

# mindset

## BOOK DIGEST

### CHANGING MINDSETS

Carol Dweck opens this chapter by saying:

*“The growth mindset is based on the belief in change and the most gratifying part of my work is watching people change.”*

She reminds us of the effects that the fixed mindset can have on bright and seemingly resourceful children, who become completely paralyzed by setbacks and feel powerless even when the simplest action would make things better.

Teaching them about the growth mindset can be life altering and yet the author reminds us that:

*“(…) change isn’t like surgery. Even when you change, the old beliefs aren’t just removed like a worn-out hip or knee and replaced with better ones. Instead, the new beliefs take their place alongside the old ones, and as they become stronger, they give you a different way to think, feel and act.”*

Aaron Beck was the pioneer of **Cognitive Therapy**. He realized how **our beliefs shape our behaviors** and how to teach people to pay attention to them and hear them. Indeed and whether we’re aware of it or not, we’re constantly running an account of what’s happening around us, what it means and what we should do. **Our minds are monitoring and interpreting everything all the time**. And **our mindset has a huge impact** on the way we’re keeping scores, because they guide our interpretation of our experience.

The **fixed mindset** keeps us stuck in **judgment**, leading us to put a strong evaluation on each and every piece of information that we gather. The **growth mindset** doesn’t take the scanning process away, but instead of trapping us in judgment, it guides us to **study the implications** of what we encounter in terms of learning and constructive actions.

Cognitive therapy can be deeply transformative because it allows people to edit their judgments into more optimistic and realistic worldviews. However, as Carol Dweck puts it:

*“it does not escort them out of the framework of judgment and into a framework of growth.”*

**Only changing our mindsets can allow us to achieve that.**

# mindset

## BOOK DIGEST

Here is an extract from a testimonial from a recovering fixed minded woman:

*“This directly affected my life because I have always wanted to be a writer, but have been afraid to pursue any writing classes or to share my creative writing with others. This is directly related to my mindset because any negative criticism would mean that I am not a writer inherently. I was too scared to expose myself to the possibility that I might not be a natural.”*

By changing her mindset, she could **reset her internal dialog** from “It’s not worth the risk. Your dream could be destroyed. Protect it.” to “**Go for it. Make it happen. Develop your skills. Pursue your dream.**”

After sharing a few more stories, Carol Dweck explains that:

*“The growth mindset gave them courage to embrace their own goals and dreams.  
And more important, it gave them a way to work toward making them real.”*

The author describes how she conducts **her Mindset workshop** and the way she and a group of educational, media and brain experts designed **a software called Brainology**, to teach young students about Mindset and transform their school experience.

She tells the tale of one of her student’s encounter with reviewers, which might strike a chord for a lot of us... The young woman had sent her thesis research to a top-tier journal and was devastated by the reviews she received. Carol Dweck then advised her:

*“It’s not about you. That’s their job. Their job is to find every possible flaw.  
Your job is to learn from the critique and make your paper even better.”*

Her student never felt judged again.

Psychologists Karen Horney and Carl Rogers studied **children’s emotional development** and how greatly it is impacted by the mindset of their parents. Their theory is that **when young children feel insecure about their parents’ acceptance of them**, they experience a great deal of anxiety, feeling lost and alone in a complicated world which leads them to look for ways to win their parents over. In order to do so, they **create other “selves”** which they believe would be closer to their parents’ expectations. This is a testament to how resourceful children are, but unfortunately in most cases this new “**upgraded self**” is likely to be a **fixed-mindset** one. It makes sense, embodying those traits are the way they meet their need for a sense of security and hope.

*“Over time, the fixed traits may come to be the person’s sense of who they are,  
and validating these traits may come to be the main source of their self-esteem.”*

And **changing mindset will therefore ask people to give up mechanisms which got us through what felt like very uncertain times**. It is really hard to give up a **programming** on which your **self-esteem** is based.

