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MINDSET

"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right."

— Henry Ford

How do you feel when you fail at something? Do you get excited? Do you say, 'Wow, I really stink at that.' 'This is so exciting.' 'I'm about to learn something new.' Or do you pretend that you know the answer, or that the answer or the skill or ability isn't actually that important anyway? Do you embrace getting it wrong with humility, curiosity and anticipation? Or are you defensive or dismissive? One approach represents the incredible resilience of a growth mindset, while the other is indicative of a fixed mindset that disallows vulnerability, mistakes and the learning and resilience that come from the alternative approach, known as a 'growth' mindset.

A fixed mindset is one where we see intelligence as set, firmly established and limited. An 'incremental' or 'growth' mindset sees intelligence as something that can be developed, grown and improved through experience and even failure. And these mindsets aren't just about intelligence. They can be applied to social skills, musical or sporting or artistic ability, and even personality and morality.

Whenever we put a limit on our capacity to do something, or when we start blaming the weather or other outside influences, or even arguing that our genes are the explanation for why we can or cannot do something, we are buying into the 'fixed' mindset. When we are open to the idea that with more practice, more effort, more persistence, or more discipline, we can be better at something, we are promoting a 'growth' mindset.

Henry Ford had it correct way back in the early 20th century when he said, 'Whether you think you can, or you think you can't, you're right.'

Whatever we believe in relation to intelligence (or any other ability that we may possess, such as athletic ability, social skills, artistic capacity or even music) becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. We're right either way.

A person with a growth mindset is resilient, because they have a mastery and learning (growth) mindset. So while setbacks hurt, they also motivate and inspire. They push a person towards trying again with a belief that through effort and persistence, excellence and success can be achieved. This leads to dramatic, positive adaptation specifically in the face of adversity. But if a person lacks resilience, that person will often possess a fixed mindset. Their focus is rigid. Failure will be seen as terminal. There will be no hope for the future. And there will be no point to trying harder.

Try these activities to promote a resilient, growth mindset in yourself and in your children:

ACTIVITY 1: Rethinking Praise

Take note of what you say to your children when they achieve something excellent. Ask yourself what message you are sending your kids when you say:

- You learned that so quickly. You're so smart.
- Wow, that picture is amazing. You're going to be a superstar artist.
- You're a natural. You did that effortlessly.

Stop praising talents and attributes like intelligence and talent. Get rid of words such as 'genius' and 'natural'. Instead, focus on drawing attention to specifics such as effort, persistence and strategy. What's an example of something you could say instead? Write your idea below.

"   "

_____

ACTIVITY 2: The Power of "Yet"

Teach your children the power of the word 'YET'. If they say they can't do something, remind them they can't do it YET. This is a growth-focused, resilient approach to challenges.

ACTIVITY 2: Set Your Own Goal

Set a goal to do something new and share it with your family. Maybe you're the person who always said, "I'm not a runner. It's not in my genes." Or "I'm not musical." Or even, "I can't cook!" Take on the challenge of running 5kms in a month. (There are programs online for free to show you how to do this.) Or have some piano or guitar lessons and then switch off the TV and practice instead. Or learn to cook your new signature dish. Teach your children by example that with practice we can do almost anything.

The activity I have chosen is: _____

I will start on this activity: _____

I will complete this activity by: _____

And I'll commit to another activity on: _____