

Positive Psychology and Growth Mindset

Which lens
shapes your
view?

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Definition

Positive Psychology is a scientific approach to studying human thoughts, feelings, and behavior, with a focus on strengths instead of weaknesses, building the good in life instead of repairing the bad, and taking the lives of average people up to “great” instead of focusing solely on moving those who are struggling up to “normal” (Peterson, 2008)

Optimism

Resilience

Mindfulness

Acceptance

Gratitude

Positive Psychology focuses on the positive events and influences in life, including:

- **Positive experiences** (like happiness, joy, inspiration, and love).
- **Positive states and traits** (like gratitude, resilience, and compassion).
- **Positive institutions** (applying positive principles within entire organizations and institutions).



“You see, what we’re finding is that it’s not necessarily the reality that shapes us, but the lens in which your brain views the world that shapes your reality; and if we can **change the lens**, not only can we change our happiness, we can **change every single educational and business outcome** at the same time.”

- Shawn

Achor

https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work



Think....Feel....Act

By Default:

Uncertainty, Doubt

Worry, Fear

Stress, Anxiety

Depression, Disease,
Decay

LACK

By Design:

Certainty,

Confidence

Calm, Faith

Excitement,
Engagement

Momentum, Wellness,
Growth

ABUNDANCE

Positive psychology involves adjusting **mindset**.

What are the benefits:

- Better ability to **cope** with stress and increased **resilience**
- Improves your overall psychological and physical **well-being**
- Increased **productivity** and **creativity**
- Improved social **connection** and relationships

Positive psychology involves adjusting **mindset**.

What does it look like:

- **Motivating** those around you with a positive word.
- Being **friendly** to those you don't know.
- **Enjoying the unexpected**, even when it's not what you wanted originally.
- Being **happy** for someone else's success.
- **Giving** more than you expect to get in return.

Positive psychology involves adjusting **mindset**.

What does it look like at work:

- Performance
- Motivation
- Engagement
- Conflict Resolution Skills
- Original Thinking

Positive psychology involves adjusting **mindset**.

How to get started:

- Recognize that we **control** how we think about the world
- **Retrain your brain** to find opportunity and focus on it
- Strive for at least a **3:1 ratio** of positive to negative interactions
- Practice **gratitude** on a daily basis
- Invest in your social **support** network

Self-evaluation

- Do you practice frequent praise and recognition? When you do give praise, do you focus only on the outcome, or on the process as well?
- Have you ever gotten stuck in a negative mindset? How did it affect your life and work? How did you get out of it?
- Do you intentionally practice gratitude on a daily basis?
- What does your social support system look like? What is one small thing you could do in your daily life to strengthen those relationships?

The concept of **Growth Mindset** was developed by Dr. Carol Dweck of Stanford University.

She proposed that **skills and abilities can be developed** with **effort**, that they are not set or limited by intelligence and that **the way we think** directly **impacts** our **outcomes** and **eventual success**.

Procedure

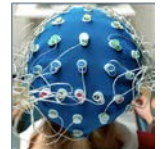
1. Participants were asked a question.



2. Participants type their answer.

3. Participants are told whether they are right or wrong.

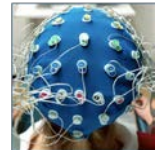
WRONG!



4. Brain activation is recorded.

5. Participants are told the correct answer.

And the answer is...



6. Brain activation is recorded.

“Failure is information—we label it failure, but it’s more like, ‘This didn’t work, and I’m a problem solver, so I’ll try something else.’”

- Carol Dweck, Psychologist

Fixed Mind-set

Growth Mind-set

Leads to a desire to look smart and therefore a tendency to...

Leads to a desire to learn and therefore a tendency to...

