

The Power of Belief:

Intersection of Psychology and Sociology

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The Power of Believing in Others

Pygmalion Effect: the type of expectations a person holds of an individual influences that individual's perception and affects their performance (HeroicImaginationTV, 2011).

- **Positive expectations** can encourage **high performance**.
- **Low expectations** can lead to **low performance**.

Pygmalion in the Classroom

In 1968, psychologist Robert Rosenthal and principal Lenore Jacobson conducted a study to test the power of teachers' expectations on their students' intellectual capabilities (Brown, 2019).

- They gave a test to the students in Jacobson's elementary school.
- Then, they gave the teachers a list of names of some of the students in their classes, and told them that according to the test, these particular students (the experimental group) would academically **bloom** in the coming year.
- However, in reality, the names were chosen **randomly**.
- The students were tested later in the year and the result was that the students in the experimental group did in fact bloom: they **scored remarkably better than their peers**.

How?



The teachers' expectations regarding what these students were intellectually capable of made them construct a special environment for them (with actions such as calling on them more and teaching them greater material) that led them to meet those expectations (HeroicImaginationTV, 2011).



Takeaway:



“People tend to become who you believe them to be.

So believe the best.”

- Holley Girth

LOOKING GLASS THEORY

Looking Glass Theory: a person forms their identity or “sense of self” through the way they think others perceive them (Murphy, 2023).

Three main components:

- **Imagination:** What we think others perceive about us through observation of factors such as their reactions and body language.
- **Interpretation of Evaluation:** We internalize what we observed.
The image formed in our minds could be either **positive** or **negative** depending on the conclusions we formed (regardless of their accuracy).
- **Emotional Response:** Our interpretations prompt certain emotions.
 - Interpretations of **positive evaluations** can lead to **positive emotions** that boost self-esteem.
 - Interpretations of **negative evaluations** can lead to **negative emotions**, such as insecurity.

→
“I am not who you think I am;
I am not who I think I am;
I am who I think you think I am.”
- Charles Cooley



The Belief-Behave-Influence Pattern

Our beliefs about others subconsciously **manifest in our actions**, are **internalized by others**, and in turn **affect those people's own beliefs** about themselves (Brown, 2019). Even simple or subtle gestures, such as reducing the amount of eye contact we make can impart a particular meaning.

This is especially true for children and even more so for adolescents because they are in the process of building their identities.

↪ (Harkavy, 2020)

Thus, it is crucial that we examine our beliefs and attitudes towards others.

Positive Beliefs Empower

One day, when Thomas Edison was young, he brought home a sealed note from school (Black, 2015). When he gave it to his mom, she read it with tears in her eyes and told him that it said he was a **genius**, his school was not equipped to teach him, and she should teach him herself.

Years later, when Edison had attained great success as an inventor, he was looking through some mementos of his mother's and came across that same note. When he read it, he cried for hours because he discovered that what the note actually stated was that he was **mentally incapable** and not accepted at the school.

Later, Edison wrote, **"Thomas Alva Edison was an addled child that, by a hero mother, became the genius of the century"** (Black, 2015). His mother did not place limitations on him and her **belief** was extremely **empowering**.

Negative Beliefs Impair

Stereotype Threat: a scientific phenomenon that refers to the fear an individual may carry of performing actions that would seem to confirm the stereotypes surrounding the groups they belong to (Zawisza, 2018).

Many stereotypes exist in our society. Though seemingly invisible, such generalized beliefs can leave large imprints in the lives of the individuals they generalize.

Research shows that if an individual is exposed to cues (even if subtle) that trigger such stereotypes, the fear prompted from these cues can lead to underperformance in the areas corresponding to the stereotypes.

Stereotype threat is particularly detrimental because it is part of a **cycle**:

- When a certain **stereotype** regarding an individual is **triggered** →
- The **fear** resulting from it can lead to **underperformance** →
- This can seem to the individual to reinforce the **stereotype**.



The Power of Believing in Yourself

Self-Efficacy: the belief an individual has in their abilities (Brown, 2019).

From a **scientific lens**, believing in yourself is a crucial concept because according to the “conservation” theory in biology, humans are not likely to put in time and energy into something they do not believe they can do.

