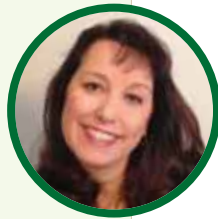


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Meeting High Expectations:

HEALTHY THINKING, RESILIENCY, AND DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN

By Lisalee D. Egbert, Todd LaMarr, Tami Hossler, Carrie Davenport, and Jodee Crace

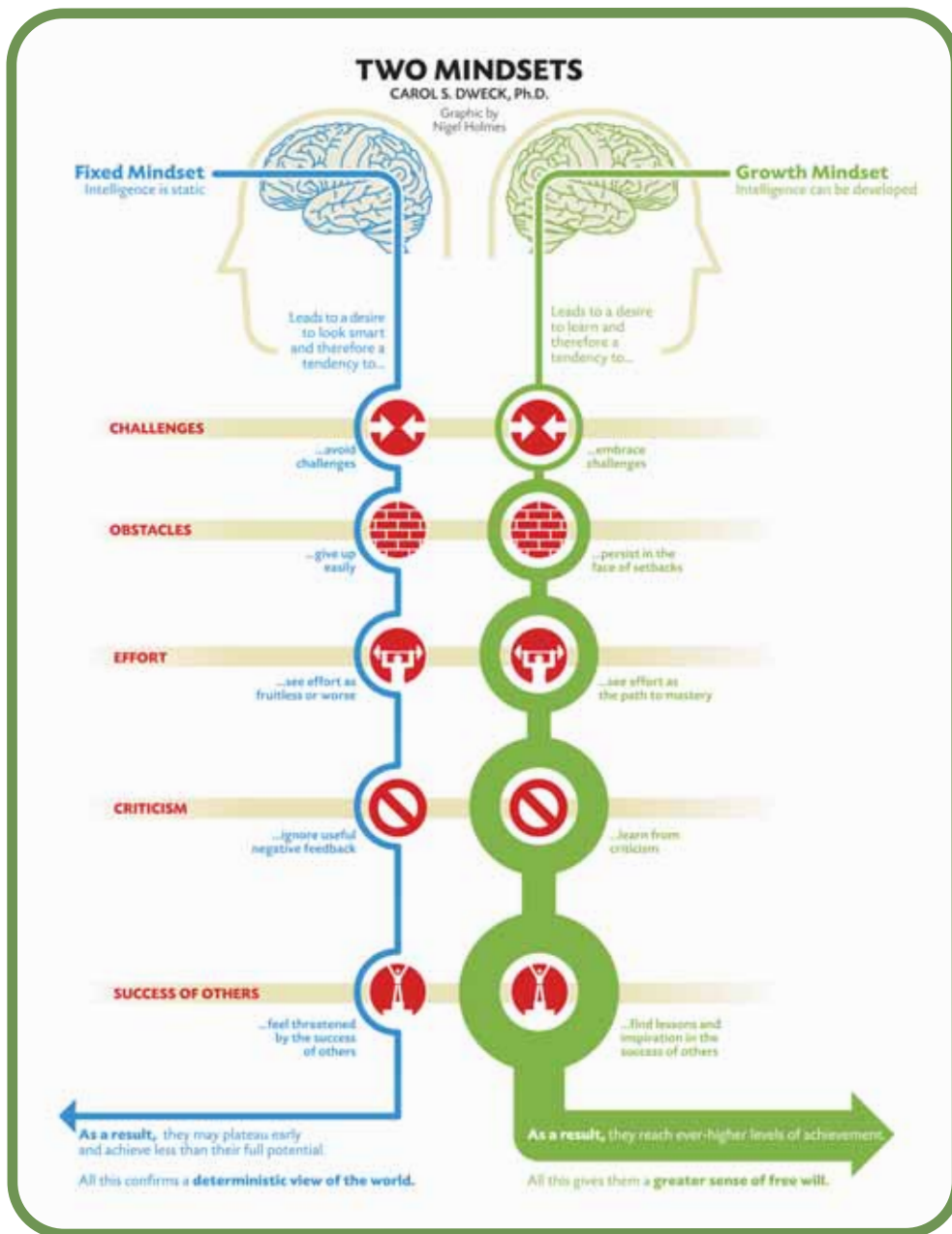
Like all children, deaf and hard of hearing children thrive in environments that support and promote healthy ways of thinking. When individuals have healthy ways of thinking, they have what researchers call a “growth mindset” (Dweck, 2006), and part of a growth mindset is resiliency. When a child who is resilient faces a challenge, he or she will try different solutions, exhibit greater effort, and not easily give up. In comparison, a non-resilient child may easily give up and even exhibit helplessness or shy away from future challenges. Developing resiliency and growth mindsets in students has been found to lead to increased academic achievement (Blackwell, Trzeniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003). As we raise expectations for deaf and hard of hearing children, we must foster their resiliency; resiliency is a critical tool in meeting high expectations and achieving academic success.

How resiliency is developed can be traced to the mindset of a child. A child's mindset—or how he or she perceives him- or herself—is related to how the child responds to challenging situations (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). A great example comes from the well-known story *The Little Engine That Could™*. As the story unfolds, the little engine is given the seemingly impossible task of pulling a load up a hill. However, with its “growth mindset,” the little engine said to itself, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can”—and it did. Resiliency and a growth mindset may be especially important for deaf and hard of hearing children because of the academic and social challenges they often face (Schick, Williams, & Kupermintz, 2006; Easterbrooks & Beal-Alvarez, 2012; Qi & Mitchell, 2012).

