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# INTRODUCTION

In 1988, a group of researchers, including Stanford psychology professor Carol Dweck, studied students' responses to failure.

Some students rebounded well, while others were derailed by simple setbacks.

After extensive research with thousands of students, Dr. Dweck came up with the terms *fixed mindset* and *growth mindset* to encapsulate the differences between how all of us think about learning.

Simply put, having a growth mindset means you believe that you can and will improve with effort. A fixed mindset, by comparison, means that you believe you have a fixed amount of intelligence or talent that will never change.

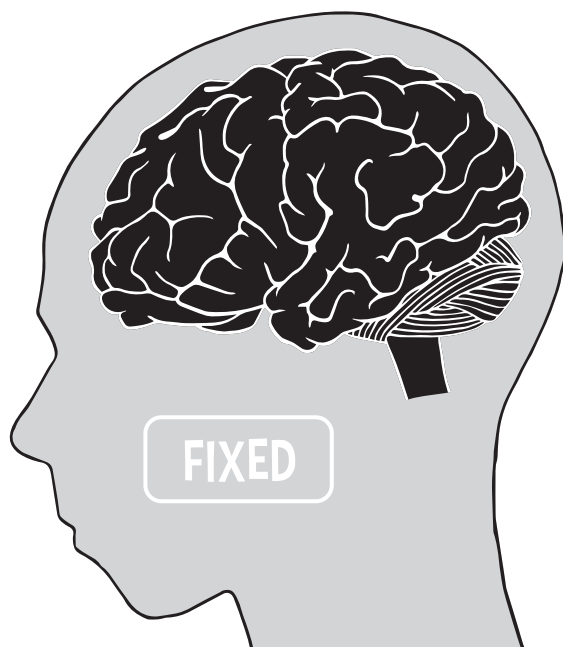
We all have these two mindsets, but what Dr. Dweck has shown is that students are more likely to succeed once they take on a growth mindset and understand that they can get better at anything with time and effort.

In a fixed mindset, challenges are avoided, criticism is ignored, and students feel threatened by the success of others and are quick to give up when things get hard.

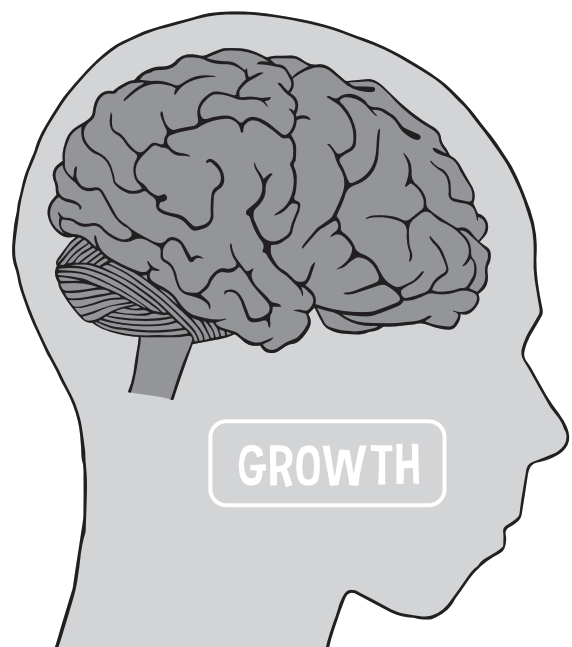
In a growth mindset, mistakes are seen as learning opportunities, challenges are welcomed, and students persevere with effort, leading to a desire to learn even more.

Teaching students about a growth mindset and the science behind it, including brain plasticity, has helped countless students to grasp the idea that they can achieve their dreams, no matter their starting points.

The activities in this book support the growth-mindset philosophy. With practice and positive reinforcement, students will be able to adopt this flexible, supportive, and uplifting perspective.



**knowledge is unchanging**



**knowledge can grow**

# I BELIEVE I can DO IT.

**“Break through that, all the judgement. Never let anything hold you back.”**

⚡ **Jessica Cox**

In order to soar, we must believe in ourselves. Self-confidence gives students the resilience to keep learning, despite any obstacles that may appear. In this unit, students learn how self-belief can propel learning and growth.

## ★ **Reading Passage: Jessica Cox**

The first pilot without arms, Jessica Cox is an incredible inspiration whose self-confidence helped her achieve her dreams.

