

LC-DC Podcast Episode 8: Growth Mindset

Transcript

00:00:11 Ryan

Hello everyone and welcome to the LCDC podcast, advice for students from students, brought to you by the Douglas College Learning Center. I'm your host Ryan and today I'm joined by my co-host Tara.

00:00:23 Tara

Hi everyone. My name is Tara. I started my journey at Douglas College in Associate of Sciences, and then transferred to SFU to pursue health sciences. I'm currently working as a science peer tutor at Douglas College, Coquitlam campus, and has been tutoring with the LC for almost three years.

00:00:46 Ryan

Great. Thanks, Tara, and welcome to the LCDC podcast. How has your winter semester been going so far?

00:00:53 Tara

To be honest, I've been busy with assignments and midterms so far, and the winter weather made it harder to stay motivated. But I'm happy to have this winter break to recharge.

00:01:04 Ryan

Yeah, it's hard to stay positive in the winter. It's hard to keep a positive mindset. So today's episode, we're going to talk all about maintaining a positive mindset. Our topic for this episode is mindset. So we'll get into it shortly. Before we do...

00:01:22 Tara

Douglas College respectfully acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples, including the

territories of the Katzie, Kwantlen, Kwikwetlem, Musqueam, Squamish, Tsawwassen, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples

00:01:42 Ryan

Getting into our topic of mindset, my first question for you, Tara, is what exactly is mindset?

00:01:50 Tara

Mindset refers to the beliefs we have about our abilities, intelligence, and potential to grow. It's essentially how we view challenges, learning, and effort. Do we see skills as something we're born with and can't change much, or as something we can develop over time through practice and persistence?

00:02:11 Ryan

That's a great question. So what is it then? Is it something, are skills something we're born with, or is it something we can develop over time with practice?

00:02:21 Tara

It's for sure something that we can develop over time and change.

00:02:26 Ryan

Great. Getting into the theory behind mindset, so who came up with this theory and what research supports it?

00:02:35 Tara

Mindset theory was developed by psychologist Carol Dweck based on decades of research on motivation, learning, and achievement. Through her studies, she found that people's belief about intelligence strongly influence how they respond to difficulty, failure, and success. Students who believed intelligence could grow tended to work harder, recover from setbacks faster, and ultimately perform better, even when starting at the same academic level as others. And if after this episode, you would like to know more about this theory, I would recommend reading her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*.

00:03:20 Ryan

Yeah, it's a great book. Tara, what's the difference between a growth mindset and a fixed mindset?

00:03:26 Tara

Fixed mindset is the belief that abilities are mostly set. You're either good at something or you're not. Common thoughts sound like, I'm just not a math person. Or, if I fail, it means I'm not smart enough. Or, others are naturally better than me. Given in context is when a student fails a chemistry midterm and thinks, I'll never understand this. I should probably drop the course. Or someone avoids participating in class discussions because they don't want to sound wrong.

00:04:01 Tara

On the other hand, growth mindset is the belief that abilities can be developed through effort, practice, and learning from mistakes. Common thoughts sound like, I don't understand this yet. If I work at it, I can improve. And mistakes help me learn. Given in context is when a student fails a midterm and reflects on it. Maybe I should try a new study strategy. Or someone asks questions, even when they're unsure, because they see confusion as part of learning.

00:04:37 Ryan

Yeah, that's a great description of the difference between growth and fixed mindset and great examples there. And I'm sure students who are listening can relate to experiences of doing poorly on a test or not doing as well as they expected. And often it can be hard to approach that failure or setback with a growth mindset, but do you have any advice for our listeners or any students on how to change our mindset around failure and setbacks?

00:05:09 Tara

The good news is mindset is impermanent and it can change. Some practical ways to build a growth mindset is to change our language. Replace I can't do this with, I can't do this yet. Replace I failed or I got it wrong with I learned something new today.

00:05:31 Tara

Other ways include focus on effort and strategies rather than results. Instead of only caring about grades, reflect on how did I study? What worked and what didn't? What can I change? We can also normalize a struggle. Difficulty doesn't mean that you're bad at something. It usually means you're learning.

00:05:57 Tara

We can seek feedback more and view feedback as a tool for growth. And lastly, try to challenge ourselves on purpose. Stretching out of our comfort zone helps us build confidence and skills.

