



Mindset: Growth or Fixed?

Fixed
Mindset

Growth
Mindset

Mindset Quiz

On a separate piece of paper write down an answer for each question.

You choices for each question is:

Strongly Agree (SA) / Agree (A) / Disagree (D) / Strongly Disagree (SD)

1. Intelligence is something people are born with that can't be changed.
2. No matter how intelligent you are, you can always be more intelligent.
3. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.
4. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that. 5. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.
6. Musical talent can be learned by anyone
7. Only a few people will be truly good at sports – you have to be “born with it.”
8. Math is much easier to learn if you are male or maybe come from a culture who values math.
9. The harder you work at something, the better you will be at it.
10. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.
11. Trying new things is stressful for me and I avoid it.
12. Some people are good and kind, and some are not – it's not often that people change.
13. I appreciate when people give me feedback about my performance.
14. I often get angry when I get negative feedback about my performance.
15. All human beings are capable of learning.
16. You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.
17. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed. 18. Human beings are basically good, but sometimes make terrible decisions.
19. An important reason why I do my work is that I like to learn new things.
20. Truly smart people do not need to try hard.

Mindset Scoring Guide: Your overall score

For the questions below, please tally your score.

If you answered:

Strongly Agree give yourself 0 points

Agree give yourself 1 point

Disagree give yourself 2 points

Strongly Disagree give yourself 3 points

Question

#1

#4

#7

#8

#11

#12

#14

#16

#17

#20

Total points for these questions:

From fixed mindset to growth mindset: the complete guide

For the questions below, please tally your score.

If you answered:

Strongly Agree give yourself 3 points

Agree give yourself 2 points

Disagree give yourself 1 point

Strongly Disagree give yourself 0 points

#2

#3

#5

#6

#9

#10

#13

#15

#18

#19

Your total points for this section:

Your total score (add two sections together):

Interpreting your score 60-45 points = strong growth mindset

44-34 points = growth mindset with some fixed ideas

33-21 points = fixed mindset with some growth ideas

20-0 points = strong fixed mindset

If you ask someone “Do you have a growth mindset?”, most people will say yes. In fact, when I ran a poll asking my followers if they had a growth mindset, only 10% said they didn’t. This is called the “false growth mindset” and it’s a natural consequence of being human. You probably heard somewhere that having a growth mindset was good, so you automatically say you do. If you want to challenge your “yes autopilot” and take a deep dive into what is a growth mindset and how you can foster it, buckle up!

The two mindsets shaping your life

A mindset is a set of assumptions held by a person or a group of people. It is closely related to people’s worldview or philosophy of life. A deeply anchored mindset can act as a strong incentive to continue to accept or even adopt certain behaviours.

In her seminal book [Mindset](#), American psychologist Carol Dweck explains the two main mindsets we have when approaching new challenges—or even life in general. Her research has challenged commonly held perceptions about what it means to be smart. I don’t think I could explain it better than she did, so here are her two definitions of the mindsets that impact the way you think and act on a daily basis.

From fixed mindset to growth mindset: the complete guide

Fixed mindset — “In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success—without effort.”

Growth mindset — “In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment.”

Let’s have a look at an example. Let’s say you you’re working on a big project. The launch goes terribly bad.

In a fixed mindset, you will feel like all your effort was wasted. Next time someone asks for your help in launching a project, you may tell them you’re not the right person. Instead, you’ll focus on stuff you know you’re good at.

In a growth mindset—while of course a failed launch still sucks—you are grateful for everything you got to learn. Because you focus on the process, the outcome doesn’t matter as much. You see this failure as a temporary setback and an opportunity for personal growth.

The idea is that what is commonly called intelligence can be “grown” incrementally by means of hard work, positivity, resilience, and training, and that people can be placed on a continuum according to their implicit views of where their abilities come from. As Derek Sivers [said](#), it’s a bit similar to the concept of nature versus nurture.

All about neuroplasticity

Contrary to what many people think, the adult brain is not “hard-wired” with fixed neuronal circuits. It’s actually very plastic. Neuroplasticity can be defined as the ability of the brain to change continuously throughout your life. For instance, synapses may strengthen or weaken over time, or brain activity associated with a given function can be transferred to a different location. It can be observed at all scales in the brain, from microscopic changes in individual neurons to large scale changes, which happen most commonly in response to injuries.

Neuroplasticity doesn’t stop after childhood. It is at work throughout your whole life. Depending on what is being actively used, connections within the brain are constantly becoming stronger or weaker. And with every repetition of a thought or an emotion, you tend to reinforce specific neural pathways. If frequently repeated, these small changes end up changing the way your brain works.

What does it mean? It means your brain keeps on changing, adapting, and forming new connections even as you grow older. More importantly, it means your cognitive abilities are not fixed. There’s nothing preventing you from learning something new, tackling a new challenge, or getting out of your comfort zone. And this is what having a growth mindset is all about.