## ★ **Short-Answer Activity: Learning to Fly**

After reading Jessica’s story, students will reflect on her belief in herself and examine what they can take away from her example.

## ★ **Small-Group Activity: Three Nice Things**

In small groups, students will say three nice things about one another, and then themselves, building self-confidence and positive collaboration.

## ★ **Whole-Class Activity: I Am, We Are**

Students will create art that completes the statement “I am...” If possible, have magazines available from which students can cut out images to include in their art. Then, as a class, discover what qualities students have in common. Create a poster with common attributes.

## ★ **Journal Prompt: Fearlessly Brave**

To overcome fear, we must believe in ourselves. In this writing exercise, students will journal about one fear they have that they would like to overcome.

## ★ **Growing Beyond**

Ask students to interview an expert; this could be a family member, a friend, or an adult relative who the student feels is an expert at self-confidence. The student should record answers to these questions:

- ★ What does it mean to believe in yourself?
- ★ What is one thing you have achieved that you didn’t think you could do at first?
- ★ What did you say to yourself in order to achieve it?
- ★ What advice would you give me about believing in yourself?

Once interviews are complete, ask students to share their findings with the class and discuss some of the common threads in the responses.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## JESSICA COX



Jessica Cox was born without arms, but she has learned how to fly. She is the first armless person to earn a pilot's license and fly solo.

How does someone without arms decide they are going to learn how to fly?

Jessica says it helps that when she was growing up, her parents encouraged her to do everything that other kids with arms could do. She learned to do every task with her feet—from drinking out of a glass and eating with a fork to coloring and playing.

For a while, she tried prosthetic arms. But they just never felt natural to her. After wearing them for 11 years, she decided to take them off. Jessica never looked back.

"I do not have arms, but that is not what determines what I can do," Jessica said.

Her belief in herself never wavered. She went to college and earned a degree in psychology and communication. She had already accomplished so much, but there was one fear left she wanted to overcome. Jessica had always had a fear of flying.

She believed she could get over this fear, and she wanted to try. For three years, she took flight lessons and learned how to fly a plane with her feet. Finally, she was a certified pilot. Jessica became the first person in aviation history to fly by using her feet.

And that is not all Jessica Cox can do. She trained in tae kwon do for many years and earned a black belt. In training, she also met her husband, Patrick. Jessica has also learned how to surf, scuba-dive, and play the piano.

For Jessica, it's not about whether she can do something—it's about how she can do it. She said, "I had to—out of necessity—develop that. Because that was how I had to approach everything. I was looking at it as: how can I do this with my feet instead?"

Today, Jessica is a motivational speaker who encourages people to overcome challenges and follow their dreams. She has unique experience that shows others that if you believe you can do it, there is really nothing to stop you from achieving the impossible.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## LEARNING TO FLY

**Directions:** Thinking about Jessica's story, answer the questions below. Then find a partner and discuss your answers.

1. Jessica had the confidence to believe in herself, which allowed her to learn how to do everything with her feet instead of her hands. What are some adjectives you would use to describe Jessica?

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2. How are you similar to or different from Jessica? Explain your answer.

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3. Jessica's family was very supportive and encouraging. Who do you have in your life that helps you believe in yourself? How do they help you?

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4. Sometimes, when we try to do something new, it can feel uncomfortable or scary. When you are learning a new skill, what do you say to yourself? Does that help you, or does it make it harder?

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5. When Jessica earned her pilot's license, her dream came true. What is one thing you have achieved that you are proud of? How did you feel when it happened?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## THREE NICE THINGS

Jessica Cox had a strong belief in herself—that she could do anything she put her mind to, despite her obstacles.

Even the most confident person sometimes doesn't see the good that others see. In this exercise, you will get a chance to hear some nice things that your classmates think about you.

**Directions:** Find two other students and form a group of three. Sit in a circle, facing one another. Take turns saying three nice things about one another. Each thing you say must be positive and true. Write what your partners say about you below. Then, at the bottom, say and write three nice things to yourself.

★ Three Nice Things from \_\_\_\_\_ to Me ★

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

★ Three Nice Things from \_\_\_\_\_ to Me ★

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

★ Three Nice Things from Me to Me ★

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_