Furthermore, acting with belief is important to achieving success in various aspects of life, such as in one’s education, career, and relationships due to its ability to aid in the following four areas (Kight, n.d.):

- **Envisioning** both the end goal and the work needed to reach that goal (the focus this grants helps overcome factors such as doubt and distraction).
- **Developing a strong will** to persevere and to battle in staying on the path leading to the end goal.
- **Generating resilience** to keep moving forward even when the barriers or challenges faced increase in intensity.
- **Acting as fuel** that unlocks your capabilities (as it counters negative forces, such as doubt, that would instead restrict them).

Note:

- You have the power to determine what you believe.
- You may not control outside circumstances but shaping your life through your beliefs still rests in your hands.



“The brick walls are there for a reason...to give us a chance to show how badly we want something.”

- Randy Pausch

The Role of Mindset

Mindset is a powerful concept in success and plays a role in how much of our potential we unlock (TEDx Talks, 2012).

Fixed Mindset

vs

Growth Mindset

Believing that one has a fixed amount of intelligence or ability (Dweck, 2012).

- Tending to stay away from challenges from fear of looking unintelligent.
- Being less likely to bounce back from obstacles because of perceiving failure to be due to a lack of ability.

➔ Emphasizes **nature**.

Believing that one's level of intelligence and ability can be developed through means such as education and effort.

- Tending to tackle challenges.
- Being more likely to rise from failure because of viewing it as part of the learning process.

➔ Emphasizes **nurture**.

We all have a fixed mindset about something and might think something like (Clear, n.d.):

- **"I'm not a math person"**
- **"I'm not a natural athlete"**
- **"I'm not creative"**

This can be detrimental because believing that we are simply not capable of something can act as an excuse to not practice or work on that area.

→ **Thus, we stay where we are at.**

"... what the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve" (Black, 2015).



Identity-Based Habits

- People with fixed mindsets tend to just focus on the **results**, such as losing a certain amount of weight or winning a particular competition (Clear, n.d.).
- People with growth mindsets, on the other hand, put their focus on the **process**, such as the sacrifice and restraint needed every day to lose that weight, or the daily practice and effort required to win that competition.

The Power of Mindset

Study of Fixed vs Growth Mindset Praise

In 1998, Carol Dweck and Claudia Mueller did a study to analyze the **effect of different types of praise on mindset** (University of Central Florida, n.d.).

They gave a group of kids some puzzles to complete, and the kids were told that they scored well (TEDx Talks, 2012).

- Some of the kids were additionally given **fixed mindset (ability) praise**:
 - **“You must be smart at this.”**
- Other kids were additionally given **growth mindset (effort) praise**:
 - **“You must have tried really hard.”**

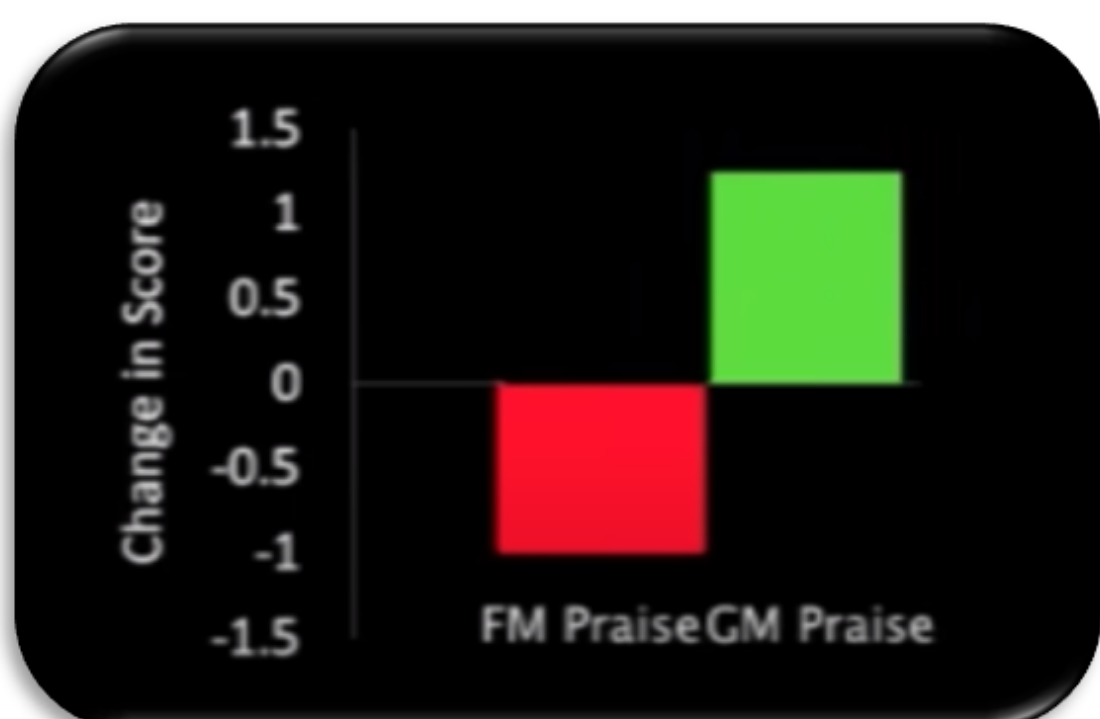
Then, the kids were asked about the level of difficulty they wanted for the next puzzle they would do.

