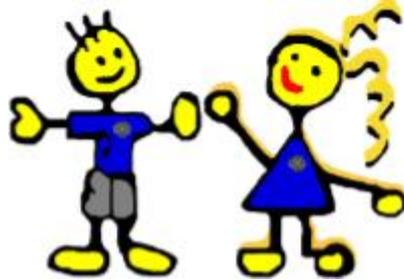


# Bervie School



## Growth Mindset

### A Guide for Parents



I can learn anything I want to.  
When I'm frustrated, I persevere.  
I want to challenge myself.  
When I fail, I learn.  
Tell me I try hard.  
If you succeed, I'm inspired.  
My effort and attitude determine everything.



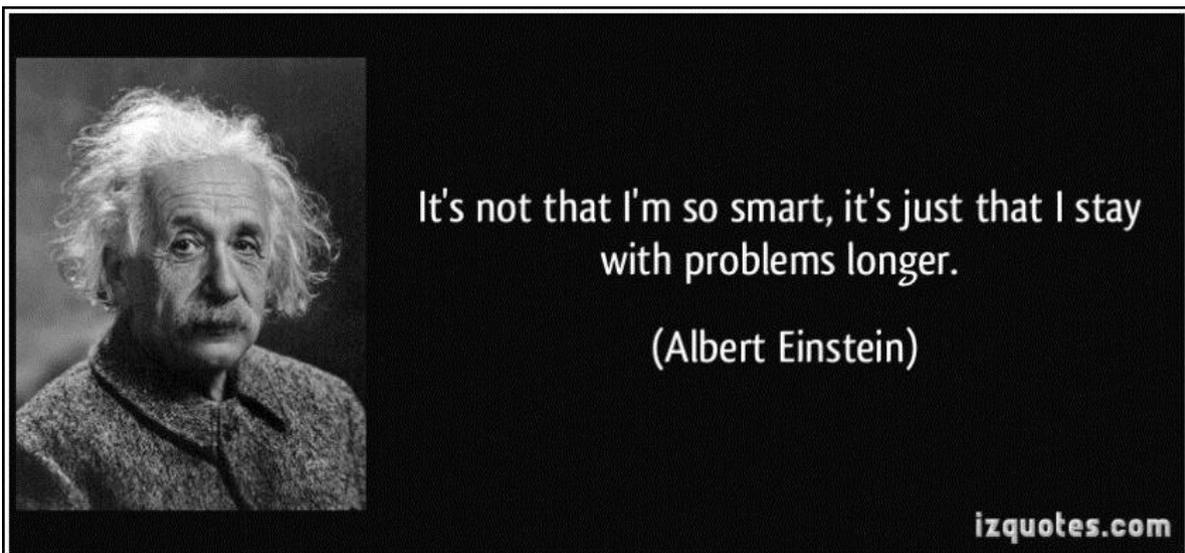
I'm either good at it, or I'm not.  
When I'm frustrated, I give up.  
I don't like to be challenged.  
When I fail, I'm no good.  
Tell me I'm smart.  
If you succeed, I feel threatened.  
My abilities determine everything.

## Introduction

The aim of this booklet is to explain an approach we have been taking towards learning in Bervie School. We have been encouraging pupils to develop a Growth Mindset and you may have heard your child talking about this or some of the strategies we've been promoting. This booklet will provide more information about the concept of a Growth Mindset as well as provide ideas for how you can support your child with this at home.

## Background

Growth Mindset is simply an approach to learning in school and life beyond. Its use is particularly prevalent in sport and the principles come from years of Research by Dr Carol Dweck of Stanford University. Her work points to people having two mindsets: Growth or Fixed. A child's beliefs about intelligence and ability are important factors in whether they become an effective learner. What do they perceive as 'intelligence'? These thoughts can affect their self-belief and their willingness to persevere and try to improve.