Identify your fixed mindset triggers

Before we explore ways to foster a growth mindset, it’s crucial to be able to spot your own fixed mindset triggers. Though the outcome will always be similar—lack of motivation, resilience, and personal growth—there are several mindset triggers people tend to react to. It’s unlikely all of these will apply to you, but it would be surprising if none of them did. If you can’t pinpoint one of these triggers as affecting you, you may actually have a false growth mindset ?

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- 1. Having to work hard.** Most people like to say they're hard workers. But in reality, there is something society seems to value more: being "gifted" or "naturally talented." Did you ever feel proud when you did well on an exam without working too hard? If hard work is one of your mindset triggers, you may get overwhelmed by tasks that require a long, sustained effort—and you will be more likely to give up. Another sign that hard work may be a mindset trigger for you is if you tend to compare yourself to others, and you feel discouraged when it seems like it requires less effort from them to achieve the same goals. Note that if having to work hard is of your mindset triggers, it doesn't mean that you're lazy. It just means you have a self-limiting belief—that you think that no matter how much work you put in, some people are just more talented than you are.
- 2. Facing setbacks.** Life happens. We get sick, we can lose a job, not sign an important contract, there can be an oversight, a mistake, an accident. A challenge is intrinsic to what you're trying to achieve. A setback is extrinsic. Let's say you decide to go on a diet, but on the very first day, a colleague celebrates their birthday at work and you feel like you have to accept a piece of their birthday cake. With a growth mindset, this wouldn't be a big deal—you'd just get back on track and forget about it. But if setbacks are a mindset trigger for you, you may stop the diet altogether because you feel like you have failed already. Let's look at another example: you promised yourself to go for a run twice a week. But it's been raining all week—what a bummer. Running won't be as nice with this kind of weather. So you don't go for a run. You basically let something like the weather derail your plans. In your mind, a setback is not a setback, it's a roadblock.
- 3. Getting negative feedback.** We don't all handle critique the same way. Okay, let's look at professional athletes. They get a ton of feedback from their coach. And sometimes, that feedback can be pretty harsh. But they listen, they learn, they apply the feedback and suggestions. The problem is that some of us struggle to separate our performance from our identity. If we didn't do well, we think we're not good enough. Think about how you react to critique—is it one of your mindset triggers?

4. **Being challenged.** Being out of your comfort zone is one of the best signs you are learning and growing. Think about it—unless you're getting stretched, chances are you're simply repeating stuff you already know. But some people are not comfortable being on the edge of their competence. If your mindset trigger is being challenged, it means that when you try to work on something and the solution you try doesn't work, you believe the goal itself is too hard—and you may quit altogether.
5. **Seeing success in others.** This is one people have a hard time admitting to. It has happened to me before. I would look at someone who was either more senior or had more experience, and I would compare myself to them. It's not a pretty emotion—I was basically feeling jealous. What my brain didn't seem to really get, though, is that these people had been working at it for longer than me, and that there was no reason I wouldn't get to a similar level if I put in the effort too. It can be intimidating to hang out with people who are more advanced than you in their journey—which is why it's a mindset trigger for many of us.

You may be facing more subtle mindset triggers—for example, some people have specific mindset triggers when it comes to their siblings or their best friend. But it's very unlikely you don't have any mindset triggers. So take the time to explore your thoughts and your emotions so you can become aware of them.

How to foster a growth mindset

As Carol Dweck said, there are two ways to look at the world: “In one world, effort is a bad thing. It, like failure, means you're not smart or talented. If you were, you wouldn't need effort. In the other world, effort is what makes you smart or talented.”

When you have a growth mindset, the hand you are dealt is just a starting point for personal growth. By changing your vision of effort and failure, you can design a whole new approach to your life. Convinced? Here are fifteen strategies you can use to develop a growth mindset.

From fixed mindset to growth mindset: the complete guide

1. **Remember the concept of neuroplasticity.** There is lots of research showing your brain's structure is not fixed. Your mind should not be fixed either.
2. **Appreciate the process over the results.** It's all about the learning process. Don't worry too much about the actual result, make sure you learn as much as possible.
3. **Acknowledge your weaknesses.** Ignoring your weaknesses means that you'll never manage to improve. Acknowledging and embracing your imperfections also means you know which ones you want to work on.
4. **Cultivate your sense of purpose.** According to Carol Dweck's research, people with a growth mindset have a greater sense of purpose. Keep asking "why" and think about the meaning of your work.
5. **Don't say *failing*, say *learning*.** Shift your vision of failure. If you fall short of a goal or make a mistake, don't see it as a failure—make it a learning opportunity.
6. **Value effort over talent.** Stop chasing the reputation of someone who is "naturally smart." First, genius requires work. Second, you won't be perceived as smart if you're not willing to put the work in.
7. **Consider challenges as opportunities.** Challenges are an opportunity for self-improvement. Tackle them, and whether you succeed or fail, make sure to learn as much as possible.
8. **Place growth before speed.** It takes time to learn. Learning fast doesn't mean learning well, and learning well requires allowing time for mistakes. Think realistically about time and effort it will require to acquire a new skill. Don't expect to master everything in one sitting.
9. **Do not chase other people's approval.** When you prioritise approval over learning, you sacrifice your own potential for growth.
10. **View criticism as a gift.** Related—don't wait for constructive criticism. Analyse all criticism. Do not let it destroy you, see it as a useful data point.
11. **Celebrate actions, not attributes.** Give yourself a pat on the back when you did something smart—not just when you were *being* smart and relying on your previous knowledge.

