

Transcript

A for effort

CAROL DWECK:

We took fifth graders. We give them puzzles to solve.

INSTRUCTOR:

So you see these blocks. Can you tell me what colour is on that side?

CHILD:

Red, yellow, white, blue.

INSTRUCTOR:

All right. So what I want you to do is put these blocks together so that the picture on top matches the picture here. All right?

CAROL DWECK:

First, we give children a set of easier puzzles to do.

INSTRUCTOR:

Now, here's the next one.

NARRATOR:

When these 9- and 10-year-olds successfully put together the puzzle, the children are praised for either their intelligence--

INSTRUCTOR:

Wow, you did really well. You must be really smart at these.

NARRATOR:

--or the effort they made.

INSTRUCTOR:

Wow, you did really well. You must have tried really hard with these.

CAROL DWECK:

Then we give them a much harder set of problems, ones that they might, in fact, struggle with.

INSTRUCTOR:

Here's the next one.

CAROL DWECK:

And we see what happens to their confidence. Do they think, oh, this means I'm not good at it after all? Do they stop liking the puzzles? Or do they maintain their confidence and think, well, it just needs more effort or strategy? What happens to their motivation?

INSTRUCTOR:

Are you ready to go on?

CHILD:

Ta-dah.

CAROL DWECK:

We also ask them, well, which problems do you want to work on some more, those easier ones or those harder ones? And generally, we find that the kids who have been praised for their intelligence really want to go back to those easier ones that were kind of their claim to fame.

NARRATOR:

This is a sign of a fixed mindset, the belief that intelligence is innate and can't be changed.

CAROL DWECK:

What we found was that children thought that that difficulty meant they weren't smart or they weren't good at the task.

INSTRUCTOR:

So you seem to have more trouble with this one. And I want to know why you think that was.

CHILD:

Probably because I'm not good at these problems.

CAROL DWECK:

A very discouraging conclusion.

NARRATOR:

Other children show a growth mindset.

CAROL DWECK:

The growth mindset is like this. No matter who you are, you can always become a great deal smarter. They feel smart when they're working really hard on something difficult and making progress.

INSTRUCTOR:

So if I gave you some more problems, would you like more problems like these that are pretty easy so you'll do well or problems like these that'll be hard, but you might learn a lot from them?

CHILD:

These.

INSTRUCTOR:

More like these.

CAROL DWECK:

Students praised for effort generally want those hard ones that they can learn from. What I've learned from my research is that kids-- and I think adults, too-- are exquisitely sensitive to what's going on in a situation, what other people value, what they're being judged on.

What is that voice in our head saying? Is it saying fixed mindset things like, oh, you better not make a mistake, you better look smart, people are judging you? Or is it saying growth mindset things, here's an opportunity, here's a mistake I can learn from, I feel smart when I do something difficult?

CHILD:

Miss Sedgewicks, we did it!