*"In a fixed mindset students believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents etc are just fixed traits. They have a certain amount and that's that and then their goal becomes to look smart all the time or never look dumb. In a growth mindset students understand that their talents and abilities can be developed through effort, good teaching and persistence. They don't necessarily think everyone's the same or anyone can become Einstein, but they believe everyone can get better if they work at it."*

**Dr Carol Dweck**

## At Bervie

We realise that most children will have a mixture of mindsets in different aspects of their life. Many teachers recognise the description of fixed mindset learners who are scared to contribute to class discussion

for fear of getting something wrong and 'looking stupid'; who find an area of maths tricky and decide they are just not good at any maths, will fail regardless and so give up; who would rather not try something new and unknown for fear they will be unable to do it successfully; who continue using the same approach in their learning even when it's not working rather than try to be creative or find a different solution because that feels 'too hard'.

*Sometimes what we call*  
→ **FAILURE**  
*is really just*  
→ **LEARNING**  
*in disguise.*

Developing a Growth Mindset can help to remove such 'invisible' barriers to learning as pupils begin to realise that we can all grow in our abilities through hard work, perseverance and practice.

As we have only introduced a whole school approach this year, we are still in the relatively early stages, however our work will focus on the following key areas:

**Brainology** - learning about what our brains can do and what we can do to make them 'stronger'

**Challenge** - pushing ourselves can increase our abilities

**Feedback** - certain kinds of feedback encourage growth mindset which in turn will improve learning

**Mistakes** - Mistakes are great for learning!

**Yet!** - The power of the word yet - 'I can't do this.....yet!'



When a child tells you they don't like or are no good at something, encourage them to use the word **YET**.

"I don't like this **yet**" leaves room for change.

"I'm no good at this **yet**" gives space for improvement.

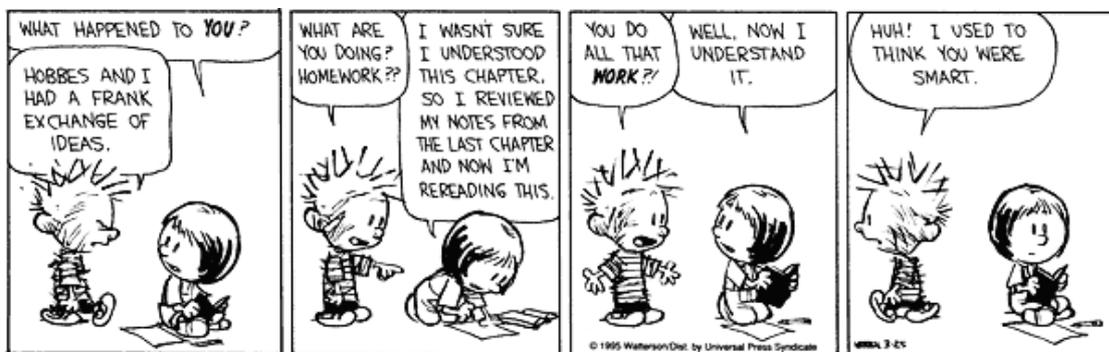
**YET**

A very cool word.