12. **Grow with others.** If you have a growth mindset, you may want to share and celebrate your progress with others. Learn from other people's mistakes, take risks with them. Don't try to look your best, show how hard you're willing to work and how comfortable you are with experimenting.
13. **Take the time to reflect.** Either once a day, once a week, or once a month, use a journal to reflect on your personal growth trajectory.
14. **Cultivate perseverance.** Grit and determination will help you overcome challenges. Remind yourself of all the times you managed to deal with a particularly tough situation. You can do it again.
15. **Use the "not yet" technique.** Carol Dweck says adding "not yet" to any fixed mindset statement is a great way to reframe your thought processes. When you're struggling, just remind yourself that you haven't mastered that skill... Yet.

There are probably more growth mindset techniques out there, but I think these will help you get the gist of it. Now, let's have a look at the questions you can ask yourself to develop a growth mindset on a day-to-day basis.

Asking the right growth mindset questions

Having a growth mindset is related to having an open mind. Instead of seeing your abilities, skills, knowledge and values as fixed, you always push into the unfamiliar, to ensure you are always learning. With that in mind, here are a few growth mindset questions you may add to your journaling routine.

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4 weekly planning questions. Here are the questions I recommend to answer on a weekly basis. I personally like to do it on Sunday evening, but you can do it whenever works for you. Some of my friends block the first hour on Monday morning to go through this exercise.

- What am I struggling with right now?
- What do I want to learn by the end of this week?
- What is one thing I will try that will get me out of my comfort zone?
- Who can I reach out to for help this week?

3 daily reflection questions. And here are the questions I think are best to answer on a daily basis. As you will see, these are not about planning. They're about looking back on your day and figuring out what worked and what didn't.

- What did I do today that made me think hard?
- What new strategies did I try?
- What mistake did I make that taught me something?

That's it. If you've read this far, you know more about having a growth mindset than most of the population—except people who actually read Carol Dweck's book (which I highly suggest)

Developing a growth mindset is a lifelong commitment. Many people fall prey to the false growth mindset and never manage to develop an actual growth mindset. Beware of your assumptions, and may you find your personal growth journey rewarding.

Why is mindset important in developing positive habits?

Your fixed beliefs about you will hold you back from making positive change. If you have a trait that you believe cannot be changed, such as your intelligence, your weight, or your bad habits, you will avoid situations that could possibly be uncomfortable or that you think that are useless.

On the other hand, if you embrace the idea that your habits *aren't* static, then that belief will be the critical first step to creating actual change in your life. Whether it's building a new skill, learning a new language, or breaking a bad habit, having the growth mindset will help you form that the belief that you are 100% capable of accomplishing any major goal.

So with that in mind, let's go over 17 strategies you can use to create the growth mindset.

17 Strategies to Develop Growth Mindset

1. Acknowledge and embrace your weaknesses.

Maybe you know that can be lazy and tend to put things off until the last minute. Try to plan around that by making modest goals and giving yourself a reasonable amount of time to accomplish them.

One of the simplest ways to overcome your weakness is to be honest with yourself about your limitations and tackle them head on. Using the above example about “laziness,” if you know that you tend to procrastinate, then one way to build the growth mindset is to create specific habits in your life that will help you tackle your lazy nature.

2. View challenges as opportunities.

We are constantly faced with important decisions, such as whether to accept a new job or signing up to take a new class.

Taking on these challenges is a big part of developing as a person. The more we challenge ourselves, the more opportunities we have to learn about ourselves. New challenges equal new opportunities.

Embarking on a new challenge may be frightening due to the risk of failure. This may result in avoiding various challenges and continuing down the usual path, holding onto excuses that we tell ourselves so we can remain in our comfort zones

The truth is, staying in your comfort zone because you are scared to venture out can become uncomfortable. If you avoid challenges, you will not be provided with opportunities to learn and grow. Instead, you will be troubled by the sense that things are not just right.

3. Know your learning style and use the right learning strategies.

If you are able to identify the best ways that you learn, you can optimize your time while researching or learning new skills.

Learning styles relate to different learning approaches that people find to be the most effective for them, so once these are identified, people can feel that their knowledge is expanding and they are getting better at what they are studying. Building a diverse way of learning is part of the growth mindset as well. So practicing new ways of learning helps you grow faster.

4. Remember that the brain has the ability to change throughout life.

Your brain forms new connections throughout life that allow it to make adjustments when you are faced with new situations or a new environment.