CHALLENGES

Avoid challenges

Embrace challenges

OBSTACLES

Give up easily

Persist in the face of setbacks

EFFORT

See effort as fruitless or worse

See efforts as the path to mastery

CRITICISM

Ignore useful negative feedback

Learn from criticism

Dr. Travis Bradbury

Panic and paralysis aren't inevitable reactions to crisis. While some people fall apart, others rise to the occasion, taking challenges not as threats, but as opportunities to learn, grow, and improve.

The difference is mindset. The way we respond to crisis, studies show¹, is shaped by how we view challenges.

Fixed Mindset **"Challenges are threats."**

People who see the world through a Fixed Mindset see crisis as threatening. They assume their skills are innate and unchangeable — so when the going gets tough, **they worry that challenges will be more than they can handle.**



Growth Mindset **"Challenges are opportunities."**

People who cultivate a Growth Mindset see crisis as an opportunity to learn, grow, and adapt. Because they believe their skills can be improved, **they feel equipped to handle whatever challenges the crisis throws their way.**



¹ Crum, A. J., Akinola, M., Martin, A., & Fath, S. (2017). The role of stress mindset in shaping cognitive, emotional, and physiological responses to challenging and threatening stress. *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*, 30(4), 379–395. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10615806.2016.1275585>

Why does it matter?

- Productivity increases
- Build on skills
- Learn from constructive criticism
- Improved relationship with colleagues and customers
- Create a positive work environment
- Encourage learning
- Build trust
- Embrace challenges and change
- Enjoy what you do

Why does it matter?

- **Walt Disney** was fired from the *Kansas City Star* because he “lacked imagination and had no good ideas,”
- **Oprah Winfrey** was fired from her job as a TV anchor in Baltimore for being “too emotionally invested in her stories,”
- **Henry Ford** had two failed car companies prior to succeeding with Ford, and
- **Steven Spielberg** was rejected by USC’s Cinematic Arts School multiple times.

<https://www.inc.com/business-insider/21-successful-people-who-rebounded-after-getting-fired.html>



“The brain is constantly creating and destroying neural pathways, forming the thought and behavior patterns our brain uses to make decisions, choose actions and present us to the outside world.

The pathways that are used get stronger; those that are under-used grow weak and eventually replaced,” according to Margie Meacham.

Reflection Activity

Think about a mistake you made in the last couple weeks, preferably one that is not too emotionally charged.

It could be anything – a mistake you made while learning something new, maybe you misunderstood the instructions for a task at work and did it incorrectly, or maybe a social faux pas where you said something you wish you hadn't, or you snapped at someone and regretted it later.

Reflection Activity

- What happened?
- What were the consequences?
- Did you have the opportunity to correct the mistake? If so, how did it go and how did it make you feel?

Reflection Activity

- In one column, write **what you remember** saying to yourself about the mistake.
- Think about **what you said** both immediately afterwards and later on.
- Try to be as **honest** as possible and give as many phrases as you can recall or that you might say in a similar situation.

Is there a way you would like to **reframe** any of **your self-talk** to be more tolerant of your mistake and to reflect a growth mindset? Use a second column to reframe relevant statements.

"Not yet"

DEVELOPING A GROWTH MINDSET

INSTEAD OF.....	TRY THINKING....
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

What does it look like in the workplace?

- Skills and intelligence are grown and developed
- Concern is focused on learning and growing
- Effort is necessary to learning
- Mistakes are learning opportunities
- Challenges are obstacles to be overcome

What does it look like in the workplace?

- Compassionate/empathetic interactions
- People listen to each other in meetings
- People express themselves openly
- Most change initiatives work
- Flexibility
- Freedom to be creative

How can I take action to apply it?

- Don't stay helpless
- Be passionate
- Take action
- Go the "extra mile"
- Expect results
- Be flexible
- Don't complain when things don't go your way

How can I take action to apply it?

- Recognize and monitor your own mindset
- Share your mindset
- Provide feedback for others' growth
- Strive for continuous team improvement

“The better your **brain** is at using its energy to **focus on the positives**, the **greater** your chances at **success**.”

– *Shawn Achor*