



Thoughts from Linda:

## Mindset Changing the Way You Think to Fulfill Your Potential

Dr. Carol S. Dweck  
2006

In this million-copy best-selling book written in 2006 and revised in 2017, Dr. Carol Dweck reveals how the simple beliefs we hold about our individual talents and 'smarts' as primarily *fixed* or *growth* based have profound implications for our entire lives. Her framework, called "Mindsets," is a research-based construct, and she shares examples from her work with school children, industry, and the world of sports to illustrate these often-remarkable findings.

Carol Dweck is an American psychologist and the Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. She was previously on the faculty of Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Illinois. She is a graduate of Barnard College, earning her Ph.D. from Yale.

According to Dr. Dweck, individuals can be placed on a continuum according to their often-unconscious views of where ability comes from. Some believe their success is based on innate ability and have a "fixed" theory of intelligence or mindset. Others, who believe their success is based on hard work, learning, training, and doggedness, have a "growth" or an "incremental" theory of intelligence. She argues that a fixed mindset, in turn, can be changed if we understand first that we *actually have it* and then consciously work to change it. She offers a clear path and tools along that journey.

Dr. Dweck explains that the originator of the original IQ instrument, the Frenchman working in Paris early in the 20th century, Alfred Binet, developed it not to deliver some permanent score indicating a fixed number that was to show permanent individual intelligence. Instead, he designed the test to identify children who were not doing well in the school system in Paris to develop special programs to get them back on track. Many of the later uses of the IQ test have corrupted this original intent and caused inaccurate labels and subsequent problems over the last century due to

misunderstanding the intent and misapplication of this tool. In his book, Modern Ideas About Children, Binet is quoted: "A few modern philosophers...assert that an individual's intelligence is a fixed quantity, a quantity which cannot be increased. We must protest and react against this brutal pessimism... With practice, training, and above all, method, we manage to increase our attention, our memory, our judgment, and literally to become more intelligent than we were before."

The book lays out her theory that builds on this quote by Binet and offers good insights into specific research experiments she conducted with teams and the ensuing results, many of which are often quite surprising. It also offers practical ways to apply the lessons learned, giving excellent specific language examples for parents, coaches, and business leaders.

Her main description of a fixed mindset is one where you believe "your qualities are carved in stone, which creates an approach to life that creates an urgency to prove yourself over and over. If you have only a certain amount of intelligence, a certain personality, and a certain moral character—well, then you'd better prove that you have a healthy dose of them." In contrast, she notes those with a growth mindset look at their starting point as just that...a place to begin development. "This growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies and help from others. Although people may differ in every way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments—everyone can change and grow through application and experience."

While the message seems simple in some ways, it is full of nuance, as her illustrations show. She takes us through eight chapters: The Mindsets; Inside the Mindsets; The Truth About Ability and Accomplishment; Sports: The Mindset of a Champion; Business: Mindset and Leadership; Relationships: Mindsets in Love (or Not); Parents, Teachers, and Coaches: Where Do Mindsets Come From; and Changing Mindsets.

I enjoyed the examples in Chapter 4, The Mind of a Champion of Jaime Escalante, the talented and inspirational teacher of *Stand and Deliver*, Mohammed Ali, Michael Jordan, and famed UCLA coach John Wooden. I especially appreciated the examples provided for parents and teachers in Chapter 7 about where mindsets come from. As she notes, "no parent thinks 'I wonder what I can do today to undermine my children, subvert their effort, turn them off learning, and limit their achievement.'" "Of course, the parent is thinking quite the opposite of: "I would do anything, give anything to make my children successful in life." And yet, many of the well-intentioned messages that they deliver boomerang consistently. As Dr. Dweck notes, these messages can send

exactly the wrong message, for example, “You learned that so quickly! You’re so smart!” “Look at that drawing. Martha, is he the next Picasso or what?” “You’re so brilliant...you got an A without even studying!”

Learn how these messages as heard by children equate to “If I don’t learn something quickly, I’m not smart” and “I shouldn’t try drawing anything hard, or they’ll see I’m no Picasso” and “I’d better quit studying, or they won’t think I’m brilliant.”

She dives deeply into the art and science of giving praise and dealing with failures and sending messages about process and growth, offering specific healthy examples for parents and others, supported by her extensive and current research. She delves into the world of cognitive therapy. She provides examples of her workshops on ‘Brainology.’ There are numerous ‘how-to’ guidance sections at the end of the book, which are useful, self-directed aids for growth and change.

This is an important book for anyone wanting to explore their own belief system around intelligence, growth, and development for themselves and others. It is especially strong for parents, teachers, and coaches—in business and/or sports. I learned much from this book and plan to explore more of her work, and I hope you do too!