Neuroplasticity explains how your brain can be retrained and reorganized showing that there is always room to grow. If you are aware that your brain is constantly changing, then you are more likely to adopt a growth mindset.

Remember that if the brain is not fixed, then the mind should not be fixed either. As you learn things, your mind will adapt to this new information.

5. Prioritize learning over seeking approval.

When you are more concerned about getting approval from other people than about learning new things, you are giving up your own potential to grow. Don't worry about what other people think about you, and instead focus on bettering yourself for your own benefit.

Our suggestion is to focus on being self taught and make it a point to spend at least 10 minutes a day on self-education, where you try to sharpen your skills, increase knowledge or master one new thing.

6. Focus on the process instead of the end result.

People who have a growth mindset are often very in tune with their intelligence and willingness to learn.

They understand that any growth is going to be a process and make their own process of goals to help them reach the end of the process. They've learned to embrace the suck, do the work, and move on to the next part of the process.

It is important to enjoy the learning process so you are able to get the most out of it and be open to the process continuing beyond the expected time frame.

One of the most important things about the process of learning is the unexpected lessons that you may pick up along the way.

7. Cultivate a sense of purpose.

People with a growth mindset are able to look at long term goals and have a larger sense of purpose for their lives. Keep the end goal in mind and always look at the big picture.

Ask yourself on a regular basis what the purpose is of the work that you are doing. Are you doing it because you enjoy it, or is it part of a bigger goal? Always work with a purpose so you have the motivation to keep working.

8. Choose learning well over learning fast.

This goes back to focusing on the process of learning instead of the end result.

Learning isn't something that you can rush. You have to go through some mistakes in order to truly find success, and none of that will come easy or quickly.

9. Reward effort and actions, not traits.

Let other people know when they are doing something creative or especially smart rather than just telling them that they are smart in general. Pointing out specifics is the key here...this shows growth in a specific area. Do this for yourself through out each day and also journal these points to keep building on your foundation

This helps people strive to continue to do smart things rather than make them feel like they have already accomplished the end goal of being smart. When you are tracking this yourself make a note of it as step in a direction towards your goal.

10. Learn to give and receive constructive criticism.

Think of criticism as a way to learn. If you have an area of weakness and someone is able to point that out to you, think of it as a gift that makes you aware of your faults so you can focus on them to improve.

Think of criticism as a way to learn. If someone points out a weakness. Don't get mad. Use it to change

It is important to not take constructive criticism personally. Often, people are trying to help, and are therefore doing you a favor rather than trying to cut you down.

If you want to enhance your growth mindset, learn to listen carefully to others, and receive constructive criticism. Think of criticism as a way to learn.

11. Need for improvement does not mean failure.

Just because you need to improve in one area does not mean you have failed. It means that you are on the right track, you're just not quite there yet. There are literally 1000s of people that have failed and failed again and again until they reached success. Don't worry if you fail once. Edison failed 10,000 times before perfecting the incandescent electric light bulb. He was asked how we kept going by a reporter "I found 10,000 ways that didn't work" He had his goal in mind and kept taking the steps until he reached success.

12. Reflect on your learning every day.

Make sure to absorb everything you learn throughout the day, whether this means writing down the main points at the end of the day or doing a little bit more research on a topic that held your interest the most that day.

Don't let your lessons from the day just float away. Write it down in and journal your journey or make some other form of a permanent record. At a minimum sit with the idea of what you learned for a while and allow all the lessons to sink in.

13. Learn from the mistakes of others.

You don't always want to compare yourself to other people, but it is important to see that other people have the same weaknesses as you.

When you see someone make a mistake and recognize how it should have been done correctly, keep that in mind for the future when you are in their situation.

You can even put yourself in their shoes for the moment and pretend that it was you making the mistake, and try to learn from it first hand.

14. Think of learning as “brain training.”

The more you learn, the more you are training your brain to act a certain way and make various connections. You want to train your brain as best you can, which equates to continuing to learn throughout life.

Your brain will have to be trained and retrained as the world evolves and things change, so it is vital to be open to the idea of manipulating your brain to keep up with current trends.

15. Cultivate grit.

You want to have a passion for what you are doing so you can have the perseverance to see it through.

Having a deep interest in your work is one of the most important things to keep you motivated each day and to keep you wanting to be successful in your field. In order to accomplish your long-term goals, you have to have the grit to keep you motivated and on track.

If you want to develop a more “gritty” attitude, then I recommend checking out [*Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance by Angela Duckworth*](#).

16. Never stop learning. Set a new goal for every one you accomplished.

You will never be completely finished learning. Just because you have finished one class or one project does not mean that you should abandon the subject.

Growth-minded people are able to continue to create new goals or build on each accomplishment so they stay motivated and interested in the subjects that they choose to study. Learning is never finished, as there is always another goal to reach or more research to be done.

Never stop learning! Set a new goal for every goal you accomplish! – That is the secret of a growth mindset!

