




The Power of an Agile Mindset in Determining Quality...

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Disclaimer: This provocative presentation is ideally the beginning of a conversation. It won't take long for me to tell you everything I know about cognitive psychology, although I have been reading in the area for several years now. I'm an amateur who has sufficient interest in weird topics and a strange way of connecting ideas that might or might not be of interest to you. Thank you for your tolerance and understanding of my meanderings and I hope you learn a little that might help you in your life.

This is not an “academic” presentation, but those interested in more information are invited to ask me for references for any part of this talk and I will be happy to make them available.



Do you mostly agree or mostly disagree with the following

Intelligence is something very basic that you really can't change much. You're born with it or not. Yes, you can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.

No matter how intelligent you are, you can always get better, sometimes you can improve a lot.

You can substitute any ability or talent for "intelligence."



Interesting experiments

Phase I:

Students were given a very easy set of questions

Then they were categorized into “effort” or “fixed” groups (about 50-50)



Phase II

All students allowed to choose between:

(1) a more difficult test (where they would learn a lot) or

(2) another easy test (similar to Phase I)

Most (~90%) “effort” kids chose (1)

Most (~80%) “fixed” kids chose (2)



Phase III

Very difficult exam given to both groups

“Effort” kids worked hard, enjoyed the challenge

“Fixed” kids easily discouraged



Phase IV

All students allowed to choose between:

(1) seeing exams of those who did better

or

(2) exams of those who did worse

“Effort” kids chose (1)

“Fixed” kids chose (2)



Phase V

All students given easy test (similar to Phase I)

“Effort” kids improved (by ~30%)

“Fixed” kids’ were worse (by ~20%)



