

Growth Strategic Mindsets for the Win!

Cesar Caballero

Southern Utah University

Strategic Leadership

Dr. Koenig

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### **Growth Strategic Mindset for the Win!**

Having a growth and strategic mind-set is what you need to get far in life! Hughes et al (2014) state: “Strategic acting requires a mind-set in which acting is understood as an opportunity for learning” (p.114). Such is no other than the growth mind-set. According to Dweck (2016), growth mindset refers to those who act with the most heart (p.98). So, what do we get? People with the most heart are those who understand that strategic mindset is about continued learning; those who learn from their mistakes and thrive in the face of adversity.

### **My First Encounter with Growth Mind-set**

I was about 13-14 years when according to my father I ‘ruined my life.’ My girlfriend was pregnant and my father rather than trying to figure out what could be done to help me realize my new responsibilities, simply chose to put me down and proceed to tell me how I had ruined all my chances for success. Now, I see that his mind-set was clearly a fixed one. Since I could not have the ‘picture perfect’ life he had then that basically meant I was a loser! My mother in turn genuinely surprised me. She talked to me and told me she was disappointed, but we had to figure out how to make sure I learned from the mistake. We soon started making plans on how I would continue to go to school and take care of my new family as well.

### **Balancing the Equation**

My father would again throughout the course of my life show his fixed mind-set, which always balanced out in my life with that of my mother. During college, when I decided to become a teacher, he explained that teaching did not give enough money and that my life was already hard enough as it was. My mother’s opinion? Anytime throughout my life when in doubt, I always went to my mother for advice and she would always tell me that she had faith in me and that as long as I worked hard for what I wanted, the result did not matter as much. She

was never unaware of the fact that I could fail but she always made sure to explain that just like I could fail, I could also succeed. She had a vision of what I should become in my life and that never included being a 'loser' no matter what. Just as Hughes et al (2014) explain regarding having a vision of what you should become and reframing to see things differently (pp. 75-78), she always inspired me to keep thinking of my current situation and my future (where I wanted to be). Now, while reading these chapters, I see that she has always possessed that growth mind-set that in turn was always instilled and nurtured in me by her.

### **Nurturing a Strategic Growth Mindset**

I think the easiest and most productive way to develop a growth and strategic mind-set is by nurturing that in your children or on whoever you are trying to instill it in. Call it your employee, your co-workers, your spouse, your children, or your students- you just have to be consistent and true about it! You cannot be a person with a false growth mind-set. I know it may be easy to fall prey to that. Believe me. I have been a teacher for over twelve years and the fact that state testing promotes a fixed mind-set rather than a growth one is frustrating! Infuriating even! We are supposed to be helping our students succeed yet we are pretty much doing the opposite by promoting all the features of a fixed mind-set within them. With that being said, I always tried (without knowing this was what it was called) to promote that growth mind-set my mom had instilled in me with my students. I often used examples such as Michael Jordan or Tiger Woods to explain that they had to work hard for what they wanted; when they failed state practice tests, I would always use positive reinforcement (if they actually had worked hard). I would start the school year telling them I was excited to learn from them and always encouraged them to see any problem as their 'Everest.' After all what is a problem, if not our own personal Everest to climb? I loved teaching but it finally got to the point where I could not keep fighting

for my students and decided I needed a break from it and perhaps a way to make a better impact. The system needs changing. I love all those examples of teacher across the nation helping students succeed but it is a very difficult journey and if you take a minute to do research on them, most of those teachers have done great things for a couple of years and then they either open their own schools or go to college and teach. The system as a whole is broken with public education (but that is another topic altogether). I would say, It is truly about nurturing the growth mind-set in them as much as possible and help it flourish within other people (students, children, family, etc.).

### **Conclusion**

I believe that the growth mind-set is within everybody. As a matter of fact, we are curious by nature and thus we have that right there, but we just need to make sure that we take care of it- nurture it! Being a leader (call it father, teacher, friend) goes hand in hand with thinking about how we never stop learning and how short and long term goals are always at play (just like my mother always considered all those when giving me advice). If you ask me, she is one of the best leaders I know!

## References

Dweck, C. (2016). *Mindset: the new psychology of success*. Random House.

Hughes, R. L., Beatty, K. C., & Dinwoodie, D. L. (2014). *Becoming a strategic leader: your role in your organization's enduring success*. Jossey-Bass.