00:06:14 Ryan

Yeah, and I definitely agree with that and just reflecting on my own life. I found I grew more, I learned more, I got stronger, smarter, better through the challenging times, the really difficult times, the times that at that time, I felt like I was really struggling and it was really difficult. But getting through that made me a better person. So definitely something to remember when we're struggling, I think.

00:06:43 Ryan

And your point at the end there about the importance of challenging ourselves is key as well, I think, right? Because what happens when something's too easy for us? We don't learn anything, right? We don't grow. So absolutely, very important to make sure we're stepping out of our comfort zones, as you say. How does, so getting back to the fixed mindset now, we talked a little bit about what we can do to have a growth mindset. How does having a fixed mindset negatively affect our learning and growth?

00:07:20 Tara

Well, having a fixed mindset is closely connected to perfectionism. When we believe we must get everything right at the first time, mistakes feel like failure, not learning. And we can procrastinate. We may fear to try new challenges. On the other hand, a growth mindset allows room for messy learning, improvement over time and progress instead of perfection. It reminds us that growth is rarely a straight or perfect, and that's okay.

00:08:03 Ryan

Yeah, I like that term, messy learning. What does that look like? What is messy learning?

00:08:10 Tara

It's trying new study skills and doing a test, quiz, or midterm and see how that helped us to learn and retain the content. If not, we can go back and try another study skill. We can ask for help. And again, go through that test, quiz, and see if it helped us this time. So going back in circles.

00:08:41 Ryan

Totally, yeah. Trying different things, seeing what works. That's great advice. And that's usually the advice we give to students around study skills, isn't it?

00:08:50 Tara

Yes.

00:08:50 Ryan

Try different things, see what works, stick with what works. Yeah, and perfectionism is a big part of that fixed mindset, isn't it? And it can be hard to get away from that perfectionist mindset, I think, because we want to achieve, we want to succeed, we want to get those straight A's, don't we? But often having that fixed perfectionist mindset can get in the way of our learning and growth. So Tara, why don't you expand on that point a little bit and tell us about how we can get away from that perfectionism?

00:09:28 Tara

As someone who was a perfectionist and is still trying to change that, not thinking about the end result, like grades, but thinking about the journey. Knowing that it's okay to start something from scratch and learn alongside it. It's okay to not know everything. It's okay to not get it right at the first time, and ask for help from our classmates or instructor and make this a habit.

00:10:16 Ryan

Yeah, I love that advice. I think it's a great approach to look at it from, and it's very, to me, it's practicing self-kindness because you're being kind to yourself when you're letting yourself, giving yourself room for making mistakes, for failure, for growth, and understanding that you're learning something new, and you're not going to get it perfect the first time, and you're never going to get it perfect, because perfect is kind of like an impossibility, right? So I love that.

00:10:49 Ryan

And I also appreciate that last thing you said, which was ask for help. And often we're scared to ask for help or it makes us feel like we're not good enough when we ask for help. But the truth is that in almost anything we accomplish in life, we don't accomplish it on our own, right? Often, yeah, it comes with the help and support of others. And there's lots of

people around us that are there that can help us when we're struggling or even when we're not struggling, when we just need an extra hand.

00:11:25 Ryan

You mentioned classmates. I'm also going to shout out yourself, Tara, and the other peer tutors at the Learning Center who are here to help you as a student at Douglas College. So yeah, if you're looking for someone to help, go to our website and just book an appointment. Tara, you mentioned your own change in mindset from a perfection, moving away from perfectionism. I'm curious to know more about how mindset has helped you personally.

00:11:56 Tara

That's a great question. As I mentioned at the start of this episode, I started my journey at Douglas College studying associate of sciences. And having a good science background from high school really helped me along the way. But I was afraid of taking electives. I always found them difficult, and they were out of my comfort zone to the point that every semester I would postpone it to the next one.

00:12:25 Tara

Learning about fixed versus growth mindset challenged how I approached taking those elective courses. I began seeing challenges as normal. I told myself, I know this is out of my comfort zone. I know that this is hard for me, but I'm going to try. I'm going to try new study methods, ask for help, and remind myself that improvement takes time.

00:12:51 Tara

I still struggle sometimes, but now I don't let it stop me. It helped me become more confident, more persistent, and less afraid of making mistakes. I can say that it made me a better learner.

