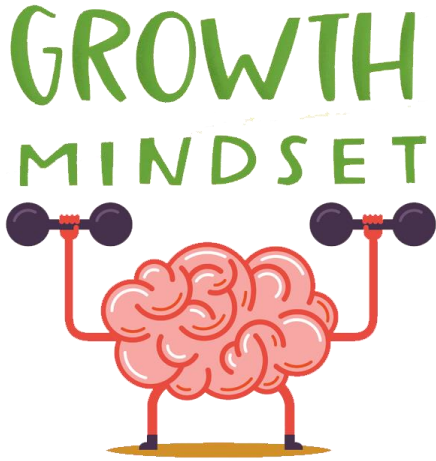


# Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Course: The Growth Mindset  
Level: Elementary



**Objective:** Students will be able to identify a **growth mindset** versus a **fixed mindset**, identify the differences between both and practice using statements that match each mindset.

**Course Intent:** Provide information and exercises for students to understand, apply and consistently practice the essential components of a growth mindset.

### Useful Applications & Benefits:

A growth mindset can help students understand that the effort they put into something can directly affect the outcome they receive.

### Course Snapshot

This course incorporates the following lessons.

- #1
- #2
- #3
- #4
- #5

LESSONS	ACTIVITY	TIME REQUIRED	RESOURCES & MATERIALS NEEDED
<b>Introductory Lesson: What is Growth Mindset?</b>	Whole group Discussion Small group	15 – 20 minutes	Lesson definitions Teacher created T-chart Post It notes
<b>Practicing Yet</b>	Partner talk Small groups	15 – 20 minutes	Lesson definitions
<b>Fixed vs. Growth Mindset</b>	Role-play Small groups	15 – 20 minutes	Lesson information Role-play scenarios
<b>Emotions and Mindsets</b>	Whole group Discussion	10 – 15 minutes	Lesson information
<b>Mindset Heroes Project</b>	Whole group Discussion	20 – 40 minutes	Optional materials- storybooks, Internet, teacher-created Mindset Hero handouts, poster paper, coloring utensils



## Lesson Rationale

Teachers learn first-hand while working with children that a student's existing belief system can either help or hinder their learning process. They can very often rely on what they have been told, by parents, peers, or educators, about their own capabilities and potential for success. There is a tremendous opportunity for teachers to instill a growth mindset while simultaneously working towards positive outcomes. The impact a teacher has in this area may drastically improve a child's trajectory towards a lifetime of academic and personal success.

A student's beliefs about themselves are closely tied to their self-esteem. A student who is confident about their abilities is much more likely to perform better than those with lower self-esteem. Children can adopt a growth mindset as early as kindergarten, which makes the process of developing their skills much easier at older ages.

## Praising Students

Be careful of your praise, as a teacher can unintentionally promote a fixed mindset when each engagement with a student offers an opportunity to nurture the growth mindset.