Growth-minded people are able to continue to create new goals so they stay motivated and interested in the subjects that they choose to study.

17. Remember that it takes time to learn.

Nothing worth doing comes quickly and easily. You have to be realistic about the time it will take for you to learn the information that you are interested in to the point of your satisfaction.

It may take several different methods of learning or several times of applying a new technique until it really sticks and you are able to master it. Additionally, because things are constantly changing, this means that the learning process may never truly be over.

Are you ready to grow?

In order to develop a growth mindset, you have to be willing and committed to changing your beliefs about what you are able to do. You cannot stay wrapped up in the idea that you were born with all of your talents and abilities, and have no room to grow.

You also have to take the appropriate actions to learn and stay motivated by looking at the big picture of why you have chosen to study what you have, and how it will benefit you in the long run.

By figuring out the best ways that you learn, you can combine these learning tactics to provide yourself with the most lasting and effective lessons that will help you achieve more success throughout your life.

Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset?

How do you feel about the fixed mindset vs growth mindset debate?

Embracing the difference between a growth or fixed mindset sets you up to improve as a person in any area of life. If you find yourself stuck in life, then maybe a fixed mindset is holding you back. And if that's the case, identify it and go through the process to start to change that belief by taking action to prove it wrong.

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There are many reasons why it can be hard to stick to new habits or develop new skills. But more often than not, the biggest challenge is sitting between your two ears.

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Your mind is a powerful thing. The stories you tell yourself and the things you believe about yourself can either prevent change from happening or allow new skills to blossom.

Learning more about the link between our beliefs and our behaviors. If you're interested in actually sticking to your goals, building better habits, and reaching a higher level of achievement, then understanding and embracing the growth mindset is a key to help unlock your success

How Your Beliefs Can Help You or Hurt You

The benefits of a growth mindset might seem obvious, but most of us are guilty of having a fixed mindset in certain situations. That can be dangerous because a fixed mindset can often prevent important skill development and growth, which could sabotage your health and happiness down the line.

For example, if you say, “I’m not a math person” then that belief acts as an easy excuse to avoid practicing math. The fixed mindset prevents you from failing in the short-run, but in the long-run it hinders your ability to learn, grow, and develop new skills.

Meanwhile, someone with a growth mindset would be willing to try math problems even if they failed at first. They see failure and setbacks as an indication that they should continue developing their skills rather than a signal that indicates, *“This is something I’m not good at.”*

As a result, people who have a growth mindset are more likely maximize their potential. They tend to learn from criticism rather than ignoring it, to overcome challenges rather than avoiding them, and to find inspiration in the success of others rather than feeling threatened.

Are Your Beliefs Holding You Back?

Dweck's research raises an important question about the connection between what you believe and what you do.

If you believe things about yourself like...

- “It's hard for me to lose weight.”
- “I'm not good with numbers.”
- “I'm not a natural athlete.”
- “I'm not creative.”
- “I'm a procrastinator.”

It's pretty clear that those fixed mindsets will cause you to avoid experiences where you might feel like a failure. As a result, you don't learn as much and it's hard to get better.

What can you do about this? How can you change the things you believe about yourself, eliminate your fixed mindset, and actually achieve your goals?

How Your Actions Change Your Beliefs

In my experience, the only way I know to change the type of person that you believe that you are – to build a new and better identity for yourself – is to do so with small, repeated actions.

Here's an example...

I had a client that set a goal to start running one year ago. This is how she describes the process...

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I started running a year ago. I didn't entirely start from scratch. In the past I had jogged every once in a while, maybe once a month.

My first run was just two miles at 12 minutes per mile. That's pretty slow. However, for a non-athlete I felt fairly good about it. I jogged a couple more times that week. After a couple weeks of regular jogging, I set a goal for myself.

I knew I would never be fast enough to impress anybody so it didn't make sense to make speed my goal. I could have picked a race to train for, a 5k or half miler, but I knew how those ended. Everyone seems to quit running right after their big race. I wanted to do something different. I wanted to not quit.

My goal involved not going too long between runs. If I skipped more than a couple days, wouldn't that be quitting? So I started running four and five days a week. The longest I went between runs was three days when I was in Hawaii for vacation.

My goal made all the difference. I was still slow, but I could at least feel good that I was running a lot. I'd have good days where I would run fast and feel great but I also had lots of bad days where I was tired and just didn't feel like running. In retrospect those days were almost better than the good days because they reinforced my goal – I didn't quit.

I ran my first 5k on Halloween, nearly five months after I had taken up running as a hobby. I wore a costume – fairy wings – and tried to keep up with a random guy with an owl on his head. I finished in 28 minutes and was super happy. I learned that racing wasn't always about being the fastest, but doing my personal best.

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I signed up to run a full marathon in December, asked questions and they coached me to help, and then set a regular running schedule.

I've started to think of myself as a runner.

If you would have told me a year ago that I would be working out almost every day and running 100 miles a month I would never have believed you. Running really snuck up on me. I had modest aspirations and didn't really care if I was great at running.

