

Growth Mindset in the Higher Education Classroom

Having a growth mindset means that you understand that one's intelligence and abilities can be developed and strengthened through strategic effort rather than simply existing as an unchangeable fixed state.ⁱ Growth mindsets aid in self-regulation, self-awareness, capacity for learning, ability to overcome challenges, and solve problems.ⁱⁱ A growth mindset can lead to student outcomes such as higher academic achievement, resilience to stress and challenges, the ability to adapt strategies to new situations, mastery of skills, greater engagement with coursework, and a greater sense of mental health.^{iiiiv} For instructors, a growth mindset encourages self-reflection and self-improvement in regard to one's own teaching abilities, thus becoming stronger and more adaptable over time.^v

How to Implement a Growth Mindset into your Teaching

- ❑ **Value effort and persistence over performance.** The work students put into their learning is more important to a growth mindset than the final grade, and worth acknowledging.^{vi}
- ❑ **Frame language around positively encouraging growth and avoid “fixed mindset” language that denies a student’s ability to succeed.** Instead of saying “You are not understanding this concept,” try saying “you have not understood this concept *yet*, but you are on the right track.” When students receive positive and fair messaging, they are more motivated to work on self-improvement through modification of their study strategies^{vii}
 - Note: It is not the tone you use, but conveying the idea that they are able to grow and improve through strategic effort.^{viii}
- ❑ **Build error training into the language you use in.** Error training includes explicitly telling students that the errors they make are part of the cognitive changes necessary for the learning process and are not inherent failures.^{ixx}
- ❑ **Praise a student’s efforts to improve their mastery of content.** Let students know that their hard work has paid off to positively affect their self-efficacy and deep learning.^{xi}
- ❑ **Find ways to support student growth.** If a student is struggling, offer reassurance and advice on how they can adjust their learning strategies to best fit the concept they are learning.^{xii} For example, connect them with outside resources on the topic they might find interesting or assign additional homework problems for more practice.
- ❑ **Self-reflect on your own teaching.** A growth mindset is beneficial for instructors, as well. Reflect on your teaching to identify where you have opportunities for growth and change.

ⁱ Ku, Y., & Stager, C. (2022). Rethinking the multidimensionality of growth mindset amid the COVID-19 pandemic: A systematic review and framework proposal. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.572220>

ⁱⁱ Mrazek, A. J., Ihm, E. D., Molden, D. C., Mrazek, M. D., Zedelius, C. M., and Schooler, J. W. (2018). Expanding minds: growth mindsets of self-regulation and the influences on effort and perseverance. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 79, 164–180. doi: [10.1016/j.jesp.2018.07.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.07.003)

ⁱⁱⁱ Nalipay, M. J. N., King, R. B., Mordeno, I. G., Chai, C., & Jong, M. S. (2021). Teachers with a growth mindset are motivated and engaged: The relationships among mindsets, motivation, and engagement in teaching. *Social Psychology of Education*, 24(6), 1663-1684. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-021-09661-8>

^{iv} Kroeper, K. M., Fried, A. C., & Murphy, M. C. (2022). Towards fostering growth mindset classrooms: Identifying teaching behaviors that signal instructors' fixed and growth mindsets beliefs to students. *Social Psychology of Education*, 25(2-3), 371-398. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-022-09689-4>

^v Hempel, B., Kiehlbaugh, K., & Blowers, P. (2020). Scalable and practical teaching practices faculty can deploy to increase retention: A faculty cookbook for increasing student success. *Education for Chemical Engineers*, 33, 45-65. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ece.2020.07.004>

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Ibid.

^{viii} Kroeper, K. M., Fried, A. C., & Murphy, M. C. (2022). Towards fostering growth mindset classrooms: Identifying teaching behaviors that signal instructors' fixed and growth mindsets beliefs to students. *Social Psychology of Education*, 25(2-3), 371-398. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-022-09689-4>

^{ix} Heimbeck, D., Frese, M., Sonnentag, S., Keith, N., (2003). Integrating Errors into the Training Process: The Function of Error Management Instructions and the Role of Goal Orientation. *Personnel Psychology* 56(2), 333–361. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2003.tb00153.x>

^x Chillarege, K.A., Nordstrom, C.R., Williams, K.B., (2003). Learning from Our Mistakes: Error Management Training for Mature Learners. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 17(3), 369–385. doi: <https://doi.org/10.22864324988>.

^{xi} Hempel, B., Kiehlbaugh, K., & Blowers, P. (2020). Scalable and practical teaching practices faculty can deploy to increase retention: A faculty cookbook for increasing student success. *Education for Chemical Engineers*, 33, 45-65. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ece.2020.07.004>

^{xii} Ibid.