# mindset

## BOOK DIGEST

On top of that, the fixed mindset will still be **guiding someone's inner dialog** while that person is shifting toward a growth mindset. This makes for a **pretty miserable inner experience** for the time it lasts. Carol Dweck reminds us that:

*“it may feel as though the fixed mindset gave you your ambition, your edge, your individuality.  
(...) BUT opening yourself up to growth makes you more yourself, not less.”*

One powerful example we can follow in order to allow the growth mindset to drive us to do good even when we're feeling bad:

*“Remember the depressed students with the growth mindset? The worse they felt, the more they did the constructive thing. The less they felt like it, the more they made themselves do it. The critical thing is to make a CONCRETE, growth-oriented plan, and to stick to it.”*

The growth mindset is particularly useful when we make **big changes** in our life situations. For instance when we start another job, we can remember that it's normal if it feels like a huge step and if we experience a flare in our insecurities. We can be upcoming with our new colleagues or teammates about how different everything is and witness that they went through the same process. They are here to help us grow and not to judge or belittle us, but to realize that, **we must give them a chance to help** us first.

The fixed mindset makes us believe that **the WORLD needs to change**, not us. We then feel **entitled** to something better (be it a job, spouse, house or situation). Yet, the growth mindset allows us to see that this is not the way. Expectations get us nowhere but **commitment** and **effort** do.

The next step on our journey of mindset makeover is coming to terms with the somewhat painful fact that **efforts are necessary** but that they **might not be sufficient**. We're not entitled to results without them AND we're still not entitled to results after them. It is not about the result, it's about the process.

*“In the end many people with the fixed mindset understand that their cloak of specialness was really a suit of armor they built to feel safe, strong, and worthy. While it may have protected them early on, later it constricted their growth, set them into self-defeating battles, and cut them off from satisfying, mutual relationships. People in a fixed mindset often run away from their problems. If their life is flawed, then THEY're flawed. It's easier to make believe everything's all right.”*

We also need to make sure that our **efforts are fueled by the right mindset**. Carol Dweck takes the telling example of school children staying up late to study but not for the sake of learning. They do this because the fixed mindset is saying that it will help them prove themselves to their parents... not because they believe in their own growth.

# mindset

## BOOK DIGEST

The author also debulks some [myth about willpower](#):

*“Willpower is NOT a thing you have or don’t have. Willpower needs help.”*

We can use our willpower to make a decision and create a plan. But then we need the growth mindset to see our plan through, overcome our inevitable setbacks, and create the results we want.

The [growth mindset](#) can also be a powerful ally [when we deal with anger](#). Carol Dweck takes the example of when our partner does something for the sole purpose of disrespecting or betraying us (or so does the fixed mindset say). Once we’re aware of that misguided interpretation within ourselves, we cannot expect to just magically disappear, but we can build up a plan to stop ourselves in our way to overreacting. We can [decide ahead of time](#) how we will handle anger when an anger-provoking situation arises. We can learn how to [matter-of-factly communicate](#) with our loved ones. We can learn to [take a break](#) before sharing our ugly thoughts--and choose more helpful ones.

And finally, [afraid that she made it look too easy to change our mindsets](#), Carol Dweck wrote the 4 steps that this journey will take. Because it is a journey, not an event.

[Step 1](#): We need to first [embrace](#) our [FIXED mindset](#). It’s part of our humanness and we cannot change what we cannot look at.

[Step 2](#): We need to become [aware](#) of what [triggers](#) us into the fixed mindset. Examples are: new big challenges, hitting dead ends, facing a failure, meeting someone far ahead on the journey, the way we think about OTHERS... The goal here is to observe, NOT judge the fixed mindset (otherwise it’s just more fixed mindset coming to torture us...)

[Step 3](#): we can [personify](#) our fixed mindset! Turn it into a little cartoon character or give it a name which allows us to distance ourselves from this part of our personality which does not reflect who we want to actually be.

[Step 4](#): We need to take our fixed mindset on a [journey](#) with us, to educate it and show it that its ways do not serve anyone.