**For example:**

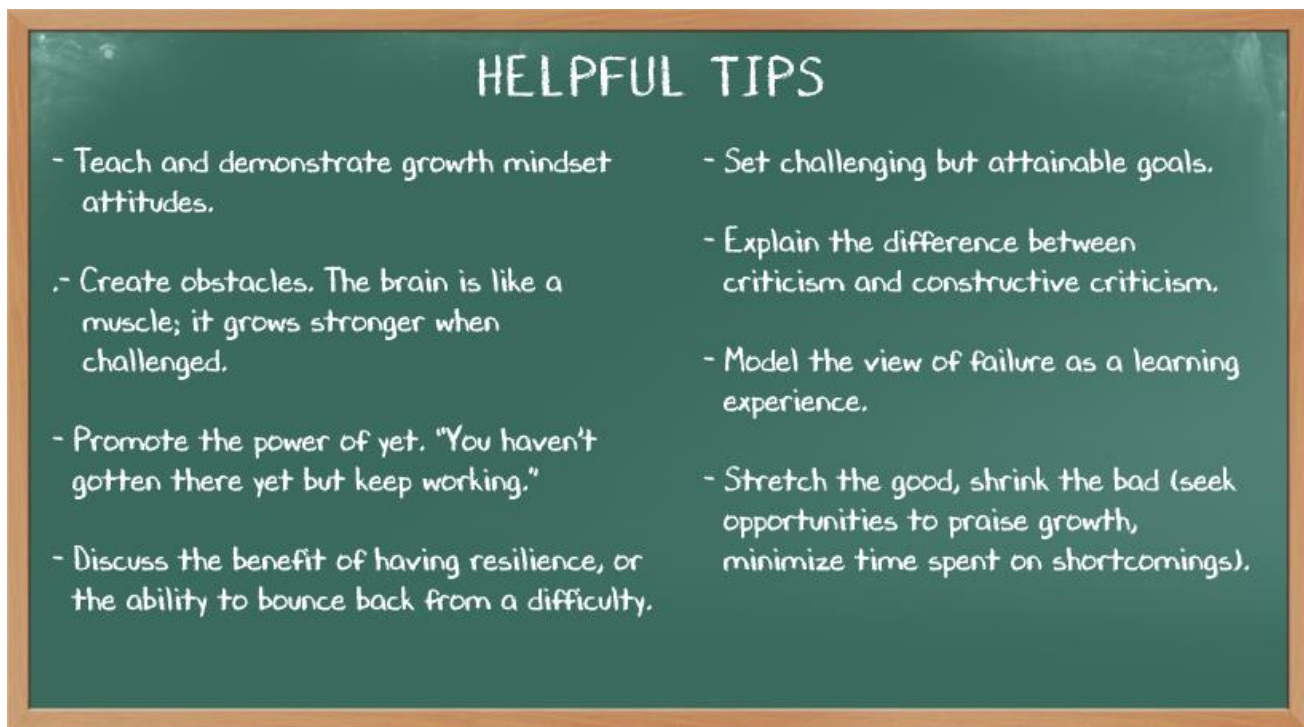
**Fixed Mindset:** "You are so smart."

**Growth Mindset:** "You put a lot of energy into learning this and it shows, you did great."

Be careful not to establish the need to seek the approval of others, by providing your approval along with a compliment, rather than simply recognizing effort and success.

**Fixed Mindset:** "I'm really proud of you."

**Growth Mindset:** "Great work on that test, you did the homework, you studied, and you earned that grade."





# Introductory Lesson #1: What is a "Growth Mindset"?

## What to know before you begin

### Definitions

#### What does it mean to grow?

*Growing is improving and getting better.*

#### What is a mindset?

*The way you look at things, or how you interpret the world, is your mindset.*

#### What is a growth mindset?

*A growth mindset contains the belief that intelligence (smarts) and talent can be improved and developed by applying effort. It means that believing in the power of yourself and your brain can lead to improvements in almost anything.*

#### What it is not

*The opposite of a growth mindset is a fixed mindset which incorrectly believes that basic qualities of intelligence and talent are fixed and cannot be improved. Wanting to quit, give up or decide that you are just not good at something are all fixed mindsets.*



The human brain is born with very few capabilities, but a tremendous amount of potential for growth. Everyone is born to learn, and whether you are scrolling through Facebook, playing a video game, or reading a book, your brain is very often learning, taking in information, figuring things out and solving problems.

A great way to improve the mind is to concentrate on learning subjects that might seem difficult. Mental effort and intellectual difficulty require the brain to establish new neural connections. The brain physically grows stronger and more intelligent when it is challenged. Even if it does not feel like you've accomplished everything you were attempting to learn, your brain has grown stronger.



## Points to Cover

The growth mindset requires teachers to strongly reinforce effort and improvement more than results. This does not imply that results don't matter, it means that to maintain consistent growth and improvement, rewarding growth and improvement consistently will drive motivation and lead to positive outcomes.

The word "yet" is an important part of the growth mindset vocabulary. Learn the power of "yet" and practice it often. When a child makes a mistake, they should not become frustrated or discouraged when performing a task. Mistakes are a bump on the road to success. You wouldn't avoid a road just because it had a few bumps in it, especially if it was the only road to get where you needed to go.

### **Activity: Defining Growth Mindset**

Start a discussion by asking students to name some things that grow. Try to have each student think of something different that can grow. Initially, student responses will most likely include things such as people, animals and plants. As students keep naming items and thinking about what can grow, their responses may turn to items such as storms that grow larger, businesses that grow bigger, or even relationships that can grow closer together. If a student mentions that our brains can grow, jump right into the discussion about growth mindset.

