

Applying Growth Mindset in our Teaching

By [Prashant Agarwal](#) | Apr 24, 2018

“Are Effective people born or Made” – Whenever I have asked this question to people, most of the time I have got a mixed response. Though, there’s nothing wrong with you being on either side, however, it can somehow affect the work you are doing and your entire life.

I recently got a chance to talk about it at with an organization named [Ahvaan](#). It is a Delhi based NGO working with primary school teachers. They felt that it would be a useful training for their trainers as most of the time our teachers are either not motivated themselves or they don’t have meaningful expectations from the students they teach. In reality, we the trainers also sometimes don’t expect a lot from the teachers we train.

[Growth Mindset](#) is a term which was coined by [Ms. Carol C Dweck](#) who has also written a book on the same topic called [Mindset](#). In this brilliant book, she shows how success in school, work, sports, arts, and almost every area of human endeavor can be dramatically influenced by how we think about our talents and abilities. People with a fixed mindset — those who believe that abilities are fixed — are less likely to flourish than those with a growth mindset — those who believe that the abilities can be developed. ‘Mindset’ reveals how great parents, teachers, managers, and athletes can put this idea to use to foster outstanding accomplishment.



While the message is simple, yet, we keep finding a lot of examples of people with fixed mindset all around us.

To go about the session, I planned to use case studies and rather than talking about all the various areas – we planned to focus on areas which dealt with teaching profession. I will be covering few of those over here and I hope you find them useful.

To start, it would be great to first see, where do you stand: -

S.No	Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
1	Avoid Challenges	Embrace Challenges
2	Give up Easily	Persist in the face of setbacks
3	See Effort as fruitless	See Effort as a path to Mastery
4	Ignore useful negative Feedback	Learn from Criticism
5	Find Inspiration in the success of others	Feel threatened by the success of others.

Now, try to rate whether you have more of Growth mindset qualities or Fixed mindset qualities.

Carol C Dweck further says that there are mainly three pillars of growth mindset:



- **Learn at all costs:** People should understand that every moment something is happening around them and they should try their best to learn from each opportunity.



- **Mistakes are part of learning:** A lot of people and organizations have started talking about mistakes and failures in a more open way than before. It's still a difficult concept to grasp and implement in your life.

- **Effort activates ability and it increases over time:** The more effort and time we put in a task, we become better skilled at it.

Praise: This is one of the favorite topics of my teachers as most of us feel that praising someone can't be wrong. However, what if I tell you that praise done in a wrong way not only affects that person but it also affects the people around.

Have you had an experience of a student who was the best student of his class, but the moment this student gets into higher standard and faces some tougher challenges i.e. say algebra – she/he just loses his interest in the subject and start focusing on other subjects.

Have you experienced a scenario where the moment a visitor comes to a class, the teacher shouts 'He is the best student of my class' or 'You are born intelligent'.

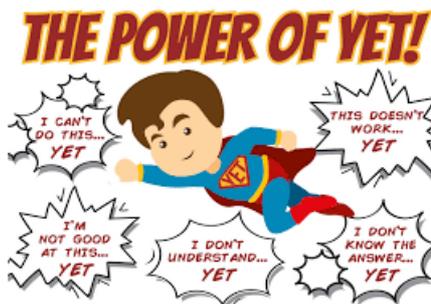
What is happening in both the scenario is that "the praise is reinforcing fixed mindset in the student" i.e. The student has always been told that she/he is born intelligent and that she/he can't make mistakes as she/he is the best student. The moment these students face any tough problem, they feel their worthiness will fall and they crumble.

Therefore, Carol C Dweck says that rather than praising the student, we should praise the hard work, persistence of the student.

For e.g.: Rather than saying "You are the best student of this class in maths", we can say "You have put a lot of effort in your maths work and therefore you are able to score great grades in the exam"

This also helps the complete class to understand 'Why the teacher has praised that student and with hard work they can also do get great grades in subject.'

One other very practical advice from growth Mindset is about the word 'Yet'.



Yet not but: Carol says that we have been using the word 'But' in our vocabulary quite often however it brings a negative connotation. For example – H.R. in a company will say – You have been doing great job but we have a long list of top performers or we have promoted almost everyone this time but not in the tech department or Rahul is a great student but he doesn't pay attention in English.

She suggests that we should change the word 'but' with 'Yet' which will bring a positive connotation to the sentence. For example: Rahul has been struggling in his job yet he performed well. We had a huge crunch this time yet we could give hike to almost everyone.

We incorporated a lot of activities to make the session fun yet meaningful.

Category: Teacher Development

Subject: Views and Reflections

Board: All boards

Grade/Standard: Early Childhood Education

Class 1-2

Class 3-5

Class 6-8

Class 9-10

Class 11-12

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