Fixed Mindset	Growth Mindset
<p><b>Beliefs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence &amp; ability are <b>fixed</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nature</b> determines intelligence &amp; ability.</li> <li>• I have an innate ability for some things &amp; an innate inability for others.</li> <li>• For example 'I will always be good at maths and always be rubbish at art.'</li> </ul>	<p><b>Beliefs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intelligence &amp; ability can <b>grow</b>.</li> <li>• <b>Nurture</b> affects intelligence &amp; ability.</li> <li>• If I apply myself more, seek help, take risks &amp; change my strategy, then I've got a good chance of learning &amp; improving therefore 'growing my intelligence &amp; ability.'</li> </ul>
<p><b>Priority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To <b>prove</b> myself.</li> <li>• To succeed, especially with little effort as this proves I'm clever and/or able.</li> <li>• Avoid failure of any sort as this would show I have low ability levels.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Priority</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To <b>improve</b> myself.</li> <li>• To learn through challenge as this will help me to grow my talents.</li> <li>• Seek interesting challenges that will stretch me &amp; help me to learn &amp; improve.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Attitude to Challenging Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge should be avoided in case I get things wrong.</li> <li>• Having difficulties will mean I'm not as clever as I thought.</li> <li>• <b>Failure means</b> I'm stupid or incapable.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Attitude to Challenging Learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenge will help me to learn.</li> <li>• Having difficulties is an inevitable part of the learning process.</li> <li>• <b>Failure means</b> I need to adapt my strategies .....until I succeed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I apply myself when there is....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opportunity to <b>show off</b> my strengths &amp; intelligence.</li> <li>• A good chance of getting everything right.</li> <li>• Very little risk of failure.</li> </ul>	<p><b>I apply myself when there is....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opportunity to <b>learn</b> new insights or skills.</li> <li>• Enough challenge to stretch me.</li> <li>• An opportunity to try something new.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I feel good....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I don't make any mistakes.</li> <li>• When it's perfect or when I win.</li> <li>• When I can do it &amp; others can't.</li> </ul>	<p><b>I feel good....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When I try hard</li> <li>• When I've begun to figure it out.</li> <li>• When I work hard &amp; can do something I couldn't do before.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Response to challenge or failure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blame myself or, to protect my ego, someone else.</li> <li>• Pretend I'm not interested in the activity or task and don't care about making an effort.</li> <li>• Try guessing answers or copy from others.</li> <li>• Seek ego-boosting distractions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Response to challenge or failure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no blame - I just want to know how to do it better next time.</li> <li>• Try various problem-solving strategies.</li> <li>• Seek advice, support or new ideas.</li> <li>• Increase my efforts to try and learn.</li> </ul>
<p><b>When others succeed .....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel jealous of or threatened by their success.</li> <li>• I ignore or play down their achievements.</li> </ul>	<p><b>When others succeed .....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am pleased for them &amp; share in their celebrations.</li> <li>• I try to learn from them to improve myself.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Mottos</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Either you're good at something or you're not.</li> <li>• If you're really good at something, you shouldn't need to try.</li> <li>• Don't try too hard; that way you've got an excuse if things go wrong.</li> <li>• <b>If you have to try, you must not be very good.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Mottos</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success comes with application.</li> <li>• No matter how good you are at something you can always improve.</li> <li>• Always try hard; that way you've more chance of success.</li> <li>• <b>If you have to try, you must be learning.</b></li> </ul>

## The Impact Praise Can Have on Our Mindset

The vast majority of children love praise and respond well to it. It is an important element of our teaching role to support and encourage pupils and praise is used for this purpose. Children love praise about their intelligence, ability and talent as it gives them a boost and makes them feel good about themselves. Sometimes however it can reinforce that we expect them to do well, be 'perfect' and always succeed and some children then struggle if they hit a snag. Their confidence can be destroyed and their motivation disappears. Praise such as 'Wow, you finished so quickly' or 'No mistakes - brilliant!' sends the message that speed and perfection are all we value. If we've reinforced that success means they are 'smart' then mistakes or 'failure' in their eyes must mean they are 'stupid'.

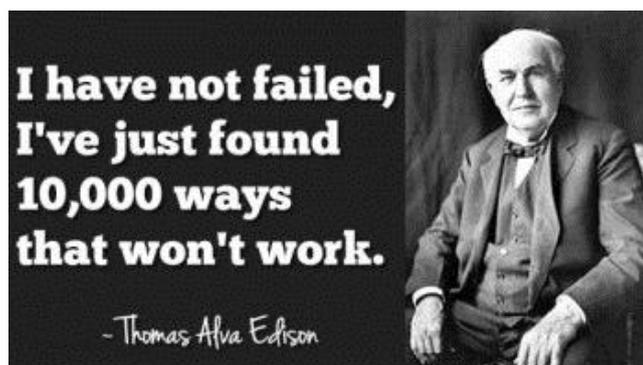


In light of this, we try hard in school to ensure that we avoid **only** praising intelligence and talent and also recognise effort and perseverance. This does not mean that we will not celebrate when children do something well - just that we will **balance** this with the importance of working hard and not giving up and praise this in equal measure.

Learners often worry that doing poorly in one piece of work or making lots of mistakes means they simply cannot and will not ever be able to master that skill or carry out that task. The message to them is that they may not be able to do it **YET**.

**F**irst  
**A**ttempt  
**I**n  
**L**earning

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## Praise Which Encourages a Growth Mindset & Supports Learning....