- Most of the kids given the **ability praise** wanted the **easy puzzle**.
- Most of the kids given the **effort praise** wanted the challenge of the **harder puzzle**.

In order to see their response to facing hardship, all the kids were given the difficult puzzle.

Then, the kids did a set of problems similar in difficulty to the ones they started with (University of Central Florida, n.d.).

- The kids given the **ability praise did worse** than they originally did.
- The kids given the **effort praise did better** than they originally did.



The results of this study are important because...

If a person repeatedly hears a certain type of praise, they might adopt the mindset associated with it (whether that be the **fixed** or **growth** one).



The Power of Mindset



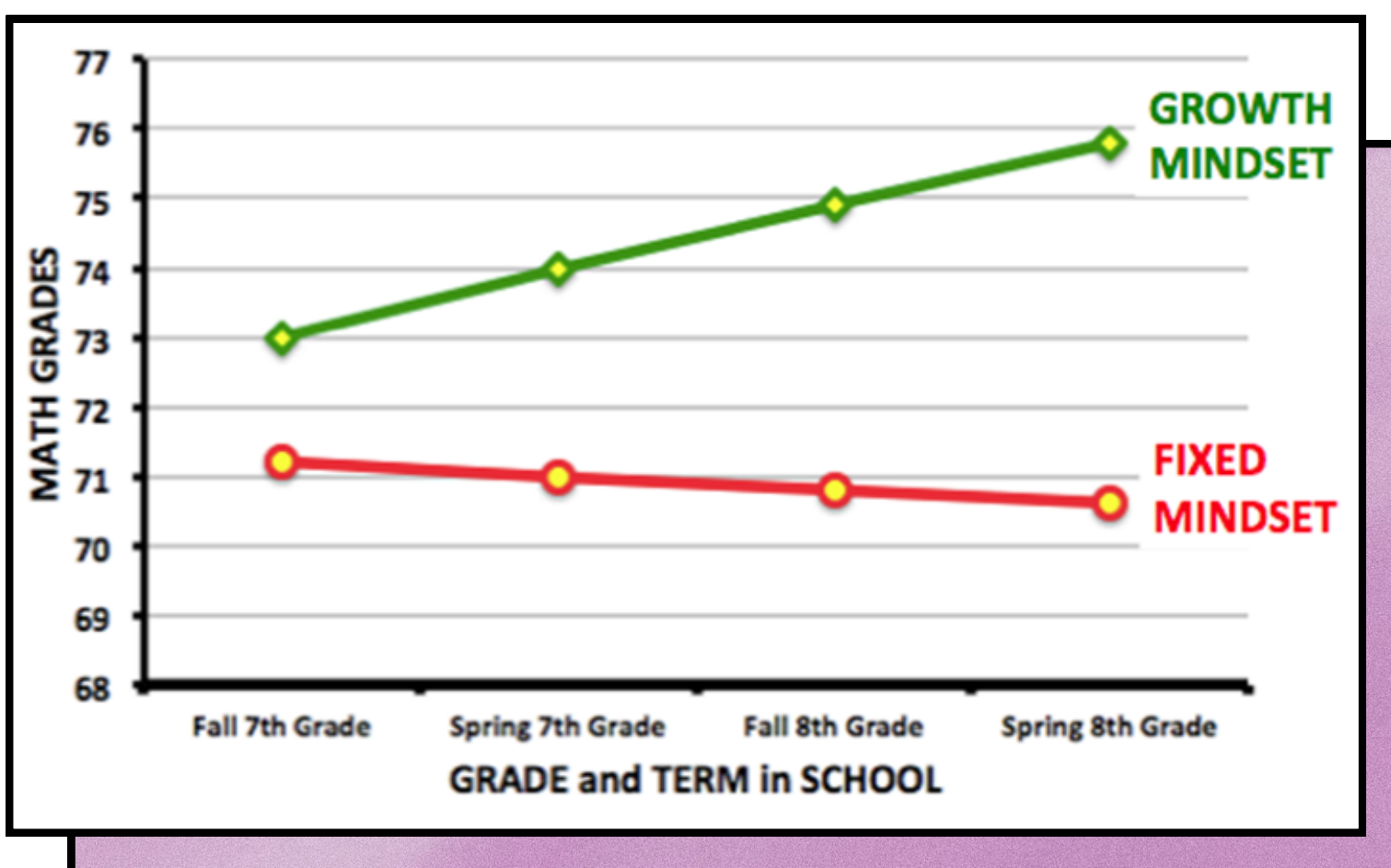
Study of Fixed vs Growth Mindset

In 2007, Carol Dweck and some of her colleagues conducted a study in which they examined the **effect of mindset on performance** (University of Central Florida, n.d.).

They gave a few hundred seventh graders at the beginning of their seventh-grade year a survey to determine the type of mindset they held.

They then tracked these seventh graders for a period of two years (until the end of their eighth-grade year) and examined their math grades during this period.