Resiliency and Mindset: Growth Be Praised

Individuals tend to have one of two mindsets—a fixed mindset or a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006)—and the mindset an individual develops relates to the way he or she is praised (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). Like non-resilient children, individuals with fixed mindsets

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perceive personal attributes, such as intelligence, to be fixed and unable to be changed; they give up quickly on challenging tasks and shy away from future challenges (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Kamins & Dweck, 1999; Skipper & Douglas, 2012). On the other hand, individuals with growth mindsets tend to perceive personal attributes as changeable and able to be improved (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin & Wan, 1999).

Which mindset individuals develop is related to the patterns of praise they receive (Gunderson et al., 2013). Often parents and teachers praise to initiate a response that is positive and beneficial to boosting confidence,

self-worth, and motivation in a child. The intent is laudable, but research shows that not all praise has these successful results. In fact, when praise focuses on an attribute of the child, it may be counterproductive as it may result in the child internalizing the attribute as an unchangeable part of him- or herself. For example, if a child receives an A on a test and is praised as “intelligent,” he or she may accept his or her “intelligence” as an intrinsic part of him- or herself, unrelated to any effort on his or her part. As a consequence, the child develops a mindset that is fixed. When children with fixed mindsets experience a setback, they find their self-worth and motivation to endure weakens.

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What Parents Can Do

PROMOTING THE HEALTHY WAYS OF THINKING THAT COMPRISE A HEALTHY MINDSET

By Lisalee D. Egbert, Todd LaMarr, Tami Hossler,
Carrie Davenport, and Jodee Crace

Homework: Write a report about clouds.

If children in your home or students in your class find themselves baffled by the assignment—for example, a report on clouds—here are some suggestions:

1. Teach students to break down the task into simple units. This makes the goal more clearly attainable. Perhaps ask them: What are clouds made of? How do they form?
2. Help students list where to find relevant information. Search for a book in the library? Search for information online? How about the websites of the National Weather Service or *National Geographic*?
3. Help students identify materials needed (e.g., paper and pencil, a computer).
4. Develop an outline: introduction, body, and conclusion.
 - a. The introduction sparks interest in readers and gives them a brief overview of what is in the report.
 - b. The body includes the main points of the report.
 - c. The conclusion is the wrap-up—all the important points and the main point of the thesis.
5. Foster the understanding that work and persistence are necessary to complete a task or reach a goal. Help students understand that each task takes time and effort and that some parts will be easier than others.
6. Discuss setbacks. Help students turn setbacks into opportunities to learn and grow. If the teacher determines the body of the report does not have enough information to support the conclusion, for example, take a moment to ask what the teacher wants or help students to see what is missing.
7. Allow students to share their feelings about the experience. What part did they like? What part was challenging?
8. Validate students' thinking. Perhaps note that the body of the report can be the most challenging. It is the biggest part of the report, and most people agree that this part is difficult.
9. Praise effort and persistence rather than innate characteristics (e.g., intelligence, ability). For example, note that students did a great job of breaking down each step and really took the time to understand the parts of the report. Praise the students' effort, not their attributes.

For example, if after being praised for his or her intelligence due to earning a succession of A's the student suddenly earns a C, the student may feel that he or she is not as smart as previously thought and give up. Resiliency is lost.

However, when praise focuses on the effort that enabled the children to achieve success, the outcome is significantly different. For example, if a child earning A's is praised not for his or her intelligence but for his or her effort, he or she will come to believe that effort is the key to success and that he or she can develop and grow with effort. Therefore, the child is better able to handle setbacks. If he or she receives a C on a subsequent test, the child doesn't attribute the grade to a part of him- or herself that cannot be changed but to lack of studying or effort. Praise that focuses on effort can also lead children to value learning opportunities, improve their ability to strategize, and increase their motivation to take on new tasks (Gunderson et al., 2013). Critically, praising effort fosters a growth mindset and, therefore, helps children develop resiliency.

The IEP: Fostering Growth Mindsets

Parents and educators can use the Individualized Education Program (IEP), the mechanism that lays out the foundation for educating students, to establish an environment that fosters a growth mindset for deaf and hard of hearing students. Here's how:

- Educate IEP team members on the difference between a fixed mindset and a growth mindset and on how these mindsets influence a student's resiliency and motivation.
- Cross-train teachers, coaches, support staff, interpreters, and extracurricular activity sponsors on how to appropriately support, encourage, and adjust their language to praise students in ways that promote resiliency and a growth mindset.



- Allow students to actively participate in their IEP development and planning (Williams-Diehm, Wehmeyer, Palmer, Soukup, & Garner, 2008).
- Train team members on techniques that break a task into parts and allow students to approach a large task through a series of smaller tasks.
- Connect children with deaf and hard of hearing peers. Use videophone or

scheduled playgroups, social, or sports events. Include opportunities for peers to learn American Sign Language and opportunities to practice with each other.

Helping students to develop a healthy growth mindset allows them to become resilient and gives them the tools to meet high expectations. The benefits of

resiliency and a growth mindset extend far beyond the academic setting and continue to impact individuals throughout their lives

(Moorman & Pomerantz, 2010).

Children with growth mindsets go through life with high expectations for themselves, the resilience to overcome and persist through challenges, and a sense of confidence in handling whatever situation comes their way.

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