00:13:07 Ryan

Yeah, that's great. I love that because I used to teach electives and I'd always get students taking those courses with the mindset that, do I, why do I have to take a history course or a language course or a psychology course? Why can't I just stick to my program courses and just learn about business or nursing or whatever it is? And I found those, the students with those mindsets, of course, that negatively affected their learning.

00:13:42 Ryan

So approaching those electives with the right mindset and the understanding that it's a bit going to be outside your comfort zone, but you're going to learn something from it and you're going to grow. And the reason we have these electives and make students take electives is to make them more well-rounded individuals and thinkers and whatnot. So definitely, I definitely appreciate what you said there and would advise any student to approach their electives with a growth mindset.

00:14:14 Tara

What I learned was that different study strategies can work for different students and different study strategies can work for different courses. The same way I study for biology is not the same way I studied for English or other electives.

00:14:38 Tara

And it's always, of course, hard to challenge ourselves and come out of our comfort zone. But the outcome always surprised me because back of my head, I thought, I can't do this. But I learned a lot in those elective courses about myself and got to see that growth mindset in action.

00:15:09 Ryan

Yeah, it's great that you have that experience. And, I hope any students listening take that and take that approach to something that they're trying for the first time or something new that they're struggling with. I can appreciate or I agree with you that when we overcome those fish out of water moments where we just we feel so out of place and we don't know what we don't know what we're doing and we don't know if we're going to succeed and just getting through that and succeeding and doing better than we expected and surprising ourselves. It's just such a huge confidence boost, isn't it?

00:15:51 Tara

Yes.

00:15:52 Ryan

And of course, just wanted to add that the Mindset book by Carol Dweck, it covers different areas of life, right? Not just studying, but also things like relationships and other areas of our life where having a growth mindset can be very beneficial to us.

00:16:13 Ryan

And the research behind it, there's a lot of strong research behind it. The one thing that I wanted to highlight here was the theory of neuroplasticity, and that's just the idea that your brain continues to change and adapt and grow no matter how old you are. So no matter how old you are, it's never too late to learn something new and to grow.

00:16:41 Tara

Life, it's an ongoing journey, and it's about developing the skills, resilience, and confidence. And that starts with believing you can grow and having growth mindset. And post-secondary is just a small part of that journey.

00:17:04 Ryan

Yeah, exactly. You've got your whole life ahead of you after post-secondary, right? So it is just a small, small stage in the journey, even though sometimes it can feel like the weight of the world is just on your shoulders trying to get through those exams and those assignments. And I'm sure after the break, you've got some tests and assignments coming up, Tara. How do you feel about those?

00:17:32 Tara

Yes, it's midterm season again. I feel like having, going into the midterms with this growth mindset can help us to learn more and adjust and reflect on the results and not see them as endpoints as we discussed. So it's, we get to practice the growth mindset in action.

00:17:58 Ryan

Yeah, absolutely. And I will say, even after you graduate, you're going to get chances to practice growth mindset, even if it's not about tests, midterms, assignments. There are going to be things coming up in your life that you're going to not feel super thrilled about, but approaching them with a growth mindset is just a great way to get through them, learn from them, grow from them. So yeah, I'm going to approach my life tests with a growth mindset. So thank you for sharing all about growth mindset with us, Tara.

00:18:35 Tara

It's great to use this time to make this a habit so that later in life comes more natural to us.

00:18:47 Ryan

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, it's a great opportunity, isn't it? Post-secondary. All right, well, thanks so much, Tara. That's it for today's show. Thanks for listening. Remember, the Douglas College Learning Center provides free one-on-one peer tutoring to Douglass students. You can book an appointment or find out more information at our website, library.douglascollege.ca/learning-center.

00:19:12 Tara

And if you're interested and want to practice this growth mindset, we at Learning Center offer study skill sessions alongside content and writing tutors for those elective courses.

00:19:29 Ryan

Yeah, that's right. Thanks for reminding me, Tara. Just choose study skills from the drop-down menu and you can book an appointment with any of our tutors and talk to them about study skills. So yes, that would be a great way to practice a growth mindset. If you like this episode, please give us a five-star rating review or share it with others who could use the advice. Follow us on Instagram at DC Learning Center. For those about to learn, we salute you.