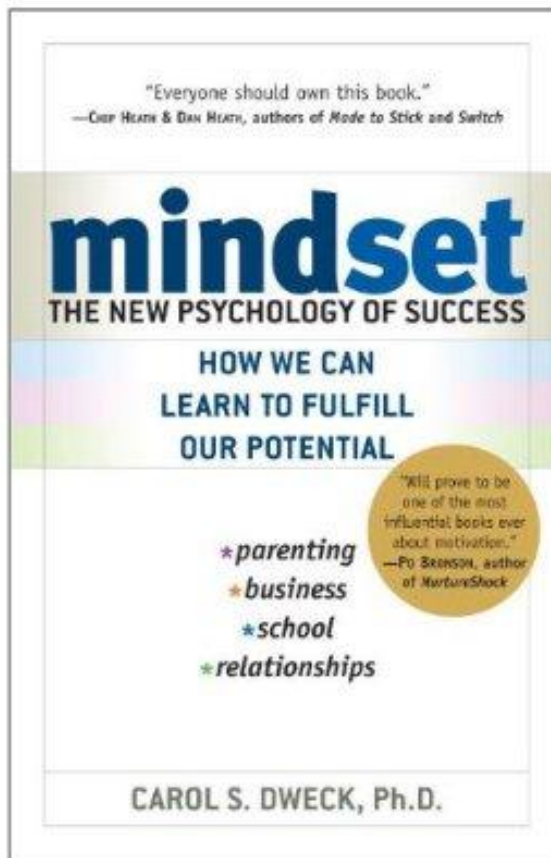
Phase VI

All students asked to give advice to other students and include their scores

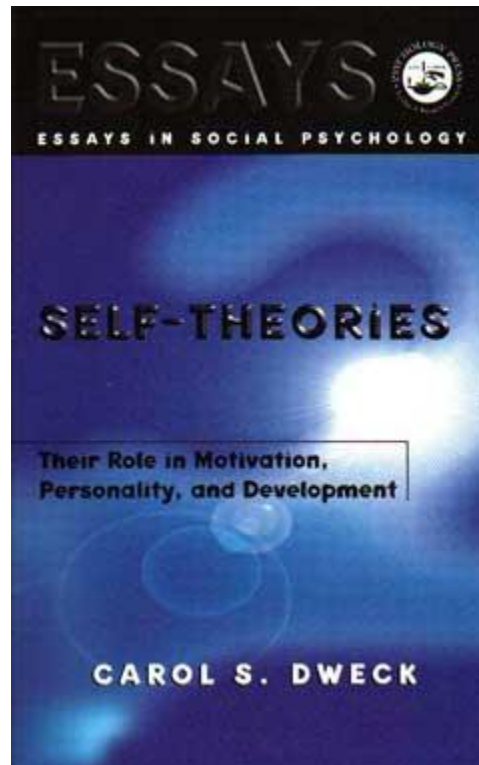
“Effort” kids: Lots of advice and encouragement.

“Fixed” kids: Very little or no advice and ~40% lied about their scores

Mindset – Carol Dweck



Self-Theories – Carol Dweck





More info

New Yorker – “The Talent Myth,” gladwell.com

New York Magazine – “How not to talk to your kids,”

Po Bronson

TIME magazine – “How to help them succeed”

mindsetonline.com/

www.stanford.edu/dept/psychology/cgi-bin/drupalm/cdweck



Two mindsets: Fixed & Agile

Research shows that mindset:

Determines goals

Reactions to failure

Belief about effort and strategies

Attitudes toward others' successes



Two mindsets Fixed vs. Agile

Ability – static, like height

Goal - look good

Challenge - avoid

Failure - defines your identity

**Effort - for those with no
talent**

**Reaction to challenge -
helplessness**

Ability – can grow, like muscle

Goal - to learn

Challenge - embrace

Failure – provides information

Effort - path to mastery

**Reaction to challenge –
resilience**

Mindsets in an MRI





Belief about yourself affects belief about others

**Those with a fixed mindset are quick to
judge others based on little information
and quick to stereotype**

**Those with an agile mindset don't ignore
information about others but are less
negative/positive**

Bright little girls



Little Empress



Bright little boys





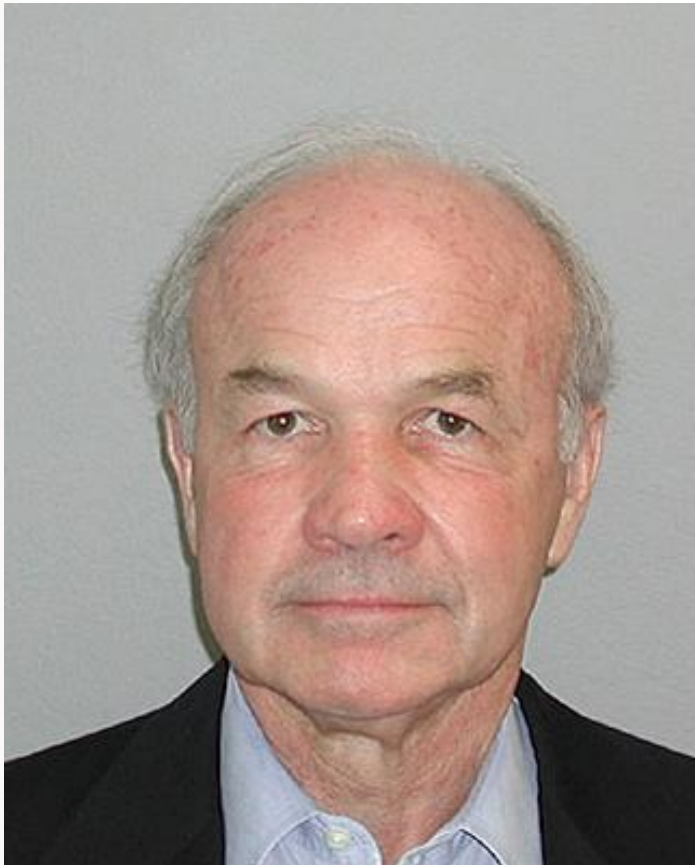
Organizations have a mindset

Amy Edmondson, Harvard Business School, studied how hospitals implemented a new technique for open-heart surgery.

