



## PARENT NEWSLETTER - GROWTH MINDSET!

This month our focus is to build a **growth mindset**. To briefly summarize, in a fixed mindset we believe that our intelligence and talent are something we are born with and can't change. This leads us to the false assumption that talent alone, without hard work, will lead to success. Extensive research has shown that children with this mindset give up easily and often avoid challenges.

In a growth mindset, we see ourselves as growing and developing. We believe we can build any skill with effort and this can help us create a love of learning and an excitement around new challenges. We see the brain like a muscle, the more effort we put in, the bigger it grows.

### **GROWTH MINDSET TIP #1**

#### **Praise Your Child For Effort Instead of Talent**

The most important thing we can work towards as parents is to praise our children for effort, not talent. Our words tell children how to think about themselves and with best intentions when we say things like, "Great job, you got perfect without even trying. You're so smart!" we send our child the message that trying hard means you aren't as smart.

Research shows that children praised for outcome will choose easier tasks to prove they are smart and gain our approval. Praising children for effort on the other hand, is what leads them to choose harder tasks because they know we value effort. This is why children with a growth mindset ultimately reach higher levels of success.

To support the growth mindset of our SJK community, please give praise freely for these growth mindset builders:

- Things accomplished through practice: studying, use of effective strategies, perseverance, and concentration.
- Choosing challenging projects.
- Trying different strategies.
- Making improvement.
- Passion

When your child does something very quickly and easily, recognize that the task didn't challenge them and say "Sorry about that. I guess that was too easy. Next time let's choose something that will really help you grow."



Try to avoid praise that judges their intellect, talent and speed rather than effort. Praising these qualities unintentionally has an adverse effect when our child faces difficult tasks, as it can create a fear of failure, increased procrastination and cause our children to quit when things get difficult.

## **GROWTH MINDSET TIP #2**

### **Be Honest With Your Children**

It can be hard for our children to come in second place, lose a big game or fail to meet their own expectations on a test but protecting your child from disappointments by being dishonest, while making them feel better in the short term, doesn't help them learn how to be honest with themselves and benefit from the feedback.

Tell your child the truth gently. Give them honest constructive feedback about their performance and avoid externalizing the loss or sugar coating. Help them think about what tools will help them succeed where they are struggling.

Keep these principles in mind when talking to your child about failures:

- Be empathetic but tell them the truth
- Don't externalize the loss
- Don't let them rely on ability alone, hard work is needed for mastery
- Help them recognize what can and cannot control ie. Their attitude vs the refs decision
- Focus on improving something and areas of potential growth
- Don't judge, we are all learning

## **GROWTH MINDSET TIP #3**

### **Help Your Child Recognize Their Fixed Mindset Voice**

The story we tell ourselves is a choice. By recognizing and acknowledging when we are using self-defeating and fixed self-talk, we can start to choose a growth mindset voice instead. Recognizing that we have a choice of which voice to hear is a big step towards using a growth mindset voice. When you hear your child using a fixed mindset frame of reference remind them that, much like opening our umbrella to protect us from the rain, the choice is up to them. Knowing this choice exists can help children take control and feel empowered in situations where they would normally feel powerless.



Here are some fixed mindset statements and alternatives we can choose:

## DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET

INSTEAD OF...	SAY THIS...
I'm not good at this	What am I missing?
I give up	I'll use a different strategy
It's good enough	Is this really my best work?
I can't make this any better	I can always improve
This is too hard	This may take some time
I made a mistake	Mistakes help me to learn
I just can't do this	I am going to train my brain
I'll never be that smart	I will learn how to do this
Plan A didn't work	There's always Plan B
My friend can do it	I will learn from them

### GROWTH MINDSET TIP #4

#### **Build In Time For Regular Self Reflection**

Reflecting regularly on what we have learned both from our successes and failures is a great way to improve the growth mindset. This regular reflection allows us to course correct quickly, recognize small wins and opportunities for improvement, and reduces how overwhelmed we feel. A great exercise to do at the dinner table is to have everyone share one thing they did great that day and one growth opportunity (an area you could improve).

Here are some examples:

Great things today:

I have committed to exercising more and I made it to the gym today.

I said something nice instead of negative about a friend I have been struggling with.

I focused in math class instead of getting distracted by my friends.



Growth opportunities:

Making a bit more time in the evening to prep a healthy lunch instead of choosing fast food.

Working on scheduling my day better tomorrow so that I don't leave my homework until the last minute.

### **GROWTH MINDSET TIP #5**

#### **Model a growth mindset**

Don't just say the words, be the change that inspires them. The easiest and toughest part of parenting is that children primarily learn by example. Modeling determination and a growth mindset in the face of setbacks is a great way to teach them how to do the same. It can be difficult to talk about your own failures with your kids but watching you bounce back can be an inspiring example of how to solve problems in their own lives.

Start by choosing your own growth opportunity. Select something you have never tried or that doesn't come naturally to you, something you may have quit in the past and then take on the challenge of improving at that skill. Maybe it was sports, math, or music. Every day we ask our children to go to school and apply themselves in a range of things and some will come more easily than others for them. As adults we tend to forget how hard new challenges can be and trying something new ourselves is a great way build empathy for our children, become better guides for them and continue to keep our adult brains healthy and growing. Pay attention to your own self-talk (positive thoughts about your capability) and practice a growth mindset.

### **GROWTH MINDSET TIP #6**

#### **Give kids a chance to step out into the rain, take risks and fail**

Children will live a great deal of life under their parents' umbrella of protection, but over time they need to build their own and this starts with an environment that allows them to step out of their comfort zone. It's okay to feel stress and to fail, in fact it's how we build grit, a characteristic strongly associated with success. However, in a society that seems to worship success, building grit can be daunting. Grit is our ability to face failures and carry on, our perseverance and passion for our goals.

Sounds like a great quality, but building grit requires failure, a feeling most of us aren't very fond of. We have become accustomed to thinking that success is the most viable way to achieve growth and status. In truth, if a child never has a chance to triumph over difficulties they don't develop confidence in their ability to face challenges. Allowing you child to take risks is very important for learning and a real sense of achievement happens when they burst through those barriers that were holding them back. Make sure you child always has the chance to pursue at least one thing that is very difficult for them.



As always, if you have any questions regarding these concepts or more ideas to practice, reach out at any time!

See this blog for a more detailed look at coaching children through the challenges of building a growth mindset: <https://umbrellaproject.co/category/growth-mindset/>

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