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Adopting a Growth Mindset

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How often do you think about your mindset? You may have heard about the importance of positive thinking and a can-do attitude, but not thought too long and hard about it.

Perhaps it strikes you as a bit cliché, or just one of those many self-improvement topics you'll come back to later. Our mindset has a huge impact on self-esteem, so it is worth investing some time learning about it.

In her book "Mindset", Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D., discusses the link between our mindset and ability to achieve. One of her key ideas is that in order to keep achieving, it's important to cultivate a 'growth mindset'. This way of thinking assumes that nothing is static. We can improve our talents and intelligence through strategic effort and dedication.

The banner features the Explorable logo at the top center, with the text "EXPLORABLE" in a large, bold, white font and "Quiz Time!" in a smaller, white, cursive font below it. Below the logo are three quiz cards, each with a different image and title:

- Card 1: Image of red roller skates on a wooden deck. Title: "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2".
- Card 2: Image of a fan of colorful pens. Title: "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2".
- Card 3: Image of a Ferris wheel at sunset. Title: "Quiz: Flags in Europe".

At the bottom right of the banner, there is a link that says "See all quizzes =>" in white text.

What Is a Fixed Mindset?

Conversely, people with a fixed mindset don't have this flexibility of thought. They think that what they have is their lot, the end, so to speak. The fixed mindset is a self-defeating attitude because it excuses poor performance on a lack of fixed ability.

Often people with low self-esteem assume their abilities are fixed, and have a negative mindset when it comes to trying new things. This creates a vicious cycle, where they never give themselves the chance to show themselves that they can successfully do new things.

What It Looks Like in Real Life

Consider some of the personalities in your school or workplace. Who are the types who always seem to get ahead: Is it the risk-takers or the people who quietly and reliably go about their duties? Is it the person who invites change, or the person who is bright but rests on their laurels?

The person who proclaims themselves an utter failure after receiving poor feedback on a project is the one demonstrating a fixed mindset, and may avoid future projects and situations where they feel measured. Meanwhile, the person with the growth mindset looks forward to evaluation as it shows them where to focus their energy for next time.

You and Others

If a person feels intimidated by their peers, it may be because that person has a mindset whereby they need to keep proving their success against others. Perhaps you feel that you lack capacity for improvement. Either way, your career suffers the risk of stagnation. Seeing as it is far easier to change ourselves than others, take some time for introspection.

Dweck recommends thinking about how you handle criticism, exploring all channels, for professional development, and try to see others as an opportunity for growth rather than people who threaten your status. As a manager, you can foster talent by encouraging a growth mindset in employees. It can start with a simple welcoming of contributions and suggestions, allowing everyone to have a voice.

It's Challenging, but Worth it!

Switching mindset is not necessarily easy. Your attitudes are a culmination of all that you have experienced, your history, personality and self-esteem all in one. If low self-esteem is keeping you in a negative state, make an action-plan to work on it. Think carefully how you can incorporate the strategies of this course to raise your self-awareness and self-esteem.

Adopting a growth mindset and positive thinking will impact your life far beyond your career. Think about how much you can develop as a person by changing your mental filters. The choice is yours. Once you start taking responsibility for how you are feeling and stop seeking external validation, you will feel a lot more empowered. This in itself can a tremendous boost to self-esteem.

You can find out more about Carol Dweck and her research, as well as watch an inspirational TED talk by her.

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