

How to develop a growth mindset.

"Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end." Dennis Waitley

Learning from failure is the key to achieving success. If you see failure as an opportunity to grow rather than a setback to avoid at all cost, you have a **growth mindset**; the belief that through passion, hard work and training, you can improve your genetic skillset. Effort is what makes you smart or talented. Failures do not define you.ⁱ

With a **fixed mindset**, failures are personal. Effort is a challenge to your self-image as intelligent or talented. You avoid projects that are too hard, where you might make mistakes. In contrast a growth mindset thrives on a tough challenge.

Children with a growth mindset in Chile were 3 times as likely to score in the top 20% of students nationally. Students with a fixed mindset were 4 times more likely to score in the bottom 20%.ⁱⁱ To develop a growth mindset in children praise them for their **effort**, **NOT** their **intelligence**, when they succeed.

Seeing setbacks as **personal**, (I'm a failure vs. I experienced a failure.) **pervasive** (Failure always happens to me vs. failure happened this time) and **permanent** (I can't fix it) vs. temporary (I will try a new approach) is a **pessimistic** perspective.ⁱⁱⁱ

Walt Disney was fired by his newspaper editor at the Kansas City Star newspaper because he, "lacked imagination and had no good ideas." Walt then launched a cartoon business, which went bankrupt within 2 years. He moved to Hollywood to direct live action films and failed. He found success with Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, an animated cartoon, but his producer stole the film rights along with most of his animators. Walt went back to the drawing board and developed another cartoon concept,

but needed funding. He was rejected 299 times before one banker finally agreed to finance the first Mickey Mouse cartoon. Walt had **grit**, the power of perseverance.

Optimistic sales agents outsell their pessimistic coworkers by 56%.^{iv} There are times **not** to deploy an optimistic perspective: when the cost of failure is high, eg. - climbing a mountain without safety equipment, unless you're Alex Honnold. Pessimists are more accurate and realistic than optimists,^v but optimists succeed because they keep trying. The trick is to be flexible enough to toggle between optimism for sales opportunities and pessimism as you set protection for a rock climb.

To learn more, read *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, by C. Dweck and *Learned Optimism*, by M. Seligman.

Stay safe and resilient,

Gary

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ⁱ C. Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006) Penguin Random House

ⁱⁱ S. Claro, D Paunesku and C. Dweck. Growth mindset tempers the effects of poverty on academic achievement. (2016) PNAS Aug. 2, 113 (31) 8664-8668

ⁱⁱⁱ M. Seligman, *Learned Optimism* (1990) Simon & Schuster, pg. 77

^{iv} M. Seligman and P. Schulman, Explanatory style as a predictor of Productivity and quitting among life sales insurance agents. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1986 Vol 50, No. 4 832-838

^v M. Seligman, *Learned Optimism* (1990) Simon & Schuster, pg. 112