Explain to students that the brain is a muscle that can grow, just like our arms or legs. To help our physical muscles grow, we must exercise and train those muscles. To help our brains grow, we also must apply effort and train our brain to believe we can improve, and we call this having a growth mindset. Be sure to explain and explore the definitions of growth, mindset and growth mindset.

Ask students to think about what the opposite of a growth mindset would be. If a growth mindset is believing that intelligence and talent can be improved by applying effort, what does it mean to have a fixed mindset? After hearing from the students, be sure to explain and explore the definition of a fixed mindset.

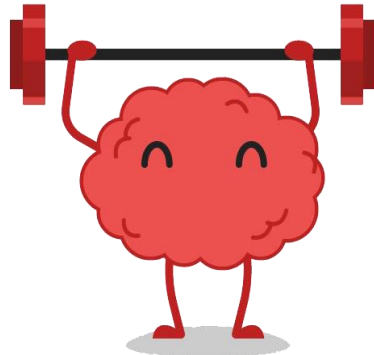
Prepare a simple T-Chart ahead of time, either on a large poster or on the classroom whiteboard, with growth mindset on one side and fixed mindset on the other side. If you want, add visuals to the T chart as reminders, especially for younger students. Fixed mindset icons might include a lock or bricks, while growth mindset icons might include a lightbulb or a plant.

Divide the students into two groups and ask one group to think about ways to describe growth mindset and the other group to think about ways to describe fixed mindset. Provide each group with Post It notes that they can easily write or draw on and add to the T-Chart. Some examples to help guide the discussions are listed in Lesson 3: "Fixed Mindset" vs. "Growth Mindset"

Conclude the lesson by revisiting the T-Chart together and making sure that the characteristics or descriptions are in the correct column.



## Lesson #2: Practicing "Yet"



### What to Know Before You Begin

#### Practicing YET

When a baby is learning how to walk, they try and fall many times, but do not give up. They keep trying until walking is a learned skill. Each new experience provides a bit more information that helps in the learning process. This is an example of the growth mindset and can be applied to learning just about anything.

#### **Activity: Sharing a Learning Experience**

Break into groups, depending on your class size and students, and perform the following two exercises:

- 1) Discuss the times that you learned something new. Maybe you learned how to ride a bike, or throw a ball, perform gymnastics, swim, read and write, count to 100. Think about how long it took you and how many different times you tried to learn. Now describe that experience to your group partner. Take one minute each.
- 2) Now think about a skill you are learning now, something you are not yet great at doing. Tell your partner about the learning process but describe it as something you are learning, and you are not great yet but getting better. For example: "I am learning math and even though I make mistakes now, and I'm not great at it yet, but I am getting better." Practice using the word yet whenever you describe your skill level. Don't say, "I'm bad at soccer," but instead, use the growth mindset and say, "I'm not great at soccer, yet, but I get better every time I play."



## Lesson #3: "Fixed Mindset" vs. "Growth Mindset"

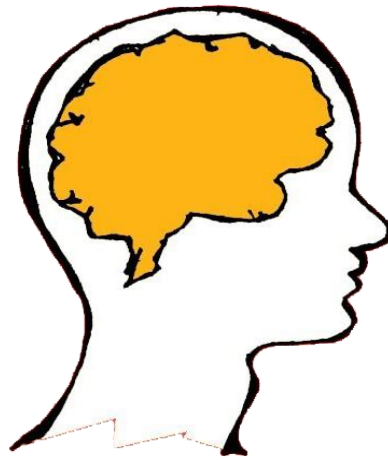
### What to Know Before You Begin

Revisit the T-Chart from the Introductory Lesson.



## FIXED

Doesn't try  
Ignores Feedback  
Gives up easily  
Makes mistakes  
Avoids challenges



## GROWTH

Learns from failure  
Focuses on effort and work ethic  
Keeps going even when it's tough  
Embraces challenges  
Learns from feedback

