



A GROWTH MINDSET

This strategy is suggested in the 11-14 BrainWaves lessons: **Turning failure into success** and **A growth mindset***

About the strategy

Building on earlier research, Carol Dweck (psychologist and professor at Stanford University) led and popularised the theory of a growth mindset - the belief that our intelligence and abilities can be developed through sustained effort and support. Her research identified two broad ways people can think about intelligence and ability:

- Fixed mindset: The belief that intelligence or ability is largely fixed - you are either good at something or you're not.
- Growth mindset: The belief that abilities can be developed over time through effort, effective strategies, learning from mistakes and seeking help.

Dweck's research found that these beliefs can influence how people respond to challenges and failure. Someone with a growth mindset is more likely to see difficulty as an opportunity to learn rather than as evidence that they lack ability. For young people, incorporating a growth mindset into daily life can specifically enable them to reframe mistakes as learning opportunities, recover faster from setbacks, and build long-term emotional resilience.

The scientific evidence behind the strategy

Whilst this comprehensive meta-analysis does not show that a growth mindset prevents mental health problems or causes better mental health, it did show that a growth mindset was positively associated with lower psychological distress (albeit a small negative relationship); more active coping techniques; and a greater willingness to seek treatment:

- Burnette, J. L., et al. (2020). *Growth mindsets and psychological distress: a meta-analysis*. Clinical Psychology Review, 77, p. 101816.

This study found that a single 30-minute growth-mindset intervention (for young people aged 12-15 years at high risk for mental health difficulties) produced significant reductions in depressive symptoms, with effects remaining at 9-month follow-up.

- Schleider, J. L., & Weisz, J. R. (2018). *A single-session growth mindset intervention for adolescent anxiety and depression: 9-month outcomes of a randomized trial*. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 59(2), pp. 160–170.

Further reading

This Mindset Kit resource offers teachers a series of lessons, videos and guides for fostering growth mindset habits in students: <https://www.mindsetkit.org/topics/about-growth-mindset>

**Available as part of the 2026/7 Lesson Impact Study only.*