

## Developing a Growth Mindset

Many athletes primarily see the value of their performance when they are performing well. However, focusing on the aspects and activities that you are best at may not be as beneficial to your game as you may think. It is true that athleticism, strength and agility are all qualities that will improve your performance, but these things can only take you so far. One quality that is often overlooked is your mindset, both during training and during competition. How you perceive your own abilities can play a key role in your motivation and level of achievement.

Several schools of thought exist concerning mindset and mental preparation for sports, but we will be focusing on what is known as a growth mindset. Growth mindset can be simply defined as a belief that your abilities can be developed and improved through dedication and hard work. In order to better understand a growth mindset, it can be helpful to contrast it with what is known as a fixed mindset. A fixed mindset is essentially the belief that your abilities and intelligence do not change regardless of effort. Having said this, there are several misconceptions concerning a growth mindset that can lead to the development of alternative and less beneficial beliefs. One major misconception is that all that is required to develop a growth mindset is making an effort. Although effort is certainly important for creating growth and improvement, there is a difference between working hard and working hard with intent. Intention is the thing that distinguishes effort with the goal of learning, and effort for the sake of getting a task done. The latter will not foster the development of a growth mindset.

Now that we have laid out the basics of what a growth mindset is, we can take the next steps in developing it in your own life. First, it is important to figure out what type of mindset you currently have. Since it can be difficult to determine this in regard to your entire life, we will be focusing specifically on your mindset during sports. Take a moment and think honestly about which of the following descriptions sounds more like you, and remember, most people have a combination of both! For this situation, we will be using the example of walking into a tough workout. When you know you are about to do a tough workout do you feel anxious, have a tendency to panic if you don't think it is going well, or are you prone to pushing too hard even




when your body just doesn't have it? Or, do you feel little to no anxiety, feel fine with letting it go if you are not performing your best, or feel that it is alright not to push your limit if your body does not feel up to it? Another way to evaluate your own mindset is to consider how you would react to seeing

another player performing better than you are. Would you feel envious or threatened? Or

would you feel inspired and eager to learn? Really challenge yourself to evaluate your own feelings and actions to honestly classify yourself into one or a combination of these mindsets. The first description in each example reflects more of a fixed mindset while the second illustrates more of a growth mindset.

Accomplish BIG Things With a  
**GROWTH MINDSET!**  
 Success Begins With Believing You Can



Instead of Thinking...	Think This...
I can't do it.	I'm still learning. I'll keep trying!
I'm not good at this.	What can I learn to get better at this?
It's good enough.	Is this the best I can do?
It's too hard.	With more practice it will get easier!
I'm afraid of making a mistake.	Mistakes are how I learn & get better!
They are better at it than I am.	What can I learn from them?
I don't know how.	I can learn how!
I can't make this any better.	I can always find ways to improve!
I don't like challenges.	Challenges make me better!
I give up.	I'll try a different way!

After you have evaluated your own mindset, you may want to learn how to develop more of a growth mindset. In order to do this, it is important to understand that a growth mindset does not encourage focusing on talents you already have, nor does it try to cover any gaps in skills or learning. Rather, it encourages you to evaluate the skills that may need more work and take necessary steps to improve them without feeling discouraged. The purpose of a growth mindset is to encourage learning while a fixed mindset focuses mostly on outcomes, not the process. Any amount of learning is crucial to progressing skills, which is truly the focus of a growth mindset. If you feel as though you may be stuck in a fixed mindset, there are several strategies that can help. For example, try to redefine the concept of success in your practices and competition. Rather than focusing on the skills you already know that you have, challenge yourself to learn something about a new skill or one that you feel is

lacking. Another strategy is to encourage your effort and adherence to the goals of your drills rather than relying on outside praise of actions you know will yield positive results. In our discussion we will talk more about other strategies to use in order to develop your growth mindset!

Discussion Questions:

1. When I say the phrase growth mindset? What does that mean to you?
2. What about a fixed mindset?
3. Did any of the information in the blog about these mindsets surprise you?
4. What is the difference between putting forth an effort and learning?
5. In the game of volleyball, what are some characteristics of a player who possesses a growth mindset? What about a fixed mindset?
6. What was the most difficult part about evaluating your own mindset? Did you find yourself wanting to identify with a one mindset over the other? Did this affect your results?
7. How do you feel after discovering your own mindset?
8. What are some goals you can set for yourself in order to begin to develop a growth mindset?
9. Was there anyone who was already aware of the definition of a growth mindset and has already been attempting to develop theirs? Please describe your journey thus far.
10. What are strategies you can use to begin the transition from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset?
11. What other aspects of your life can you apply the growth mindset to and how?

Homework:

1. Email me ideas of what you would like to discuss next week (kmahern7@gmail.com)
2. Develop 3-5 personal goals for your own game utilizing a growth mindset
3. Think of 3 ways to apply this mindset to other aspects of your life outside of volleyball

Remember: A growth mindset creates a love of learning and resilience that is essential for improvement!