They found that those who held a **growth mindset improved** in their average math grades while those with a **fixed mindset** showed a **decline**.



CHANGE YOUR WORDS CHANGE YOUR MINDSET

FIXED

- I'M JUST NOT GOOD AT THIS!
- I GIVE UP!
- I'll never be as smart!
- THIS IS TOO HARD!**
- I'm never going to get this!
- I CAN'T MAKE THIS ANY BETTER!

GROWTH

- I'LL USE SOME OF THE STRATEGIES I'VE LEARNED!
- I CAN ALWAYS IMPROVE. I'LL KEEP TRYING!
- This may take some time and effort!
- I NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT I DID WRONG AND GET SOME HELP!
- I'M ON THE RIGHT TRACK!**
- WHAT AM I MISSING?

Note:

Mindset does not directly determine performance. Instead, mindset leads to different behaviors (relating to one's perception of **challenge**, **effort**, and **failure**) and these behaviors in turn affect one's learning and performance.

- Those who tend to **seek challenges**, **put in effort** to develop, and **view failure as a learning opportunity** are more likely to perform well.

Thoughts are the Roots of Belief

According to neuroscience, the **brain** is extremely **malleable** (TEDx Talks, 2012).

Lots of mental activity (like various sounds, sights, thoughts, and feelings) streams through our brains and has temporary effects, like ripples in a river (Hanson, 2013).