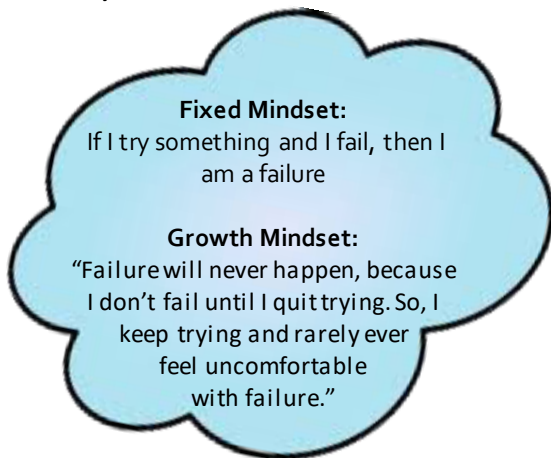
### Activity: Role Play Both Sides

Break into groups of two and prepare to role play. One person will adopt the Fixed Mindset on purpose and act out what a person says when they are in a poor state of mind, using the Fixed Mindset and the other student will respond with a statement using the Growth Mindset. Read the traits and revisit the T-Chart to help students brainstorm fixed mindset and growth mindset statements. Help to guide students by providing some of the example statements below. After some time, have students switch roles.

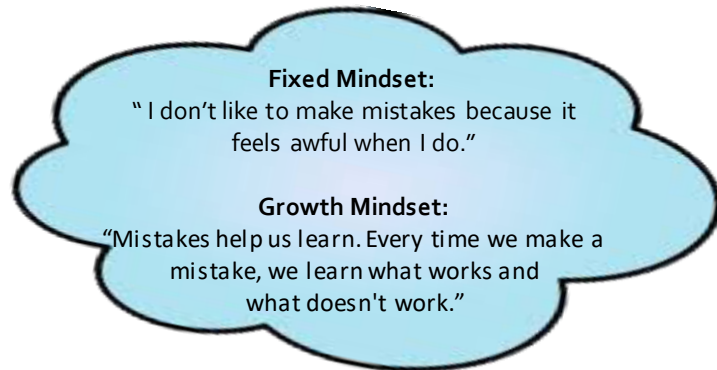


## Scenarios and Example Mindset Statements for Role Playing:

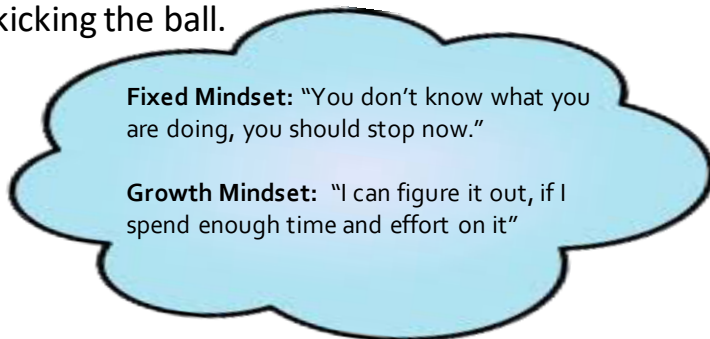
**Role-Play Scenario:** The teacher started a new math unit on division today, and so far, you haven't gotten any answer correct.



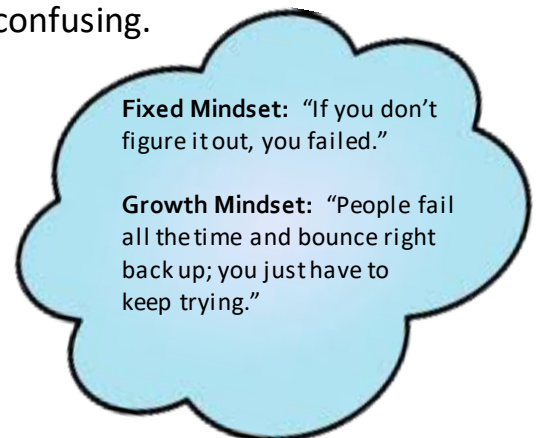
**Role-Play Scenario:** You have to do a presentation for class, and you are nervous to speak in front of your classmates because you don't want to make a mistake.



**Role-Play Scenario:** This week in P.E. the coach is teaching everyone to play kickball. You are usually pretty clumsy and have a hard time kicking the ball.



**Role-Play Scenario:** You are so excited because the new video game you've been waiting for has finally arrived! It's very different than the games you usually play and seems a bit confusing.