*“Remember that your fixed mindset persona was born to protect you and keep you safe.*

*But it has developed some very limiting ways of doing that.*

*So educate it in the growth mindset ways so that it can support you: in taking on challenges and sticking to them, bouncing back from failure, and helping and supporting others to grow.”*

# mindset

## BOOK DIGEST

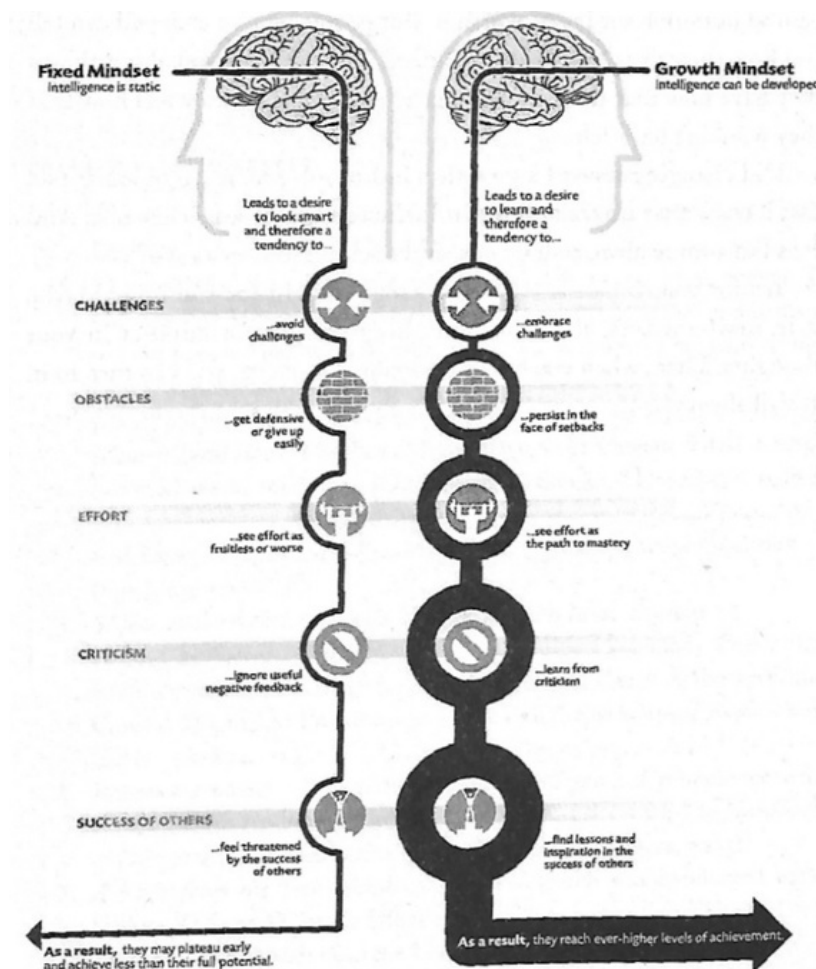
“Understanding that everyone has a fixed-mindset persona can give us more compassion for people. It allows us to understand their struggles.”

And it can **change the way we relate to those we mentor or work with:**

*“How many students or employees are considered incompetent, stubborn, or defiant when they just don’t know how to function well under the current conditions? How often do we threaten, punish or write off these people rather than helping them work it through or helping them find the conditions under which they can thrive?”*

### One final word of inspiration by the author:

*“For your growth mindset to bear fruit, you need to keep setting goals—goals for growth. Every day presents you with ways to grow and to help the people you care about grow”.*



# mindset

## BOOK DIGEST

### Fixed mindset curse:

“When people believe in fixed traits, they are always in danger of being measured by a failure.  
It can define them in a permanent way.  
Smart or talented as they may be, this mindset seems to rob them of their coping resources.”

### Growth mindset blessing:

“When people believe their basic qualities can be developed, failures may still hurt,  
but failures don’t define them.  
And if abilities can be expanded—if change and growth are possible—  
then there are still many paths to success.”