I just wanted to stick to my one goal: don't quit.

Did she start by thinking about how much weight she wanted to lose? No. Did she start by thinking about how fast she wanted to run? No. Did she start by thinking about the marathon she wanted to complete? No.

She didn't start by thinking about the results.

She simply focused on the process. She focused on showing up. She focused on sticking to the schedule. She focused on “not quitting.”

Eventually, the results and the self-confidence came anyway. Her actions shifted the way that she saw herself. *“I've started to think of myself as a runner.”*

The best musicians practice every day. The best athletes practice every day. The best writers practice every day.

Yes, their results are fantastic and they get to enjoy the fruits of their labor ... but it's not the results that set them apart, it's the dedication to daily practice. It's the fact that their identity is centered on being the type of person who does their craft each day.

People with a growth mindset focus on the process of building a better identity rather than the product.

Identity-Based Habits vs. Rapid Transformations

So often, we overestimate the importance of a single event (like a marathon) and underestimate the importance of making better choices on a daily basis (like running 5 days per week).

We think that getting *"that job"* or being featured in *"that media outlet"* or losing *"those 30 pounds"* will transform us into the person we want to become. We fall victim to a fixed mindset and think that we are defined by the result.

The graphic below shows the layers of behavior change. Sustainable and long-lasting change starts with building a better identity, not by focusing on results like your performance or your appearance.

Here's the truth: it's your daily actions that will change what you believe about yourself and the person you become. It's about setting a schedule, showing up, and sticking to it. It's about focusing on building the right identity rather than worrying about getting the right result.

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In my experience, identity-based habits tie in directly with the research from Dweck and her contemporaries. When you let the results define you – your talent, your test scores, your weight, your job, your performance, your appearance – you become the victim of a fixed mindset. But when you dedicate yourself to showing up each day and focusing on the habits that form a better identity, that's when you learn and develop. That's what a growth mindset looks like in the real world.

What You Should Do Now

In case I haven't made it clear enough already: skill is something you can cultivate, not merely something you're born with.

You can become more creative, more intelligent, more athletic, more artistic, and more successful by focusing on the process, not the outcome.

Instead of worrying about winning the championship, commit to the process of training like a champion. Instead of worrying about writing a bestselling book, commit to the process of publishing your ideas on a consistent basis. Instead of worrying about getting six pack abs, commit to the process of eating healthy each day.

It's not about the result, it's about building the identity of the type of person who gets to enjoy those results.

We all want to become better people – stronger and healthier, more creative and more skilled, a better friend or family member.

But even if we get really inspired and start doing things better, it's tough to actually stick to new behaviors. It's more likely that this time next year you'll be doing the same thing than performing a new habit with ease.

Why is that? And is there anything you can do to make change easier?

Identity-Based Habits

The key to building lasting habits is focusing on creating a new identity first. Your current behaviors are simply a reflection of your current identity. What you do now is a mirror image of the type of person you believe that you are (either consciously or subconsciously).

To change your behavior for good, you need to start believing new things about yourself. You need to build identity-based habits.

Imagine how we typically set goals. We might start by saying “I want to lose weight” or “I want to get stronger.” If you're lucky, someone might say, “That's great, but you should be more specific.”

So then you say, “I want to lose 20 pounds” or “I want to squat 300 pounds.”

These goals are centered around outcomes, not identity.

To understand what I mean, consider that there are three levels at which change can occur. You can imagine them like the layers of an onion.

Identity-Based Habits: How to Actually Stick to Your Goals This Year

There are three layers of behavior change: a change in your outcomes, a change in your processes, or a change in your identity.

The first layer is changing your outcomes. This level is concerned with changing your results: losing weight, publishing a book, winning a championship. Most of the goals you set are associated with this level of change.

The second layer is changing your process. This level is concerned with changing your habits and systems: implementing a new routine at the gym, decluttering your desk for better workflow, developing a meditation practice. Most of the habits you build are associated with this level.

The third and deepest layer is changing your identity. This level is concerned with changing your beliefs: your worldview, your self-image, your judgments about yourself and others. Most of the beliefs, assumptions, and biases you hold are associated with this level.

Outcomes are about what you get. Processes are about what you do. Identity is about what you believe. When it comes to building habits that last—when it comes to building a system of 1 percent improvements—the problem is not that one level is “better” or “worse” than another. All levels of change are useful in their own way. The problem is the *direction* of change.

Many people begin the process of changing their habits by focusing on *what* they want to achieve. This leads us to outcome-based habits. The alternative is to build identity-based habits. With this approach, we start by focusing on *who* we wish to become.

The Recipe for Sustained Success

Changing your beliefs isn't nearly as hard as you might think. There are two steps.

1. Decide the type of person you want to be.
2. Prove it to yourself with small wins.

First, decide who you want to be. This holds at any level—as an individual, as a team, as a community, as a nation. What do you want to stand for? What are your principles and values? Who do you wish to become?

