

# HOW A GROWTH MINDSET AFFECTS SPORTS PERFORMANCE

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Most people only think of talent when it comes to sports – even the experts. Sports is actually where the whole idea of being “a natural” was born. “A natural” is someone who moves, looks, and is an athlete without having to work hard. Since so many people believe in natural talent, many professional coaches and scouts only look for naturals, paying huge amounts of money to recruit these individuals.

Unfortunately, many coaches look back with frustration when they suddenly realize that some of the most talented athletes, the “naturals”, never really achieved great success. Why aren't these talented athletes successful? The real reason is that these athletes didn't have the correct mindset.

The book, “Mindset,” by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D. talks about two different mindsets that individuals may have about their abilities and talents. Individuals with a fixed mindset simply think that their abilities and talents are fixed. They have what they have and that is it. With a fixed mindset, athletes often become so preoccupied with looking and being talented that they don't realize their full potential.

The other mindset is known as a growth mindset. Individuals with this mindset think of their abilities and talents as things they're able to grow and develop. They realize that with practice, instruction, and effort, they can realize their full potential. The growth mindset recognizes talent, but it focuses on developing and building on talent instead of displaying talent and trying to simply coast along to success.

## THE FIXED MINDSET

Individuals with a fixed mindset believe that their intelligence and skills are already determined and can't be changed. This mindset often results in emotional athletes that continually compare themselves to others. This results in fearful, rigid athletes that limit their potential.

Individuals with a fixed mindset usually think that:

- ❖ Challenges should be avoided
- ❖ People are born with skills
- ❖ Perseverance doesn't help
- ❖ Challenges may show off a lack of skill
- ❖ If individuals have to work hard, it's because they aren't good enough
- ❖ Effort isn't really needed
- ❖ If failure occurs, it's the fault of someone else
- ❖ Feedback is something to take personally

## THE GROWTH MINDSET

These individuals believe that they can improve and develop their intelligence and skills. With a growth mindset, they believe that:

- ❖ They can improve upon their skills
- ❖ Skills are a result of hard work.
- ❖ Challenges offer a chance to test themselves.
- ❖ Mastery comes from effort.
- ❖ They should embrace challenges.
- ❖ They can learn from feedback.
- ❖ Setbacks offer opportunities to learn.
- ❖ Setbacks can be a wake-up call.
- ❖ Feedback can be used to help find areas that can be improved upon.
- ❖ Effort is an essential trait.



# Fixed vs. Growth Mindset— What That Means for Coaches

Mental strength coaches are in a unique position that allows them to help mold an athlete's mind, no matter their age. With this opportunity, it's essential for coaches to work with each athlete so they develop the growth mindset. This often comes down to the coach's values and how the coach praises athletes.

Some of the best athletes make the most mistakes. However, they aren't afraid to make a mistake. They realize that mistakes allow them to learn something that helps them achieve a higher level in the game. While this is a result of their own mindset, it also comes from the type of praise that comes from the coaches.

It's common to see parents, trainers, and coaches that believe that winning is the only thing that matters. Unfortunately, this sets up athletes to have a fixed mindset. Athletes begin to play to avoid mistakes instead of expressing their personality by trying things that may not be in their comfort zone. Taking a chance and making a mistake teaches athletes what doesn't and does work, helping them to increase their skill faster than athletes that simply work to avoid mistakes.

Athletes with a growth mindset grow, achieve, and learn far more than individuals that have a fixed mindset. Parents, trainers, and coaches need to praise the effort of their athletes instead of only praising the end result of the athlete's actions. This helps an athlete develop the growth mindset. By developing this way of thinking, it helps them succeed in their sport and in the rest of their life.

## Coaching a Growth Mindset

### 5 Questions to Develop a Growth Mindset

- What did you learn from today's performance?
- What steps did you take to make you successful today?
- What are some different strategies you could have used?
- How did you keep going when things got tough?
- What can you learn from your opponent today?

### 5 Feedback Comments to Develop a Growth Mindset

- This will be a challenging concept to learn, but I believe you can master it.
- You haven't got it yet, but you will if you keep working and thinking about it.
- I really appreciated your effort today.
- It is okay to take risks, that's how we learn.
- Getting better takes time and I see you improving.

@BelievePHQ @SportPsychDunc

## The Iceberg Illusion

Success is an iceberg

**WHAT PEOPLE SEE**

**SUCCESS!**

**WHAT PEOPLE DON'T SEE**

- Persistence
- Failure
- Sacrifice
- Disappointment
- Dedication
- Hard work
- Good habits

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