

**Ep #25: How to Speak Growth Mindset  
and Why You'd Want To**



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With Your Host  
**Lisa Smith**

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## Ep #25: How to Speak Growth Mindset and Why You'd Want To

Welcome to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*, a podcast for parents that are tired of yelling, threatening, and punishing their kids. Join mom and master certified parent coach Lisa Smith as she gives you actionable step-by-step strategies that'll help you transform your household from chaos to cooperation. Let's dive in.

Welcome, welcome, welcome to today's episode. I am so excited to be with you here today. We are going to talk about some really important stuff today around praising our kids. So let me ask you, did you know that there's a wrong way to praise your kids? Yes, I said wrong way. Now, if you've been listening on the regular, you know I'm not one to tell you what to do or typically use words like right or wrong. But there is a wrong way to praise your kids, and I want to share that with you. I had no idea before I learned this work, and I suspect you might not either.

So in today's episode, I'm going to introduce you to one of my mentors. Her name is Carol Dweck. Dr. Dweck has a PhD. She's an author, a speaker, has written many books, and is a professor at Stanford University. According to Dr. Dweck based on her years of extensive research, each one of us is roaming the earth with either a fixed or a growth mindset. "Say what Lisa? What in the heck does that even mean?" Okay, let me tell you.

According to Dr. Dweck, those of us that are roaming the earth with a fixed mindset, we believe that talents and abilities are inborn and carved in stone. You're just made that way. You were meant to do this. It was always going to happen this way. Now growth mindset people are people who roam the earth believing that success is a result of effort as much as or more than aptitude and can be achieved and obtained and worked towards.

Let me say that again. Fixed mindset people believe talents and abilities, you're born with them. They're set in stone. There's no way to affect them.

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Growth mindset people believe that success is a result of effort as much or more than aptitude.

So after learning about this work, I realized that I grew up in a fixed mindset family. I was raised to believe these “truths” like we’re not good at foreign languages. We’re not athletic people. I can't sing. Okay, the last one might actually be true. I really can't sing. There will be no singing on this podcast by me ever, I promise, or you would run for the hills.

Aside from that, I definitely grew up in a fixed mindset family. And really bought into these truths like I'm not athletic. I really wanted to be an athlete my whole life, but I was told that I was uncoordinated, or I lacked coordination and I wasn't athletic. I bought into this truth. After learning the fixed mindset concept, I can see how the idea that my talents were or weren't “God given” and set in stone limited me. It dictated how I felt about myself, and where I put my efforts towards success.

So as I learned about this, I asked myself the question: was I passing my fixed mindset on to my son? It appeared that I was. I realized this during my son's early teen years. According to Dr. Dweck, the number one priority for fixed mindset kids is to look smart at all times and all costs. That certainly was the case for my son. This is why fixed mindset is a problem for kids. Because their number one priority is to look smart at all times at all costs, which limits them in growth and achieving the success. It turns out fixed mindset is a poison pill we feed our kids.

So I'll use my son as an example. Because of this fixed mindset, he used to hate not knowing what he was doing. He hated looking like he was failing. He didn't want to look stupid or behind. Ugh, it stings just to tell you this. Just to admit this. Because I absolutely know that my husband and I taught him this fixed mindset by overpraising his results. This led him to stop trying

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or to give up too soon if his fears got triggered. Because remember, a fixed mindset person's number one priority is to look smart at all times.

According to Dr. Dweck, the growth mindset kids believe that the goal is to learn at all times, at all costs. I don't know about you, but I want that for my boy. I want his number one priority to be to learn at all times, at all costs. I want him to know that life is about effort and passion, not about inborn ability. I want him to understand that he can keep going, he can keep trying, and keep putting in the effort even if an activity feels a bit hard or unnatural at first. I want him to get that talent and skill are not set in stone but actually take time to hone and develop.

So I began by introducing this concept to him. We talked about being an intentional growth mindset family. We practiced using growth mindset language with each other. We point out when we see someone using fixed mindset words. Most of all, my husband and I are rewiring our brains to praise our son's effort rather than his results.

Okay, at this point you might be thinking, "I like what I hear Lisa, but I need to know more. Give me some examples." So here are two quick ways to boost your child's positive self-image by instilling a growth mindset. The first example is to make sure that you're praising the effort, not the result.

Take grades for example. When your child comes home with an A on their test or report card or paper, focus on the effort that went into achieving the A instead of the resulting grade itself. When the emphasis is placed on the result, the child connects success to achieving the same outcome.

The result of that is anytime they don't feel certain they can succeed, i.e., get another A, win the game, etcetera, they can develop a fear of failing. Which makes them afraid of even trying. Worse than that, they can develop

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a fear of even asking for help because they feel they have to get everything right on their own.

Instead of saying, “Dylan, you are the best at math. Or Tiffany, I'm so proud of the A you got on your book report.” You could reframe with, “Dylan, you seem to really like math, and I've noticed you really putting in the effort.” You could also say, “Tiffany, your effort on that book report really paid off with the A. How do you feel about having worked so hard for the grade?” Help them make the connection between the effort and the result with the spotlight always shining brightly on the effort.

