

Handout - Seven Common Growth Mindset Scenarios and Responses

As a mentor, you will encounter multiple situations where you can encourage and reinforce a growth mindset. But even if you understand the concepts of growth mindset, it may not always be clear what to say when confronted with a student who is struggling to persevere or who is shying away from challenges. This tip sheet illustrates some of the messages you can deliver about mindset in response to common situations you may face as a mentor.

<p>Situation 1: Faced with a new learning challenge</p> <p><i>Underlying principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges are exciting, not just overwhelming. • Effort is important: you'll get out of this what you put into it. • Having a strategy is vital. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Divide the learning into pieces that can be taken as chunks and defining them ○ Set up opportunities for there to be small wins that lead to the completion of the larger learning goal • It's OK to ask for help. A little struggle is a sign we are stretching and leaving our comfort zone. But after a while, it's OK to get help or hear new strategies. 	<p>Some potential responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's identify a target for today that will get you closer to completing the learning challenge? After you complete the day's target, what might tomorrow's target be? • This is a great challenge! Your brain is going to get stronger as you work through the challenge. • Let's take one step at a time that way we can see where we might need to focus more attention and time. • This looks like pretty demanding stuff. What would a focused first try look like? • I am here to help you learn how to ... • Let's come up with a strategy. • Describe this challenge in your own words. Share anything that might be really confusing. • This may be difficult now, but might be a lesson you remember for the rest of your life. • I have seen you learn challenging things in the past. For example, last _____ [week/month] I saw you... • This is challenging! What do you think are some strategies you could try?
<p>Situation 2: Expressing high expectations</p> <p><i>Underlying principles:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research is clear, setting high expectations tells kids the adults they care about believe in them • Unrealistically high expectations without support; however, are a different matter 	<p>Some potential responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let's think through this to determine what you know and where you might need support. • Let's discuss some strategies for tackling this. • What do you already know about this? • When you learn this/do this/ succeed at this, you can be proud because it isn't easy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This looks like one of those opportunities to stretch/to reach higher. • This is a challenge that could produce some great mistakes that will really help you learn.
<p>Situation 3: Succeeding easily without effort</p> <p><i>Underlying principle:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having it be too easy is counterproductive • Acknowledging the lack of challenge and determining the appropriate level of challenge is important 	<p>Some potential responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You finished that quickly. Let's find something a little more challenging. • That seems a little easy for you. How can you make it a stretch enough to build your brain? • I am sorry this was not challenging for you. Your skills didn't seem taxed. Is that true? • What can you do to make this [more meaningful, challenging, exciting]? • How can you add another level to this to challenge you even more? • Do you already know how to do this? Let's come up with something more challenging if you already know how to do what was presented.
<p>Situation 4: Slow progress despite strong effort</p> <p><i>Underlying principle:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effort is the key to success • Identify supports to help foster a sense of success and accomplishment • Analyze the strategies being used and see if they can be improved (see below) 	<p>Some potential responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I see that you tried that five times. I admire your persistence. It will pay off. • Let's review all of your attempts to determine the best course of action. • Remind yourself that you just can't do it "YET." Let's think through some next steps to take. • Let's walk through the problem/assignment/issue/task, perhaps you need a little more information or guidance to get to the next step. • If it were easy, you wouldn't be learning enough. • What progress did you make? What was different? • I expect you to make mistakes. Mistakes are the signals of opportunities for learning - what did you notice in the mistakes you made? Is there anything in the mistakes that will identify where you might need additional guidance or support? • Does it make sense to stop now and come back to it later? • Let's talk about how you've been approaching the problem/assignment/

	issue/task. Maybe one of your strategies could be improved.
<p>Situation 5: Offering help with strategies when struggling</p> <p><i>Underlying principle:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When challenge because difficult and your mentee wants to give up, support him or her by identifying strategies that will support persistence and resilience 	<p>Some potential responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Okay, let's think about how to approach this differently? Would you like to try _____ [different strategy]? Let's try it together. Let's do it a few more times to get the synapses strong - get that learning into long-term memory. What was difficult? Let's focus on the difficulties to see if we can figure it out. Who else can you ask for help? Let's put a plan together for the next _____ [days, weeks]. Let's go through it together and find the mistakes. What was your approach? Where do you think you might be struggling the most? Let's de-stress, so your brain can relax and process better [square-breathing, changing the physical location in which the work was being done, etc.] Does it make sense to stop now and come back to it later?
<p>Situation 6: During progress</p> <p><i>Underlying principle:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As your mentee begins to make progress toward a goal or an important task, it's important to praise the process in order to build persistence 	<p>Some potential responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show me how you arrived at your present conclusion? Starting to come along nicely - your strategy is working! It seems like the problem/task/concept is at a right level; you've been working on it for a while. Good job! I see you are using your notes. What other strategies have you used or could you use to continue to make progress? I can see a difference in now compared to _____ from last week/yesterday. What has changed? Talk me through what happened.
<p>Situation 7: Succeeding with strong effort</p> <p><i>Underlying principle:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is important to acknowledge the effort once a new challenge is overcome and complete 	<p>Some potential responses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was it like for you when you started work on _____? Look how different it is for you to do that now. Did all that hard work pay off?

- When mentees understand that they have strategies in their toolbox for tackling big challenges, they will be able to use specific tools for specific challenges

- What do you think contributed to your success in _____?
- I saw you use a variety of techniques; way to go!
- This had that one brilliant mistake. Let's talk about what you learned from that mistake.
- Did you compromise on anything to get this done?
- The next time you have a challenge this big, what can you use from this experience.
- Congratulations for trying again and again to get this done.
- How would you compare this to other accomplishments?

Developed by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