Those who were successful saw a steep learning curve and realized it would be challenging, but worth it for quicker, easier patient.

Those who were not successful saw the change as “cool” new technology, a marketing opportunity, a way to show other hospitals that they “had it.”

Smartest guys in the room





Enron's fixed mindset

Identify and hire “the best talent”

Then continuously and ruthlessly grade, sort, fire, and promote – a process called “rank and yank”

We are a company of people, not planes. That is what distinguishes us from other airlines.



Great Value.

Excellent Service.

Our Mission.

Fly Southwest Airlines because you want to be treated like a person.



The Southwest Culture

Hire for attitude

**Establish a culture of community, trust, and
the “Southwest spirit”**

**Then provide learning opportunities and
continually grow people**

Southwest seems to have an “agile” mindset

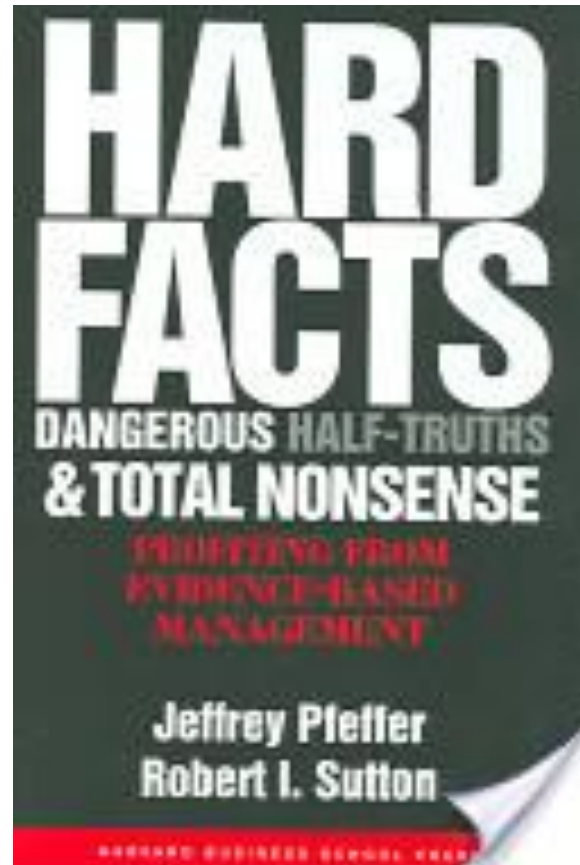


Managers have a mindset

“Keen to Help? Managers’ implicit person theories and their subsequent employee coaching,” Peter Heslin, Don Vandewalle, Gary Latham, Personnel Psych., 2006.

“Pygmalion in Management,” J. Sterling Livingston, Sept/Oct 1988 *Harvard Business Review*.

Hard Facts – Pfeffer & Sutton
<http://www.evidence-basedmanagement.com/books/>





Agile organizations

Scott Forstall, senior vice president of Apple in charge of iPhone software – “to make mistakes and struggle, but eventually we may do something that we’ll remember the rest of our lives.”

David Kelley, IDEO’s founder and chairman: We like our people to fail early and fail often.

Amazon’s Jeff Bezos says his company’s strategy is like planting seeds, or going down blind alleys.



Fixed educational system?

“... what we do throughout our whole education system is give students solvable problems. In fact they’re guaranteed to be solvable.... In the real world, most problems are not solvable...and there are many competing demands....you have to often change course in the middle in order to meet sociological issues as opposed to technological ones.....it’s very difficult for us to implement that in our teaching. But I think we do a much better job and a much better service to our students if we try and teach our students to fail more effectively.”

Lawrence Krauss, theoretical physicist

EEG, ERN, Pe





The good news is...

