacy/failure, one is using a fixed mindset.
- **Remember the power of "yet."** It is helpful for both individuals personally as well as those they teach to remember the power of the word "yet". Simply allow you or your learner to hear that word at the end of a sentence and it will make a big difference. It leaves space for growth and encourages effort.

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Reference & Suggested Resources:

- Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York: Ballentine Books.
- Moser, J. S., Schroder, H. S., Heeter, C., Moran, T. P., & Lee, Y.-H. (2011). Mind Your Errors. *Psychological Science*, 22(12), 1484–1489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797611419520>
- <https://ed.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/manual/dweck-walton-cohen-2014.pdf>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D4TW1Nvx3_g

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“I have not failed.
I’ve just found
10,000 ways that
won’t work.”

-Thomas Edison



Dean's Corner

Cynda Johnson, MD, MBA

This month, I would like to give a special thank you to our dedicated faculty who lend their knowledge and expertise to making sure our graduating students have a smooth transition into residency. As you recall, we renamed our former Dean's Colloquium Transition to Residency (TTR) last year. Our fourth-year students still go through that two-week session (now called TTR2), which gives them an opportunity to explore various topics of interest. We also added an additional two-weeks surrounding Match Day and the Medical Student Research Symposium (called TTR1).

Our faculty have gone above and beyond in making TTR1 a success.

First is Match Day. We had one of our most successful Match Day's ever earlier this month in terms of the number of students who got their first choice of residency as well as the caliber of residencies they matched in to. Our faculty have lent countless hours mentoring our students, giving them interview tips, writing letters of recommendation, and providing overall support during this stressful time.

Second, I commend our faculty members for the assistance they have given implementing and evaluating Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs) for Entering Residency. These are 13 skills the AAMC believes students should attain in medical school ahead of residency programs. Our faculty have been actively engaged in teaching our short curriculum around the EPAs that includes simulation and other learning activities to test the skills of our upcoming graduates.

And finally, our Medical Student Research Symposium, also held earlier this month, is the culmination of four years of scientific inquiry for our students. The impressive research projects that come of this requirement could not happen without faculty research mentors.

These are just a few of the ways you, as faculty, make our students' success a priority. To all of you, I extend a hearty dose of appreciation.

Cynda