These are big questions, and many people aren't sure where to begin—but they do know what kind of results they want: to get six-pack abs or to feel less anxious or to double their salary. That's fine; start there and work backward from the results you want to the type of person who could get those results. Ask yourself, “Who is the type of person that could get the outcome I want?”

Here are five examples of how you can make this work in real life.

Identity-Based Habits: How to Actually Stick to Your Goals This Year

Want to lose weight?

Identity: Become the type of person who moves more every day.

Small win: Buy a pedometer. Walk 50 steps when you get home from work. Tomorrow, walk 100 steps. The day after that, 150 steps. If you do this 5 days per week and add 50 steps each day, then by the end of the year, you'll be walking over 10,000 steps per day.

Want to become a better writer?

Identity: Become the type of person who writes 1,000 words every day.

Small win: Write one paragraph each day this week.

Want to become strong?

Identity: Become the type of person who never misses a workout.

Small win: Do pushups every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Want to be a better friend?

Identity: Become the type of person who always stays in touch.

Small win: Call one friend every Saturday. If you repeat the same people every 3 months, you'll stay close with 12 old friends throughout the year.

Want to be taken seriously at work?

Identity: become the type of person who is always on time.

Small win: Schedule meetings with an additional 15-minute gap between them so that you can go from meeting to meeting and always show up early.

What is your identity?

When you want to become better at something, proving your identity to yourself is far more important than getting amazing results. This is especially true at first.

If you want to get motivated and inspired, then feel free to watch a YouTube video, listen to your favorite song, and do P90X. But don't be surprised if you burn out after a week. You can't rely on being motivated. You have to become the type of person you want to be, and that starts with proving your new identity to yourself.

Most people (myself included) will want to become better this year. Many of us, however, will set performance- and appearance-based goals in hopes that they will drive us to do things differently.

If you're looking to make a change, then I say stop worrying about results and start worrying about your identity. Become the type of person who can achieve the things you want to achieve. Build identity-based habits now. The results can come later. One of the biggest things that hold us back is FEAR. This can be fear of change, fear of failure, fear of the unknown and the list goes on!

“I can have fear, but I need not be fear—if I am willing to stand someplace else in my inner landscape.”

*Parker Palmer, Author, **The Courage to Teach.***

And, as often, We constantly limit our options by deciding for others. All I had to do was apply, and it then became the university's job to accept my application or not.

You probably have seen this pattern countless times in yourself and others. It's far easier to “not fail” when you haven't tried. It's far easier to not be wrong when you're not putting yourself out there. It is easier to say they wouldn't hire me anyway. We constantly limit our options by deciding the out come for others. This stops us from actually taking the steps and actions to be successful.

If this fear of failure is so bad for our personal and professional growth, why is it so common?

We all want to be loved

Fear of failure starts in early childhood. In a study looking at the relationship between young athletes and their parents, researchers found a correlation between the parents' high expectations for achievement and the children's fear of failure. The more the parents showed a negative reaction to what they perceived as failure from their kid, the more the kid would fear the consequences of “failing.”

In some people, this can turn into atychiphobia, an irrational and paralysing fear of failure, often accompanied by an intense feeling of panic or anxiety, and physical symptoms such as difficulty breathing, an unusually fast heart rate, and sweating.

Increments of curiosity and your fear of failure

For most people, though, fear of failure manifests itself in self-doubt that prevents them from making decisions. Because we are social animals and feel the need to be accepted by others, we end up:

- Putting off doing things because we're not sure how they will turn out
- Not doing things we know will improve our lives because they involve getting out of our comfort zone
- Avoiding situations where we may have to try something new in front of other people

We end up doing things that are already within our realm of safety, and give ourselves the illusion of growth by reading, researching, watching videos... Anything but actually *doing* the thing and risking to be judged by others. We're basically procrastinating. We are doing "busy" work but not successful actions.

The good news, though, is that nobody is hoping for you to fail. The truth is that most people you know would be happy to see you succeed. So how can you shift your perception and overcome your fear of failure?

Your perception of possible

When you start reading a novel, you rarely expect to finish it in one go. Instead, you will probably read a few chapters, then a few more, until you're done with the book.

Strangely, we're not so pragmatic when it comes to personal goals.

It's a common mistake to look at a long term goal and to never get started because it seems too far out of reach. But we can reshape our perception of what's possible by breaking our journey down into smaller, more achievable chunks.

Increments of curiosity and your fear of failure

Achievable in this case does not mean something where you are certain of succeeding, but rather something that you can put to the test in the short term, without being able to use any excuse to put it off.

For example, if you have a fear of public speaking and use the excuse that nobody would ever invite you to speak at a conference, a small, achievable chunk would be to apply to five local meetups to give a talk.

While speaking in public may sound terrifying, filling an online form is perfectly doable. While writing a book is a daunting task, writing a blog post is much more manageable.