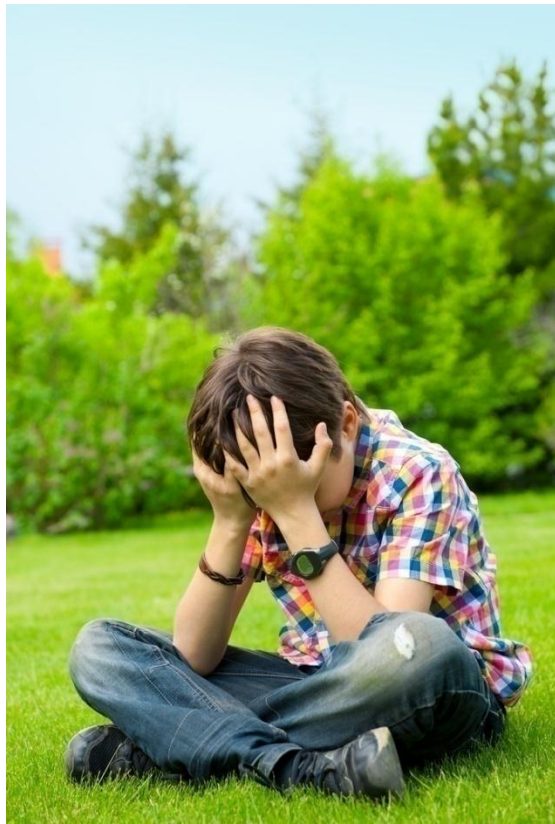
Mindset is not “fixed”

We encourage one or the other in each other

We develop one or the other in our children

Research has shown that small experimental manipulations, e.g. feedback or reading an article can produce one or the other

**You mean I don't have to
be stupid?**





Effort is good!

Praise effort, strategies, process

Ask about the work

**Instead of ignoring failure, teach others
that it's a way to learn and improve**



For Kids

Instead of “You’re so smart” or “You picked that up so quickly,” **say** “That was a clever approach” or “I’m proud of your persistence.”

Instead of “You’re a natural” **say** “Practice is really making you better.”

Instead of “Did you win?” **say** “Did you give your best effort?”

Instead of “How was your day?” **say** “What did you learn today?” or “What mistakes did you make that taught you something?”

Instead of “What do you want to do when you grow up?” **say** “What are your plans for reaching your goals?”

Never let failure progress from an action to an identity.

Never label kids, e.g. “Jimmy is the artist” or “Susie is the computer geek.”

When a child doubts her ability, ask her to think of areas where she once had low ability and now excels, or to recall a time when she saw someone learn something or improve in ways no one thought possible.



For Yourself

Instead of letting salary, benefits, and status define job satisfaction, ask yourself if you're still learning. If yes, then you're fortunate to have a job that encourages a growth mind-set. View its challenges as opportunities rather than stress. If you've stopped learning, then consider looking either for new avenues of growth or for another job.

Instead of blaming others in your relationships, remember “the whole point of a relationship is to encourage each other's development.”

Depressed people tend to believe that it's just the way they are. **Instead of** viewing yourself as a failed end product, think of yourself as a temporarily derailed work in progress. “We usually think of personality as something very stable, but we're finding that even core parts of it can be changed by shifting mind-sets.”



Agile software development

Fail early, fail often.

Fail fast, learn constantly.

Failure *IS* an option.

Without failure how can learning happen?

“Make mistakes faster.”

Rich Sheridan, CEO, Menlo Innovations

“Perfect is a verb.” Kent Beck

“Those that fail fastest grow strongest.”

Roy Singham, Founder and Chair, Thoughtworks



Agile is agile

The agile mindset believes that we are *ALL* a work in progress.

The agile software development process isn't fixed. It continues to change and grow as we learn more about it. If we are lucky, this will never end because it will never be perfect.

**We will continue to improve as we age—just like me 😊!
Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try Again. Fail again.
Fail better. Samuel Beckett, Irish poet (1906-1989)**

Thanks for listening!