

The Pathways to Nurturing Children's Growth Mindset in Family Education

Lin Liu^{1,2}, Yong Liu¹, Lei Wang¹, Chenghai Gao² & Tao Wang³

¹ Taishan College, Shandong, China

² Northwest Normal University, Gansu, China

³ Xinyuan Baby Kindergarten, Shandong, China

Correspondence: Lin Liu, Taishan College, Shandong, China; Northwest Normal University, Gansu, China.

doi:10.56397/JARE.2024.09.03

Abstract

In family education, both parents and children have a belief system to construct the world and interpret experience. Some of these beliefs point to a dynamic self and a dynamic world with the possibility of growth, while others point to a static self and world with fixed qualities. These beliefs are part of the motivational system and strongly influence what goals people pursue. The cultivation of children's growth mindset in family education can help children construct their desired life and study and maintain flexibility. No matter whether things are fulfilled or not, it will inject enthusiastic attempts and efforts into children's life and study. These attempts and efforts can help children live a determined life, solve problems actively and discover their potential.

Keywords: family education, growth mindset, cultivate, path

1. Introduction

In recent years, growth mindset has become one of the themes concerned by the education circle. More and more people pay attention to "the actual effect of education". Education is not only the "learning success" in study, but also to guide children's positive and optimistic attitude towards learning and life. The purpose of family education is to let children on the road of life "sustainable development". "Don't lose at the starting line" is one of the family education anxiety. The result of it may put the child into a fork in the road. Students in four Chinese provinces and cities scored first in the world in the PISA (Programme for International Student

Assessment) 2018 test results but fared poorly in the category of growth mindset. Among students surveyed in four provinces and cities in China, only 50 percent of them have growth mindset.

Some children choose to try various things or ask for help when they encounter difficulties. They believe that difficulties can be solved through hard work and regard failure as an opportunity for growth. Some children tend to give up and avoid challenges. They regard failure as a lack of ability. Every child will encounter difficulties, setbacks or failures in the process of growing up. Do they choose to face it or avoid it? Children's different mindset patterns

lead to different choices for them. Family education is devoted to cultivating children's growth mindset, which can avoid children forming fixed mindset as much as possible. Active family education can help children realize their potential. The growth mindset has many benefits for both parents and children.

2. The Meaning of Growth Mindset and Its Significance in Family Education

The concept of growth mindset originates from implicit theories proposed by psychologist Dweck. Growth mindset is a kind of mindset mode with intelligence variable and plasticity as the core belief system. The opposite of growth mindset is fixed mindset. Fixed mindset believes that individuals are born with fixed talents and abilities. The two opposite mindset patterns of fixed and growth exist in everyone, but each person's belief tendency and degree are different.

2.1 The Meaning of Growth Mindset

An individual's perception of himself, others and the world is influenced by mindsets. The growth mindset is a mode of thinking in which an individual believes that human attributes such as intelligence and ability are not innate but can be developed and improved through individual efforts. The concept of growth mindset was introduced by psychologist Dweck (2006) and it was previously known as gradualism (a type of implicit theories).

Variability or controllability is a dimension that classifies important things (whether internal or external, abstract or concrete). The implicit theories guide individuals toward specific goals and establish different patterns. The implicit theories is an individual's internal belief about whether a particular attribute is malleable. It includes two types: incremental theory and entity theory. In her book *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006), Dweck changed the term "implicit theories" to "mindset", the term "incremental theory" to "growth mindset" and the term "entity theory" to "fixed mindset". Individuals with growth mindset believe that human attributes are variable or controllable. For example, they believe that they can become smarter through effort and education and believe that steps can be taken to develop their personality or moral character, etc. In contrast, individuals with fixed mindsets believe that human attributes are fixed. For example, they believe that everyone has certain intellectual,

personality or moral qualities that cannot be changed through effort and education.

2.2 The Significance of Growth Mindset in Family Education

The growth mindset and the fixed mindset have different ideas about effort, ability, failure and many other aspects. Therefore, in life or learning, whether an individual holds growth mindset or fixed mindset will have different impact on his development. Children with fixed mindset think they have a certain ability, and they can't do much to change it. In contrast, children with a growth mindset believe that they can develop their abilities through hard work, good strategies and guidance from others.

According to Dweck, all people have growth mindset. If parents want to give their children a gift, then the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, enjoy hard work and persevere in learning. The ability to grow is the core of a child's development. It is of great significance to cultivate children's growth mindset in family education.

3. The Pathways to Nurturing Children's Growth Mindset in Family Education

The growth mindset is crucial to a child's future development. Children with "growth mindset" face difficulties and setbacks with a positive attitude. They are willing to invest more time and energy to solve problems or grow their abilities to reach higher achievements. Therefore, in family education, parents can actively guide children to form growth mindset with the help of some methods.

