

GROWTH MINDSET NEWSLETTER



Issue 002

Fall 2024

How We Praise Our Children Matters: The Impact on Mindset and Success

As parents, we all want to boost our children's confidence and encourage their success. But did you know that how we praise our kids can significantly impact their mindset and future achievements? Recent research has shed light on this important topic, and the findings might surprise you.

The Power of Praise: A Double-Edged Sword

We often think that telling our children they're smart will motivate them and build their self-esteem. It feels good to hear, and kids naturally enjoy being praised for their intelligence and talents. However, studies have shown that this well-intentioned approach can actually backfire. When we praise our children's intelligence, we might be unknowingly reinforcing a "fixed mindset" – the belief that their abilities are set in stone. This can lead to some unexpected consequences: Fear of challenges: Kids may avoid tasks that might threaten their image of being "smart." Decreased persistence: When faced with difficulties, they may give up more easily. Lower enjoyment: Challenging tasks become less enjoyable when the focus is on proving intelligence. Attributing failure to lack of ability: Setbacks are seen as a sign of not being smart enough, rather than opportunities to learn and grow.

The Growth Mindset Alternative

Instead of focusing on innate abilities, research suggests we should praise our children's efforts, strategies, and learning processes. This approach fosters a "growth mindset" – the belief that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. When we praise effort and perseverance, we:

1. Encourage children to embrace challenges
2. Help them see failures as learning opportunities
3. Boost their resilience and motivation
4. Teach them to value the process of learning, not just the outcome



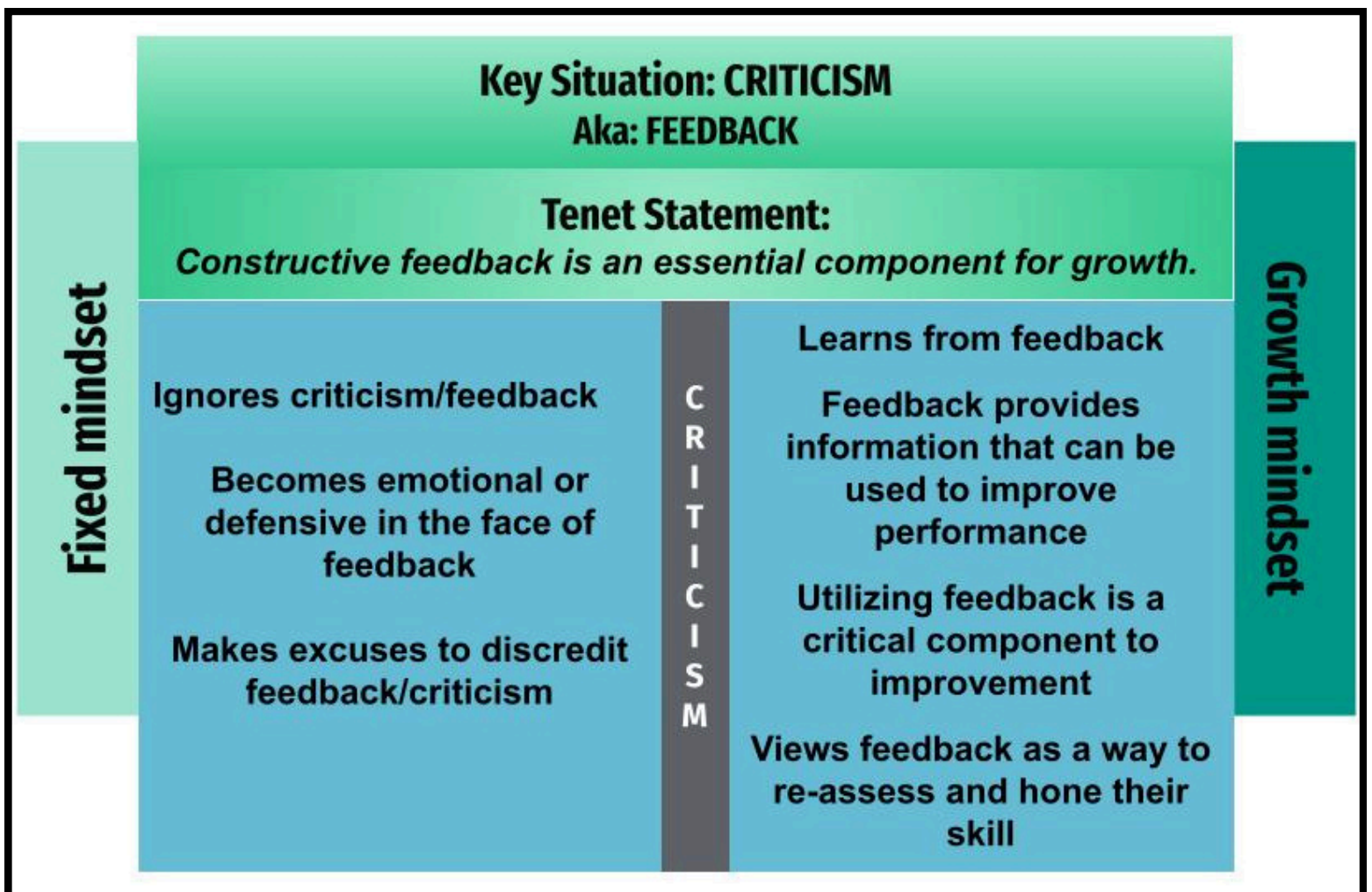
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Breaking Old Habits