Let me say that again. Help your kids make the connection between the effort and the result. Move away from using language that has them think that the result comes from inborn talent. Help them make the connection between the effort they put in and the result with the spotlight always shining brightly on the effort.

Okay, here's example number two. When things don't go as planned, use it to get better. When our kids fail, have a loss, make a mistake, bring home a low grade—notice I didn't say bad grade, I said low grade. Sometimes we want to go to one of the extremes. We either want to soothe our child or put intense pressure on them.

Let's say your daughter is in a play, and she forgets a couple lines during her first performance. On the way home, tears well up in her eyes. Your heart breaks for the pain radiating off her. Your first instinct might be to tell her, “Hey, it's okay. You'll get it next time.” Because you just want her to feel better.

Growth mindset speak would go something like this, “What can you learn from this to help you in your next performance? Or I know you're upset that you forgot your lines. I love that you want to do your best. How can you get

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better? What can we do to help you remember your lines?” You're offering empathy, but at the same time you're helping her grow and learn. You're telling her that you're interested in helping her develop and push yourself a little bit further. You're encouraging her to make the effort to get the results she wants.

At the other extreme, let's say your son brings home a low grade on a test, and you know he didn't study that much. It makes you mad that he didn't study more for the test. The grade triggers your concern that he isn't giving his best at school. Even though he's only in junior high, you're already feeling fear that he isn't going to go to college or complete high school or “make something of himself”.

All of this comes up as you see his test score, and you react big time. You find yourself mad at him, and you let him know it. You focus on the grade in the conversation with him. He hears you are unhappy with his grade, and tells you that he is incapable of more, and worse yet, begins to believe it himself. The conversation turns into an argument and just goes round and round and round in circles. Ever been there? Sound familiar? I know it sure does in our house, especially before I understood growth mindset.

Instead of saying, “I knew you weren't going to do well on that test,” you could ask him, “Do you think you put in enough effort to prepare for the test?” You could also ask, “What can you learn from this experience?” Instead of saying, “I'm disappointed in your grade,” you could say, “I'm disappointed in the effort you put into preparing for the test.” Better yet you could say, “What did you do to prepare for the test that didn't hit the mark? What can you do differently next time?”

Focusing on the effort can sometimes be tricky when our kids don't have a passion for something like math or English or history or school in general. But that's when you really have to double down and focus on the effort.

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Sometimes effort isn't about more. It's about doing it differently. Being open in learning. Sometimes the secret is to first figure out what doesn't work, and then you can move to what does.

This is especially important, I believe, when our kids aren't passionate about something. It's easy for all of us, let's be honest, to put in the effort when we're passionate about something. Whatever hobbies you have that you're passionate about or if you're passionate about your work or you're passionate about fitness, it's pretty easy to get up and get yourself to the gym.

What we really need to help our kids with is find that growth mindset and put in the effort in things they're not passionate about so that they can get the results they want. I've experienced the benefits of speaking growth mindset. In a very short amount of time, I was able to see quite a turnaround in my son regarding homework.

His dad and I have worked really hard at reprogramming our brains and learning to speak growth mindset. Once we shifted our conversation to effort rather than grades, we saw our boy's mindset begin to change as well. He became open to new ideas, new ways to study, and began putting in his own effort on his own into studying. The biggest benefit, he has a newfound curiosity and enthusiasm about getting it done. And yes, his grades have improved.

Let me say it again. We keep telling him if he puts in the effort, the results will come. We're committed to this mindset for him and for us. My son and I were recently talking about growth mindset, and he said that he likes that his dad isn't constantly talking about his grades. He feels a sense of relief that we're focusing on the effort rather than the grades all the time. Growth mindset speak is about helping our kids see that they're developing as a

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person, and that we're interested in their development. Not just in the results, but in their development at whatever point in the journey they're on.

By the way, a funny thing also happened along the way. Instilling the importance of a growth mindset in my son has started to rub off on me as well. I find myself with a whole new and far more empowering attitude about my abilities as a coach, a speaker, and an author. While I was once consumed by self-doubt, I now find a deeper sense that nothing is off limits to me or unimaginable including becoming a coordinated athlete at this age.

So I want to encourage you to go forth and speak growth mindset. Focus on the effort your kids are putting in, not the result. Focus on the effort when they're knocking the ball out of the park and focus on the effort when they're striking out. Focus on the effort about things they're passionate about and focus on the effort with regard to things they aren't passionate about. Focusing on the effort helps them feel good about themselves and helps them always think about the effort rather than the result.

When we speak growth mindset, our kids see that we're interested in their development as a person rather than just the results. It's so worth the effort to double check that you're speaking growth mindset in your family. Hey, a funny thing might happen to you along the way as well. So once again, I hope you'll accept the invitation to go forth and speak growth mindset. Until we meet again, I'm wishing you peaceful parenting.

Thanks for listening to *Real World Peaceful Parenting*. If you want more info on how you can transform your parenting, visit [thepeacefulparent.com](http://thepeacefulparent.com). See you soon.