Fail like a scientist

If you see life as a giant experiment where your goal is to explore as much as you can to obtain answers to *your* questions, failure becomes the price to pay to get closer to these answers.

Scientists often have to repeat experiments thousands of times to get a conclusive answer. And more often than not, the answer they get is that their initial hypothesis was *wrong*.

Not performing the experiment would have allowed them to stay in a cozy limbo of being *not wrong*, but is that what a scientist would prefer?

“The cost of being wrong is less than the cost of doing nothing.”

Seth Godin, American Author.

This is why approaching failure like a scientist is so powerful. By taking decisions that will let you learn something new, you are guaranteed to never really fail.

Increments of curiosity

Another way to approach your fear of failure is to think like a kid. Instead of imagining all the ways you may fail, keep an open mind, and cultivate the skill of curiosity...Keep Asking WHY!

Children tend to experiment just for the sake of it. What will happen if I press this button? How does it feel to touch this thing?

Reconnecting with your inner child is a great way to overcome your fear of failure. What will happen if I publish this post? How does it feel to speak my mind?

Increments of curiosity and your fear of failure

Maybe nothing good will happen, but a child would not take the answer for granted.

Build your journey in increments of curiosity. Start with something small, then move onto the next step. With time, your mind will become increasingly comfortable with the idea of trying new things and growing through constantly expanding your horizons.

Here is how can you start applying this approach right now:

1. **Pick something you've been putting off because of a fear of failure.** Is it public speaking? Starting a blog? Producing a podcast? Launching your first product? Write it down.
2. **Define one small incremental step you can take towards this goal.** Ideally, something that's actionable. For example, apply to a few meetups to give a talk, produce one episode of a podcast, announce that you will build a product on Twitter. No need to write this one down, it should be simple enough that you can just do it.
3. **Reflect on what happened.** Any negative reactions? What about your emotions? What did you learn? Taking notes help.
4. **Rinse and repeat.** Keep defining incremental steps. Things that are out of your comfort zone but not scary to the point of being paralyzing.

The only mistake you can make is to not get started. You may feel some anxiety or discomfort along the way, but addressing your fears and trying new things you care about is the only way to avoid another feeling that's much harder to manage: regret.

3 surprising benefits of curiosity

It seems like most adults go about their lives without any effort to foster their curiosity. You might think, maybe that's not such a bad thing after all. But curiosity has magical properties which have been extensively studied by scientists.

- **Curiosity keeps you young:** research shows that keeping a sense of wonder throughout life and as well as a novelty-seeking behaviour helps people to stay young. A study which followed aging individuals while tracking their curiosity levels found that those that showed high levels of curiosity were more likely to be alive five years later.
- **Curiosity helps you learn:** there is strong evidence that curiosity helps you better remember new information. The more curious you are about a topic, the more likely you are to remember it.
- **Curiosity fosters better relationships:** being *genuinely* interested in other people helps build more robust relationships. This means a greater feeling of intimacy and creating the foundation for meaningful relationships.

The good thing is that low levels of curiosity doesn't mean your curiosity is just gone. In most adults, it's mostly suppressed. In fact, every time you go to bed to sleep and you start dreaming, you let your curiosity run wild!

How to cultivate your curiosity

There are a few simple activities that will help you foster your curiosity and by extension increase your creativity. Try a few and see which ones feel most effective for you personally.

New project

1. **ASK Questions!** Randomly ask yourself *why?* and *how?* when reading something or chatting with friends. You can even write down some of these questions to take the time to find the answers later.
2. **Read outside of your field:** pick a type of book you would never naturally buy in a bookstore. Is it classic poetry? Non-fiction? A cookbook? Something about geology? Read it just for the sake of reading it.
3. **Be inquisitive with people:** choose someone in your entourage that you haven't seen in a while, and invite them for coffee. Make it your goal to learn as much as possible about their interests. Take that approach any time you meet a new person.
4. **Practice saying less:** this is linked to the previous one. Try to talk less and to listen more.
5. **Immerse yourself in a topic:** select a topic that you find interesting, and push the limits of your curiosity by going deep. This means reading lots of articles, books, and research papers, watching TED talks, listening to podcasts.
6. **Write:** take it to the next level by writing about this topic. This is exactly what I'm doing here. By committing to write on this blog, I get to explore new topics and cultivate my curiosity.
7. **Carry a notebook:** it will make it easier to remember topics you're curious about and want to either research or write about later.
8. **Learn about yourself:** curiosity doesn't need to only be outward. Explore your feelings, ask yourself about your goals and behaviours, or even research your past and family history.
9. **Slow down:** productivity can be the enemy of [creativity](https://nesslabs.com/7-books-to-increase-your-creativity). Take the time to let your mind wander and let questions pop into your head.
10. **Hang out with a child:** playing and talking with a child is probably one of the best reminders of our potential for curiosity.

Go Build Your New Growth Mindset

Your brain is a muscle that gets stronger each step you take and each action you take. The stronger you become the easier each next step become the faster you can perfect each action!