It's not always easy to change our praising habits. Even parents who understand the concept of growth mindset might find themselves automatically praising intelligence or talent. But being aware of this tendency is the first step towards making a positive change.

The next time your child succeeds at something, try focusing on their hard work, problem-solving skills, or improvement over time. For example, instead of saying "You're so smart!" you could say "I'm proud of how hard you worked on this" or "I love how you figured out that tricky problem!"

Remember, our words have power. By shifting our praise to emphasize effort and growth, we can help our children develop a mindset that will serve them well throughout their lives, helping them face challenges with confidence and resilience.



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Effective Feedback Strategies and Tips

Describe how mental effort can alter the brain and enhance its capabilities. Just as muscles respond to exercise, the brain reacts to mental exertion. Understanding this concept can motivate students to persevere when faced with challenges.

Emphasize that tests and assignments evaluate a student's current skills, not their overall ability or potential. Provide feedback that focuses on areas for improvement, such as "You haven't grasped this concept fully yet" to support students.

Provide feedback that highlights student progress, strategies, persistence, and effort. Offer specific comments like "Impressive improvement in X; you're ready to progress" or "Good progress; more practice with X is needed." Avoid attributing performance to "innate" abilities and focus on the quality of work rather than the student.

Differentiate between preparation and ability. Students labeled as "smart" often have more exposure and experience, while those who grasp concepts slower may lack preparation, not potential. Provide foundational support and tailored examples to help these students develop skills based on their backgrounds.

Offer feedback that outlines specific changes required. Break down tasks into manageable steps, pinpointing where students may have gone wrong. Encourage practice on each step before advancing, gradually reducing support as students master each phase.

Maintain high standards for success and communicate these clearly to students. Provide necessary tools and support to help students meet these benchmarks, while giving honest feedback on their progress

Practice "wise feedback" when addressing errors. Clearly communicate high expectations, identify areas where students fall short of these standards, and offer guidance on meeting them. Encourage students by expressing confidence in their ability to reach these goals.

Always allow students the chance to discuss feedback to ensure they comprehend the points raised and the steps ahead.

Considerations When Praising Effort – Dweck

“Another pitfall is praising effort (Or any part of the process) that’s not there. In other words, effective praise to support a growth mindset is authentic and deserving, grounded in process.”

“Many people believe that a growth mindset is only about effort, especially praising effort. I talk about how praising the process children engage in- their hard work, strategies, focus, perseverance - can foster a growth mindset. In this way, children learn that the process they engage in brings about progress and learning, and that their learning does not just magically flow from some innate ability.”

“Using effort praise as a consolation prize when kids are not learning” is a great concern of Dweck. “If a student has tried hard and made little or no progress, we can of course appreciate their effort, but we should never be content with effort that is not yielding further benefits.”

In these situations, figure out why that effort is not effective and guide kids towards evaluating and adjusting their process.

“Do you label your kids? This one is the artist and that one is the scientist. Next time, remember that you’re not helping them - even though you may be praising them. Remember our study where praising kids’ ability lowered their IQ scores. Find a growth-mindset way to compliment them.”

Learning Connections

[1] Dweck, C. S. (2016). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. Random House.

[2] Mueller, C. M., & Dweck, C. S.: (1998). "Praise for intelligence can undermine children's motivation and performance". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*

[3] After Skool. (2024, May 28). How Feedback Affects Performance - Andrew Huberman - Growth Mindset. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9ewjjzAIRs>

[4] Ragan, T. (2014). Carol Dweck - A Study on Praise and Mindsets. In YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWv1VdDeoRY>

[5] Dwyer, C., & Carlson-Jaquez, H. (2010). Using Praise to Enhance Student Resilience and Learning Outcomes. *Apa.org*. <https://www.apa.org/education-career/k12/using-praise>