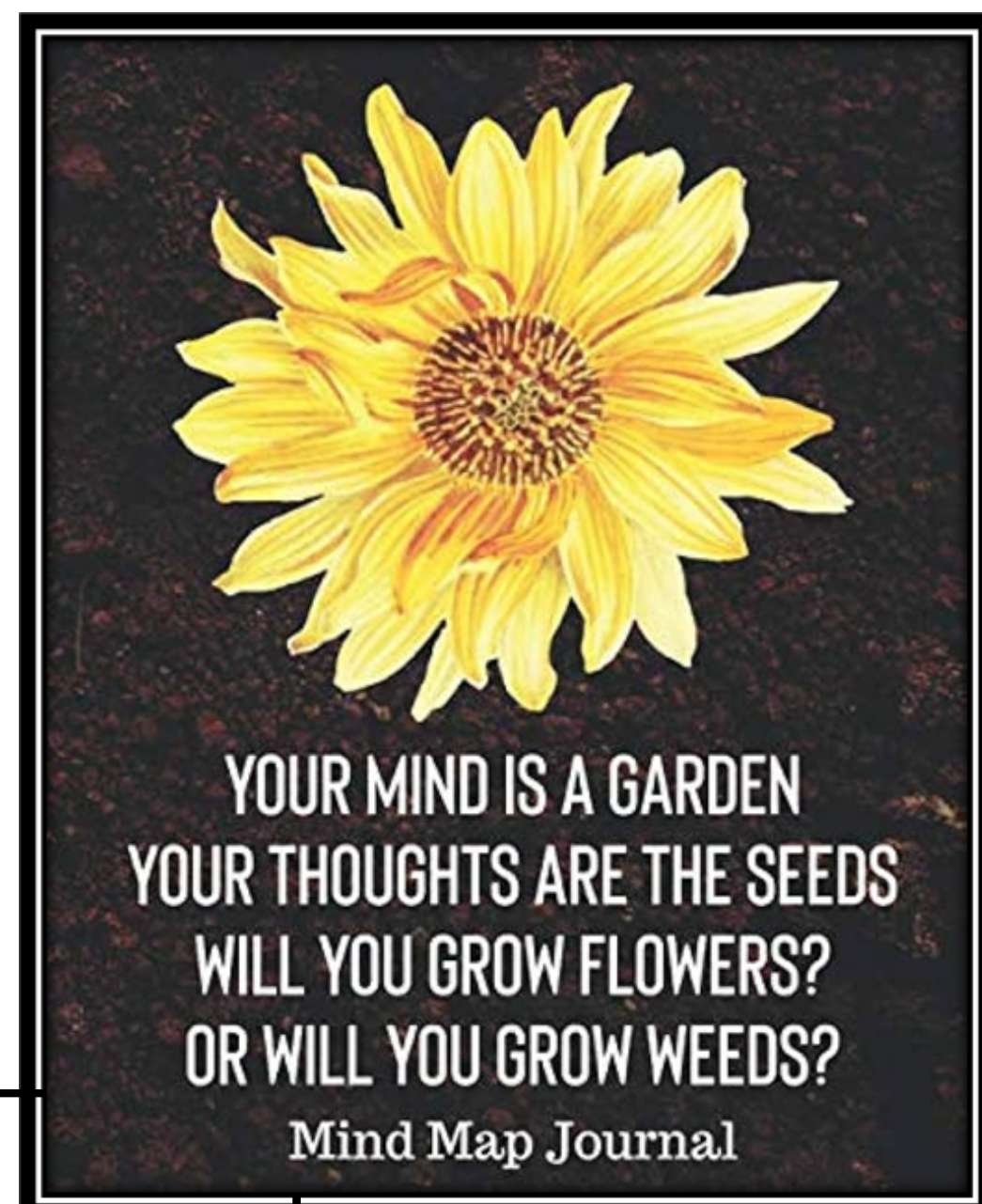
Activity that is vigorous or repeated numerous times makes physical changes to the neural structure of our brains, “like a surging current reshaping a riverbed” (Hanson, 2013). This process is called **experience-dependent neuroplasticity**.

Thus, by what we choose to have our minds focus on, we choose how we structure our brains.

Linking Thoughts, Emotions, and Behavior

(Itani, 2020)

- The **thoughts** we award attention to
- ↓
- Affect our **emotions**
 - This fuels the thoughts that prompted them which in turn, intensifies these emotions.
- ↓
- Which affect our **actions**.



Our Thoughts Reinforce Our Beliefs

- **Repeated** thoughts, emotions, and actions construct a map in our subconsciousness.
- This map is acted upon, continuing the same experiences that correspond to those repeated thoughts and emotions.



Takeaway:

- One does not control outside forces.
- However, one can control what one thinks in order to shape what one believes and does. Rewiring our brains takes time but we can begin now.

