

RESILIENCY & MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS QUICK TIPS #7

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Resiliency & Mental Health Wellness Quick Tips #7

Each week, we will present an article here that will discuss a key component of resiliency, positive psychology, and mental health wellness!

The articles will briefly present a new topic, provide a skill and/or exercise to try, and will often include other available resources.

We hope that you find this material helpful and work to apply these concepts in your life.



Resilience Concept: Mindset

The concept of mindset was mentioned in Quick Tips #6, as it ties in with the topics of perspective and realistic optimism. Mindset determines how we approach our experiences in our lives, and can be particularly important for how we approach challenges and adversity in our lives.

Mindsets Defined:

Mindset: Dr. Carol Dweck describes mindset as a belief about yourself. Much of what you describe as your personality stems from your mindset. And this belief directs and controls the majority of your life – it touches all parts of your life. Moreover, this belief may be holding you back from your potential (Dweck, 2008).

For example, someone may believe they are either really smart or not really smart. Or, they may believe they are a good parent or not a good parent.

Fixed Mindset: In a fixed Mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits...” (Dweck, 2008).

Growth Mindset: In a growth mindset, basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work...this view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment” (Dweck, 2008).

As you might have guessed, having a growth mindset increases our resilience. It is directly related to how we can experience adversity and learn and grow from those difficult experiences.

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Research:

In her book, Dweck (2008) described numerous studies conducted with students. The overarching findings were that students' mindset - or how the students PERCEIVED their abilities – had a direct influence on students' motivation and achievement. Furthermore, they discovered that teaching students to adopt a growth mindset could IMPROVE achievement. More specifically, students who believed they could increase their intelligence, talents, or abilities achieved more (or outperformed) those students who believed these factors were static and unchangeable.

What does it mean to have a growth mindset?

- (1) Believing in yourself
- (2) Believing that your skills, talents, and abilities can be developed
- (3) Embracing challenges
- (4) Viewing Effort as the path to success
- (5) Learning from feedback
- (6) Being open to new information and approaches

What does it mean to have a fixed mindset?

- (1) Intelligence/Talent Static
- (2) Avoids Challenges
- (3) Sees Effort as Useless
- (4) Ignores Feedback
- (5) Disregards New Information/Approaches

WHO INFLUENCED YOUR MINDSET, AND WHOSE MINDSET ARE YOU INFLUENCING?

In her book, Dr. Dweck (2008) discusses how our mindsets are formed in the first place. Our parents, teachers, and coaches have some of the greatest influence on our mindsets. Think about yourself and who influenced your mindset. Think about who you are and the roles you play and the mindsets you are influencing. Think about this as a leader, supervisor, team member, and/or colleague.

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MINDSET & RESILIENCE:

So why is this important to our understanding of resilience and its application to our lives? Put simply, it means **HOPE**. It means change. It means everything as to how we view our current selves and the selves we want to be. It changes how we face adversity and puts it in the perspective of embracing challenge. It means that there is no such thing as failure anymore, only opportunity for growth. It means that each of you, each one of us, can grow and change. **POWERFUL!**

DEVELOPING YOUR GROWTH MINDSET:

So how do you apply an actual skill for helping with this?

1. Understanding the terms fixed mindset and growth mindset and how our beliefs and perceptions influence these mindsets.
2. Understand **GROWTH MINDSET IS** critical for learning resilience skills.
3. When faced with challenging circumstances, obstacles, when life throws a curveball at you, when something bad or traumatic has occurred, recognize how your mindset can help you through those challenging times.
4. Practicing this concept, putting this into motion, builds a more resilient you. It is a key component of resiliency.

APPLICATIONS & EXERCISES

1. Coaching – This is great for coaching. I coach my son's baseball team and I love using these concepts. I often talk to the young players about coach-ability and making sure they exemplify and model this characteristic. I try to allow the players to understand that the focus is on improving, getting better, and that I believe in their ability to do so. I encourage them that they need to believe in their ability to do so. I explain that coach instruction and critique is designed to help them get better. I look to build their growth mindset by encouraging the players to ask questions to the coaches, actively listen and look for feedback on the recommended improvements. Even if you do not coach, this example of one application of growth mindset has many analogies to various aspects of our lives.

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2. Discuss mistakes. Wait what? You want me to acknowledge I made a mistake? Well yes. This is an exercise in developing your growth mindset. We need to be able to have an open dialogue about mistakes we make with people with a like mindset that we can trust. We tend to shy away from this for fear of being judged. But in doing so we do not grow or learn from our mistakes. The focus should move from the mistake to what we can do to change it next time. What strategies can I put in place so it does not happen. This can be a highly beneficial approach as a supervisor. If one of us makes a mistake, we acknowledge it, discuss it, learn from it, and move on together as a team.
3. Journaling. Take a few moments and write about a recent setback or adversity. Read it and look for ways to rephrase or change your perspective to a growth mindset. How can you learn from this situation? How can you improve and grow from the experience? What can you do differently? This helps develop your growth mindset by viewing setbacks/adversity as learning opportunities.

A QUICK INSPIRATIONAL STORY:

I recently heard a story from a doctoral student at his hooding ceremony where I learned about his life leading up to this high personal honor for him. He was a child in a rural area of Kenya. Growing up, he had limited access to books and learning resources. He stated that his chances and hopes for a higher education were slim from the start. However, he had teachers in middle school who encouraged him and pushed him to pursue his education. These teachers created a growth mindset in this young student. This student became one of the first in his family to obtain a college degree, then master's degree, and then a doctorate degree. He eventually moved from rural Kenya to the United States to take a job at the United Nations. He stated that education changed his life. I wonder what would have happened to this student had his teachers given up on him or discouraged him? I wonder what would have happened to this man if he had developed a fixed mindset.

Resources

If you would like to learn more about this topic, check out the video on this topic that will be appearing on May 15, 2020 on the webcast series, Resilient Minds on the Front Lines. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCT6o5PDQxUELfeBZvMGW4IA>

Also, Carol Dweck's book on Mindset is a great resource. See various editions here: <https://www.google.com/search?tbm=bks&hl=en&q=mindset+the+new+psychology+of+success>

References

Dweck, C. S. (2008). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House Digital, Inc.