

Mindset Theory and Interventions

Performance and the factors that influence ability is a topic of vast interest as the need to enhance ability is ever growing. In recent times, the concept of mindset being an essential moderator of individual performance has grown in prominence as many research studies have established the credibility of implementing the findings.

The history of the Mindset theory can be traced back to theories on learned helplessness and attribution theory, which posits reactions to failure and challenges can lead to learning helplessness and seeking to attribute causal factor in order to understand the event, (Dweck, C. S., & Yeager, D. S., 2019).

Dr. Carol Dweck pioneered the research on mindset as a success indicator, by establishing evidence through her research paper on “*Mindsets that promote resilience: when students believe that personal characteristics can be developed*”, (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). The study examined the malleability of human characteristics in order to assess the mindset of the students and the impact it has on their academic performance and peer interactions.

The conclusion of the study presented that the students face various challenges in their academic life which are inevitable, the responses of the individual towards these challenges is what promotes resilience and an effective strategy to grow through the challenge. Helping students to gain the right mindset of viewing the challenge as an opportunity by using encouragement, renewed effort, learning new strategies, taking help from others are ways used to help the student gain a growth mindset.

My favourite illustration of this concept is shown in the *Dark Knight Rises* movie, when Batman is thrown into jail and the only way out is to make the climb, He tries and tries using the rope as a safety harness, and cuts a frustrated figure when he is unable to make it out. The old man’s narration of the story of a child who is the only one who got out of this jail achieved it without a rope; Batman gains a new perspective, training himself and with the encouragement of the inmates rooting for him he finally makes the jump and gets out of the jail. This is a classic scene depicting resilience leading to transformation of intelligence and character which is evolving to overcome the obstacle.

The concept has developed to have wide spread applicability and has been adopted into different fields such as business, education, non-profit, consumer behaviour, mental health services to name a few. The need to have a positive mindset towards day-to-day life is essential, especially in an academic institution where students face various challenges consistently. As a counsellor identifying and implementing mindset interventions are crucial

to the betterment of the counselees, in my experience three interventions of *growth mindset*, *belonging mindset*, *struggle story and reflection* were successfully used in combination and respectively in order to instil incremental mindset.

Growth mindset intervention is educating the students that they can overcome their challenges as their intelligence is malleable and developing constantly based on their experience and efforts. Belonging mindset is used to make the student feel like their problems of not belonging is temporary and normalizing the fact that many students go through a similar experience can effectively contribute to the mindset of not thinking they are the only ones suffering from this issue and reduce victim mentality. The narration of difficult stories of famous scientist who have struggled and persevered to get to success, serves as a motivational tool for students to understand that difficult experiences are a part of the journey to success. These interventions are targeted to develop resilience in the students by understanding the challenges they face and developing a plan of intervention to help them cope with the situation, (R Binning, K., Wang, M. T., & Amemiya, J., 2019).

In my counselling experience, a student faced challenges to voice out her opinion in class and was constantly held by the fear of judgement and ridicule. We used the belonging mindset intervention which helped her gain more insight into her fixed mindset response. Understanding that her classmates are not a threat, rather that most of them feel the same way as she does and the teacher is looking for answers to help discuss the topic better, is the positive mindset she developed which worked in her favour.

With another student, we used a struggle story to elucidate resilience when faced with challenges and using reflection as a tool to change the mindset of the student. I counsel a student who has lost both her parents and lives by herself and manages all her daily activities and even celebrates religious festivals in a way to practice the traditions that her parents taught her. Her mindset and meaning system helps many students gain a renewed perspective towards their problem, and provides an example to push forward and assign meaning to their perseverance.

Using the growth mindset of helping students understand that their intelligence is not fixed has proved effective with one student in particular, who struggles academically and tends to blame himself or the situation for his poor performance. The mindset intervention was particularly helpful in one session when the student had just received poor marks and was feeling bad about himself as he thought he could never do well. We examined his mindset and how that formed his approach towards studies and providing him with encouragement for his effort. The student slowly began to reflect and implement the growth

mindset and adopt a renewed approach towards the efforts needed to perform better in his exams.

These examples are encouraging signs to implement mindset interventions; however, it is also important to understand that an effective implementation of these interventions is heterogeneous in nature and not homogeneous which is the biggest challenge. There are several moderators which influence the effectiveness of mindset intervention as they are subjective and complex to implement. As individuals we all have areas where we exhibit growth mindset and fixed mindset respectively, it is unrealistic to have a pure wholistic growth mindset, it is only in the presence of fixed mindset can there be a need to change and provide a worthy challenge to work on.

In conclusion, our learning and attribution of events in our life leads us to develop a mindset towards similar experiences, understanding this and remedying the approach by developing awareness, adopting a growth mindset in turn results in resilience and perseverance. It's also imperative to acknowledge that exploring the individual's story, observing the readiness to change and the timely administration of the intervention is crucial to the effectiveness of the intervention. Teaching this theory and intervention to students can help them to excel at the prospect of challenges and associate positive meaning system to the growth mindset, which sets them up for long term success.

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