

Freshman Experience: Developing a Growth Mindset

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Abstract

Stress, major indecision, and frustration from entering a new world full of unfamiliarity may cause a lack of confidence and prosperity in the classroom as an undecided college student. To prevent this from happening, developing a growth mindset in education as well as the outside world benefits both the student and the community around them. A growth mindset creates a mentality that causes students to progress toward a self-sufficient path through practice, exertion, and focus. This article will address the importance of obtaining a growth mindset as an undecided student, clarify the characteristics, and show how it positively affects student achievement, major exploration, and eventually career/major choice.

Introduction

Throughout the world, psychologists, professors, and other social scientists are researching ways to mitigate the challenges faced by most college students. Obtaining a growth mindset has been found to be key to overcoming the mounds of stress and obstacles caused by a lack of certainty in a new environment (Dweck, 2008). When entering a new environment such as a post-secondary institution, it is crucial to cultivate qualities that pull you towards a successful future. As my first semester progressed, it quickly became clear that I was not the only one struggling to transition and adapt to a world much different than the years prior. Through talking and attending several freshman MU 180 Seminar sessions, it occurred to me that the help every student needs is within themselves. That help comes through developing a growth mindset.

What is a growth mindset?

Psychologist Carol Dweck (2015) defines a growth mindset as “people's belief that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work—brains and talent are just the starting point.” This view creates a love of learning and resilience that is essential for great accomplishment in students. A growth mindset allows students to gain confidence in the classroom and a pathway to success as it creates a mentality that causes students to be more self-sufficient. This comes with practice and exertion as well as becoming more focused while exploring different opportunities. Otherwise, when faced with a tough situation, it is easy to shut down and create a negative reflection on oneself resulting in defeat and failure to rejuvenate. A growth mindset ultimately helps people reframe their approach to challenges and

stay motivated to work towards improving skills.

The most interesting aspect of this type of mindset is the freedom that follows. It presents the opportunity to explore innovative ideas, embrace challenges, and succeed in anything you put effort into (The Scientific Foundation for Mindset, 2015). To put it in perspective, this attitude is what will push you towards success and set you apart as a hustler and a groundbreaking achiever. To be able to create this sense of empowerment and authority on your thoughts and actions, it means focusing on success and therefore creating a foundation of confidence and accomplishment.

How would students benefit?

There are countless ways to benefit from this approach. Students become more self-reliant, self-regulating, confident, and successful. As a psychologist from Stanford University, Dweck states “Students with a growth mindset embrace problems as an opportunity to learn while students who assume that their intelligence is set, are less likely to ask questions in order to overcome setbacks in their learning. (Dweck 2008). As a student who has adopted this way of thinking, I already see major changes in the way I view the future, plan to handle challenges that may come my way, and opportunities that may arise in my future endeavors. Students who were taught about developing intelligence went on to perform better in school and exhibit more motivation in the classroom. Not only does this set students up for success, but it also presents diverse ways to deal with situations and to learn from the experience. Students will find a love for continuing an effort even after failure (Dweck 2008). Being able to understand and learn through life experiences in a pristine environment is crucial to success and development

Why is it important?

The American Freshman National Norms Study sampled 197 people over a 10-week evaluation period throughout their first semester of college found that 75% of undergraduate students experience at least moderate stress, in particular incoming first-year students. They found that levels of stress increased, and the emotional well-being of students was declining (Pryor, 2010). The first step to improving this statistic is to encourage students to get attuned to a growth mindset. The benefits of developing this mindset specifically as an undeclared college student are endless. The opportunities, resilience, and overall lessons this mentality allows you to inherit follow you for a lifetime. Along with the skills to overcome obstacles, students feel empowered. Confidence levels will rise as you see your work starting to pay off. The process of developmental milestones reached is simply too satisfying to give up on, which then results in a healthier relationship with learning. It is also essential for accomplishing goals with comfort knowing that even if difficulties may arise, everything will be okay. Facing fears, authenticity, and creating a purpose are all reasons that prove how drastically important it is for students to obtain this way of thinking. Embracing imperfection, using trial and error, exploring new territories and the increase of personal and professional growth is astronomical.

Conclusion

A growth mindset is the ability to provide yourself with the desire to learn from your mistakes. Knowing the beauty behind the challenges is what makes the journey of learning so incredible. It is the belief that skills and abilities can develop through hard work, challenging new ideas, and learning from failure. Many students, like myself, find it hard to adjust with so many overwhelming responsibilities and

little idea of what the future holds. Developing this mentality is what will create this positive outlook that sets you up for a brighter future. Growth mindset is what allows this sense of relief knowing that if

you work towards an outcome, you will find a way. It is all about loving the journey that comes along with it, through all the failures, and most importantly, all your success.

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