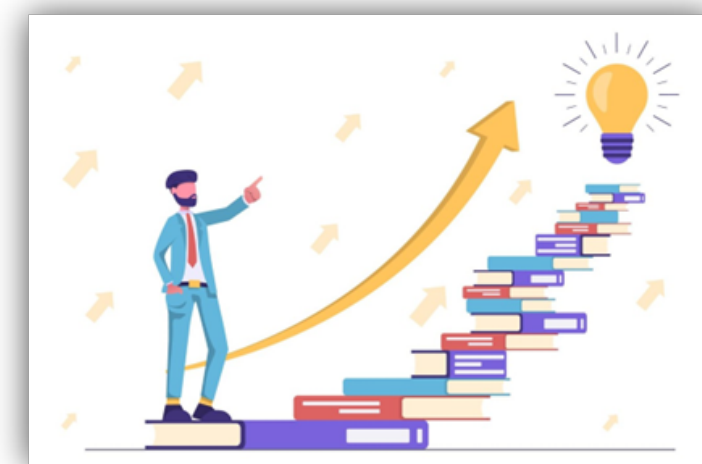
“You are not your thoughts, you are the thoughts you give power and attention to—you are the thinker” (Itani, 2020).

Steps in Moving Forward

(Future Learn, 2022)

Developing the Growth Mindset*

1. Identify the mindsets you hold
2. Recall things you have improved at
3. Look at the success of others
4. Ask for feedback from others
5. Utilize the power of “yet”
6. Learn new things
7. Realize the value of mistakes
8. Be kind to yourself
9. Look to positive examples
10. Set realistic goals



* Note:

We may not be able to entirely have a growth mindset or to succeed at everything, but these are still steps we can take to develop the growth mindset.

(Healthline, n.d.)

Tips for Regulating Thought

- Put your focus on the good things
- Express gratitude
- Have a gratitude journal
- Don't be afraid to laugh
- Spend your time with positive people
- Practice positive self-talk
- Determine your areas of negativity
- Start on a positive note every day





Annotated Bibliography



Black, T. (2015, October 16). Believing in yourself is the foundation for success. The Tennessean. <https://www.tennessean.com/story/money/2015/10/16/believing-yourself-foundation-success/74050854/>

- Black shows the power of belief through Thomas Edison and gives tips for improving one's belief. I incorporated this source by highlighting the moment discussed in Thomas Edison's life to display how influential believing in others can be.

Brown, J. (2019, August 27). The power of belief in the classroom. Medium. <https://johnbrownpraxisgroup.medium.com/using-the-power-of-belief-in-the-classroom-5f3a72b29ebb>

- Brown demonstrates the power of belief through two main experiments, shows the effect of the manifestation of our beliefs in our behavior, and discusses other related concepts. I incorporated this source by defining self-efficacy, describing the “belief-behave-influence” pattern, and discussing one of the experiments mentioned.

Clear, J. (n.d.). How your beliefs can sabotage your behavior. <https://jamesclear.com/fixed-mindset-vs-growth-mindset>

- Clear discusses the fixed vs growth mindset and gives examples that show the importance of being fixated on the process rather than an end result. I incorporated this source by discussing the link between the fixed vs growth mindset and “identity based habits.”

Dweck, C.S., (2012). Mindsets and human nature: promoting change in the Middle East, the schoolyard, the racial divide, and willpower. *American Psychologist*, 67(8), 614-622. DOI: 10.1037/a0029783

- Dweck discusses the fixed vs growth mindset (as it relates to the nature vs nurture debate) and highlights studies showing the impact of mindset in various areas. I incorporated this source by defining the fixed vs growth mindset and showing its link to nature and nurture.

Future Learn. (2022). What is a growth mindset and how can you develop one? <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/general/develop-growth-mindset>

- This source defines the fixed and growth mindsets, gives examples of them, discusses whether the growth mindset works, and gives ten ways to develop the growth mindset. I incorporated this source by listing the tips it gave.





Hanson, R., (2013, September 24). How to grow the good in your brain. Greater Good Magazine.

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_grow_the_good_in_your_brain

- Hanson gives an analogy of our minds being like gardens, explains the concept of experience-dependent neuroplasticity, and discusses how we can take charge in shaping our brains. I incorporated this source by highlighting this concept and showing how we can take charge.

Harkavy, D. (2020, February 25). The power of believing in others. Forbes.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/02/25/the-power-of-believing-in-others/?sh=1b3c8caf6154>

- Harkavy shows the power of belief through an experiment conducted in an educational setting, discusses takeaways, and shows how this powerful concept also applies to the workplace. I incorporated this source by stating one of its takeaways.