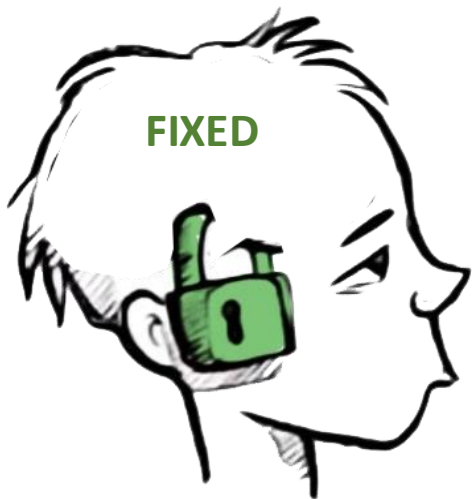
**Role-Play Scenario:** Your best friend is going to basketball camp over the summer and wants you to join. On the first day of camp, you notice that some of the other players easily make each basket, but you only made the basket three times.



*"I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." – Thomas Edison*

## Lesson #4: Emotions and Mindsets

### Activity: Connect Emotions to the Mindsets



As a class, discuss what emotions are felt when someone has the fixed mindset.

What does it feel like to...?

- Ignore feedback
- Not try something new
- Give up easily
- Make a mistake
- Avoid a challenge

Then, ask the class to consider what emotions are felt when someone has a growth mindset.

What does it feel like to...?

- Learn from a failure
- Focus on effort and work ethic
- Keep going when it's tough
- Embrace a challenge
- Learn from feedback



Conclude the discussion by asking students to consider how your mindset attitude influences your emotions.





## Lesson #5: Mindset Heroes Project

### Activity: Research Growth Mindset Heroes

Depending on the age of your students and available resources, this lesson has multiple modes of implementation. Begin by grouping students into pairs or small groups. Either assign students a "Growth Mindset Hero" from the list below, or ask students to research a historical figure, celebrity or influential individual they think exhibits or exhibited a growth mindset. If technology is available, allow students to research individuals on the Internet. If not, pre-print information on small handouts about each individual and provide these to students. Another option is to provide students with a storybook about an individual (see a list of storybooks below).

Here are some examples of those who have adopted the growth mindset to overcome their own unique challenges.

#### Challenge

First Language  
Physical Ability  
Socio-Economic Situation  
Gender  
National Origin  
Sexual Orientation  
Age  
Personal Challenges  
Ethnicity  
Setbacks while learning

#### Person

Arnold Schwarzenhager  
Allen Iverson  
Oprah Winfrey  
Marie Curie  
Albert Einstein  
Ellen DeGeneres  
Tom Brady  
Abraham Lincoln  
Barack Obama  
Thomas Edison

Here is a list of storybooks that tell the true stories of individuals that have adopted a growth mindset.

- *Nadia, the Girl Who Couldn't Sit Still* by Karlin Gray
- *Salt in His Shoes: Michael Jordan in Pursuit of a Dream* by Delores Jordan and Roslyn Jordan
- *Mistakes That Worked: 40 Familiar Inventions & How They Came to Be* by Charlotte Foltz Jones and John O'Brien
- *She Persisted: 13 American Women Who Changed the World* by Chelsea Clinton and Alexandra Boiger
- *Emmanuel's Dream: The True Story of Emmanuel Ofose Yeboah* by Laurie Ann Thompson
- *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin* by Jeen Bryant
- *Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music* by Margarita Engle

As students research or read about different individuals, have them create a small poster or simply share with the class what they learned about the individual they researched. Make sure the students share the challenge that was overcome by the individual and how the individual exhibited a growth mindset. For a poster presentation, ask students to add a drawing or picture of the individual, or a visual to represent them.



## Quick Quiz

1.) Which of the following statements is an example of a growth mindset?

- A.) I failed, so I am never going to try again
- B.) I lost, so I don't want to play anymore
- C.) I didn't do the best I could, so I am going to try to do better
- D.) I got a bad grade and now I am upset

2.) Which statement refers to someone using a fixed mindset?

- A.) Gives up easily
- B.) Doesn't want to try and do better
- C.) Lets failure discourage them
- D.) All of the above

3.) What should failure prompt you to do?

- A.) Motivate you to try again
- B.) Make you frustrated
- C.) Make you quit
- D.) Scare you

### Teacher Feedback

Please provide insights on any adjustments made regarding the actual use of the content above.  
Feel free to share your thoughts, suggestions, constructive criticism.  
Email your feedback to: [info@mylearningtools.org](mailto:info@mylearningtools.org)