

Boost Your Mindset

Mental Health Mastermind

Our mindset and perspective on the world around us and the challenges we face have a big impact on our mental health and wellbeing. There are lots of ways to boost our mindset, but a simple way to approach it is how we think about the things that are going well and how we think about life's challenges.

Thinking About the Good Things

Noticing and appreciating good things that happen is one step toward boosting our mindset during good times, but that's only part of the equation. What we tell ourselves about those good things can make a big difference.

Seeing positive events as external to us, specific to this one moment, and fleeting contributes to a state called **learned helplessness**. In other words, when we see good things in life as something we don't deserve, random luck, or fleeting, we can develop a sense of hopelessness or helplessness. This kind of thinking is something we learn, repeat, and strengthen over time.

Conversely, thinking about good things as internal, global, and stable (giving ourselves some credit, representative of our life as a whole, and steady), helps us develop **learned optimism**.

What do you know about the way you think about the good things in life?

What's something positive that you've given yourself some credit for recently?

Thinking about Life's Challenges

Viewing challenges as a natural part of life and as the fuel that stimulates growth is another way we can boost our mindset. Even when we don't want the challenges presented to us and actively resist them, we are getting pushed to learn and adapt. And even if we are fighting our way through the challenges, a little shift in our mindset can make a difference.

Personal or Situational?

One way we can be more intentional about the way we think about challenges in life is to notice the story we're telling about the challenge. Is it a story about you and what you've done wrong, a story about the situation, or a mix of both? Being able to recognize the situational factors and view the personal factors as something we can learn from can help us further develop learned optimism.

Growth Mindset

The belief that one's abilities, talents, and circumstances can be changed over time. Coming from a growth mindset, setbacks, challenges, and failures can be seen as opportunities for learning and growth.

Fixed Mindset

The belief that one's abilities, talents, and circumstances are fixed or cannot be changed. Coming from a fixed mindset perspective, setbacks, challenges, and failures can be seen as evidence of one's limitations.

Putting It All Together

What's do you know about the way you've been thinking about a recent challenging situation?

What's one way you could boost your mindset in challenging times?

Lessons in Growth

Repeat this exercise to help you broaden your perspective on a challenging situation.

When/where in your life have you seen growth, big or small?
When/where in your life have you come back stronger after being knocked down?
What failures, obstacles, or setbacks you've experienced have you later found gratitude for?
What does this tell you about a current challenge you're facing?

Grit & Resilience

Grit refers the ability to persevere in the face of adversity or challenges. Grit is influenced by effort, passion, self-efficacy, self-discipline, and mindset among other factors. Resilience is the ability to bounce-back after challenges and withstand obstacles, pain, or struggle. While researchers are still investigating whether grit and resilience can be taught as a whole, there is plenty of evidence that components of each can be enhanced with practice.

As good as this sounds, many students have a complicated relationship with grit and resilience. You may feel that you've had no choice but to be resilient or that your resilience has led to burnout or mental health concerns. High expectations, FOMO, ableism, perfectionism, and hustle culture are just a few other factors that contribute to a complicated relationship with grit and resilience.

What do you know about your relationship with grit and resilience?

How does this relationship with grit and resilience impact your mindset?