3.1 Guide Positive Attribution

Individuals with growth mindset believe that people's abilities are variable. Individuals with fixed mindset believe that human abilities are immutable. This is actually a kind of attribution. The attribution reflects individual's subjective interpretation and speculation of the cause of an event. It is not necessarily the real cause of the incident. However, children who attribute negative events to fixed mindset of "immutable abilities" are prone to a sense of learned helplessness. At the same time, the sense of helplessness that a child initially experiences in one negative situation can spread to other situations. These can lead to individual depression and loss of hope for the future.

Therefore, parents should guide children to make positive attribution. Especially when

children experience setbacks and failures, parents guide children into controlled attribution believing that abilities can be changed with constant practice and effort. "Practice", "effort" and so on are controllable factors that are the only way to master skills and grow. Positive attribution can prevent the formation of fixed mindset.

3.2 Give Positive Feedback

Many studies have shown that praising children's "diligence" is easy to form growth mindset and praising children's "smart" is easy to form fixed mindset. If children are praised for being smart, they tend to avoid difficult problems and tend to complete simple tasks. If children are praised for their "hard work", they will become willing to challenge and learn from it.

In addition, parents' feedback to their children can use "it doesn't matter", "although this time did not achieve, you can work hard next time" and so on. Parents guide their children to face life positively with growth mindset. The future is worth looking forward to. At the same time, parents' feedback to their children should pay attention to the "implicit attitude". Growth-minded parents are better at praising their children's efforts. They teach children to deal positively with setbacks and challenges.

3.3 Conduct Longitudinal Comparisons

Behind fixed mindset of children is actually "evaluation anxiety". Everyone wants to be what their parents call "someone else's child". But when the child finds himself always compared with "someone else's child", he will be afraid of failure. Especially when some things have not been achieved with special efforts, the child will feel hurt self-esteem and tend to do self-protection and self-defense.

To cultivate children's growth mindset, the key is for parents to have growth mindset, less horizontal comparison, more vertical comparison, to see the child's own advantages and growth as a unique individual and to believe in the child's potential. Let the child believe that ability can be developed, believe that they can continue to improve through hard work.

3.4 Parents Teach by Example

The purpose of education is not only to expect children to make progress in learning, but also to hope that children's physical and mental

health and sustainable development. In family education, parents should guide children to accept their own advantages and shortcomings, positive and optimistic life. Parents' mindset will affect the way to educate children and also affect the child's mindset. Parents should act as communicators of growth mindset, teaching by example and growing up with their children.

Haimovitz and Dweck found that parents' beliefs about failure and how they react to their child's failure consistently predict child's mindset (Haimovitz & Dweck, 2016). Parents who believe that failure makes people weaker focus on their children's performance and abilities rather than their children's learning. Their children in turn tend to see intelligence as fixed rather than growth. Every word and action of parents conveys information to children. When parents believe that abilities can grow, they can pass on growth mindset to their children through their educational behavior.

4. Conclusion

The mindset pattern is a set of established attitudes that an individual holds. Individuals with different mindset patterns show great differences in how they treat efforts, challenges, failures, setbacks, etc. Individuals with growth mindset believe that people's abilities can be changed through continuous practice and effort. The challenges, failures and setbacks are seen as opportunities for their own growth. Individuals with fixed mindset believe that human abilities are innate and unchangeable. They cannot be changed by acquired effort and experience. Failure can be attributed by the individual to a lack of ability. Child with fixed mindset will never recover from setbacks.

In recent years, in the family education, parents have a common feeling. "Lying is uneven, rolling is not moving and swinging is not rotten." The "45 degree life" is very difficult, bringing a lot of invisible stress and anxiety. Under the anxiety of family education, parents guide children to form growth mindset in family education, which is helpful to alleviate the anxiety of education. At the same time, these educational measures contribute to the healthy physical and mental development of children. The cultivation of children's growth mindset in family education can help children construct the life they want. Whether things work out as expected or not, it will inject positive attempts and efforts into children's life and learning.

References

- Dweck C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York, USA: Random House (NY).
- Dweck, C. S., & Leggett, E.L. (1988). A social-cognitive approach to motivation and personality. *Psychological Review*, 95(2), 256-273.
- Haimovitz, K, & Dweck, C.S. (2016). What Predicts Children's Fixed and Growth Intelligence Mind-Sets? Not Their Parents' Views of Intelligence but Their Parents' Views of Failure. *Psychological Science*, 27(6), 859-869.