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<https://www.healthline.com/health/how-to-think-positive>

- This source discusses the effects of positive and negative thinking and gives tips for thinking positively. I incorporated this source by listing the tips it gave.

HeroicImaginationTV. (2011, September 25). The Pygmalion Effect and the power of positive expectations [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTghEXKNj7g>

- This video discusses the Pygmalion effect and the results of the study done by physiologist Robert Rosenthal and principal Lenore Jacobson regarding its effect on a set of students' performance. I incorporated this source by using it to define the Pygmalion effect and to explain the obtained results.

Itani, O. (2020, April 21). You are what you think: How your thoughts create your reality. <https://www.omaritani.com/blog/what-you-think>

- Itani shows how our thoughts shape our lives by discussing the link between our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors and discusses how our thoughts reinforce our beliefs. I incorporated this source by discussing these two aspects to show that changing our beliefs stems back to analyzing our thoughts.





Kight, T. (n.d). The power of belief. Focus 3. <https://focus3.com/the-power-of-belief/>

- Kight gives an example that demonstrates the power of belief and discusses four main reasons as to why belief is powerful. I incorporated this source by stating these four points to introduce the power of believing in oneself before diving into the mindset required to hold such beliefs.

Murphy, T. F., (2023, December 8). Looking glass theory. Psychology Fanatic. <https://psychologyfanatic.com/looking-glass-self/>

- Murphy discusses the concept of self and the looking glass theory along with its three components. I incorporated this source by defining this theory to emphasize the power of others' beliefs in terms of the formation of one's identity.

TEDx Talks. (2012, November 18). The power of belief -- mindset and success | Eduardo Briceno | TEDxManhattanBeach [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNbOKXc>

- Briceno discusses the power of the growth mindset by giving Josh Waitzkin as an example and highlights studies done regarding mindset. I incorporated this source by stating the role of mindset and summarizing the entails of the study discussed regarding the effect of fixed vs growth mindset praise.

University of Central Florida. (n.d.). Psych in real life: Growth mindsets. <https://pressbooks.online.ucf.edu/lumenpsychology/chapter/psych-in-real-life-growth-mindsets/>

- This source presents two studies done by Professor and Psychologist Carol Dweck and her colleagues that show the impact of mindset. I incorporated this source by discussing the entails of the second (regarding the effect of mindset on a group of seventh graders' mathematical performance).

Zawisza, M. (2018, August 28). The terrifying power of stereotypes - and how to deal with them. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/the-terrifying-power-of-stereotypes-and-how-to-deal-with-them-101904>

- Zawisza discusses the concept of "stereotype threat" and shows its effects through various example studies. I incorporated this source by defining this concept and showing how it is a cycle.



Image Citations

Decoration:

Pages 2-4 (upper left and right corners) and 11-17 (upper left corner)

Corner Plant:

Solomatina, J. (n.d.). Greenery decorative corner arrangement, composed of fresh green leaves. 123RF. https://www.123rf.com/photo_146079678_greenery-decorative-corner-arrangement-composed-of-fresh-green-leaves.html

Brain:

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Pages 5-10 (upper left and right corners) and 11-17 (upper right corner)

Corner Plant:

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Quotes:

• From Holley Girth (Page 2)

- Holley Girth. (n.d.). Let's believe the best about each other. <https://holleygerth.com/believe-the-best-2/>

• From Randy Pausch (Page 5)

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Image Citations

Other Images

Page 1

Background Image:

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Page 2

Image of a Teacher High-Fiving a Student:

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Page 3

Image with a Girl and a Mirror:

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Page 4

Image Representing Stereotype Threat:

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Image with a Magnifying Glass on the Word “Stereotype” :

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Image Citations

Page 5

Image of a Figure Breaking Down a Brick Wall:

Hughes, J. (2022). Are you ready to break through the common barriers to business growth? LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/you-ready-break-through-common-barriers-business-growth-judi-hughes>

Page 6

Image Portraying Success Through an Iceberg:

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Page 7

Graph of the Change in Score:

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Graph of the Average Math Scores:

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Image Citations

Page 9

Image with a Sunflower:

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Image with a Brain Being Watered:

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Page 10

Image with Steps Leading Up to a Lightbulb:

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Image of a “Changes Ahead” Sign:

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