Phrases & approaches we aim to use are:

- *"You really worked well to prepare for this task and your improvement shows it."*
- *"I like the way you tried different strategies until you finally got it to work."*
- *"I know you're worried that you don't find this as easy as the work you did before but maybe you weren't using your brain to its full potential then. It's exciting that you're having to stretch yourself now - that's what learning is all about."*
- *"Everyone learns in different ways. Let's keep trying till we find the way that works for you."*
- *"That piece of work is really good! Tell me about how you did it - maybe we can share your ideas and strategies with others."*
- *"We all have different learning curves. It may take more time for you to get out of the \*'Learning Pit' than others but it's important to keep on trying and using different strategies."*

\*You may hear the children talk about the 'Learning Pit'. This is an approach we use in school to describe and visualise the process of learning and how it can make us feel. Ask your child about it. We will also produce a parent leaflet to explain this in the near future.

## Do you have a Growth Mindset?



IT'S  
okay  
TO  
not know,  
BUT IT'S  
not okay  
TO  
not try.

I'm not  
telling you  
it's going  
to be  
easy,  
I'm  
telling you  
it's going  
to be

**WORTH IT.**



<b>INSTEAD OF.....</b>	<b>TRY THINKING....</b>
I'm not good at this	What am I missing?
I give up	I'll use a different strategy
It's good enough	Is this really my best work?
I can't make this any better	I can always improve
This is too hard	This may take some time
I made a mistake	Mistakes help me to learn
I just can't do this	I am going to train my brain
I'll never be that smart	I will learn how to do this
Plan A didn't work	There's always Plan B
My friend can do it	I will learn from them

**How Can You Help With This at Home?**

The good news is that mindsets can be changed. This approach may be helpful in many areas of our lives, not just at school. As you can imagine, a key part of developing a Growth Mindset is in hearing consistent messages from everyone involved. Receiving Growth Mindset messages at home will undoubtedly help to further embed these beliefs in your child.

*"If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort and keep on learning. Parents should not shield their children from challenges, mistakes, and struggles. Instead parents should teach children to love challenges. They should teach their children to embrace mistakes. And they should teach them to love effort: "That was a fantastic struggle. You really stuck to it and made great progress".*

**Dr. Carol Dweck**

Which mindset do you believe is closest to yours?

Which do you think your child displays?

Is this different in different situations?

Which mindset do you model?

**GROWTH MINDSET**

THE BELIEF THAT WE CAN WORK HARD AND IMPROVE.



### **Praise effort, perseverance, motivation and strategies – Process Praise**

- Well done - you're learning to .....
- You're finding it hard? Good - it's making you think - that's how your brain is growing!
- Every time you practise, you're making the connections in your brain even stronger.
- Be brave. Have another go. Maybe this time you could try.....
- You've worked hard on this and you've succeeded because .....
- You've sounded that word out really carefully using your phonics -
- You can use this mistake. Think about why it didn't work and learn from it.

### **Show an interest and ask open-ended questions:**

- Tell me about it; Show me more;
- How did you do that?
- How many ways did you try before it turned out the way you wanted?
- Are you pleased with it? What do you think will happen if.....?

### **Encourage your child to take a risk:**

Gently nudge your child to push themselves and see challenge as a positive part of their learning. When possible encourage them to try things that seem 'just out of reach'. Offer small but achievable challenges at home - you're your own bed, fold your clothes etc. Remember we don't learn many new things when we're in our comfort zone.

### **Try to model a Growth Mindset yourself:**

Let your child know when you are finding something difficult or frustrating but narrate your inner thoughts as you keep working through it. Try to avoid labelling yourself in a fixed mindset way - telling your child that you were rubbish at maths gives a message that you are either good at maths or not good at maths and there's nothing that can be done about this. It leads them to believe their failure in that area is pre-determined. We want them to see they can make progress. A better comment would be 'I found maths tricky at school too but if you keep trying and learning from your mistakes I'm sure you will improve.'

### **Don't sweat the small stuff:**

Accidents and mistakes happen. Show your child that there is something to be learned when we don't achieve what we set out to accomplish. Encourage them to think of different strategies and try again. Talk about what has worked in the past or for others. When they do learn from a mistake, celebrate this!

**Resilience**

**Perseverance**  
**Creativity**

**Effort**  
**Curiosity**

**Positive Attitude**  
**Focus**