

Parent Guides

Mindset by Natalie Costa



It's heart breaking when your child tells you they are rubbish at something or you can see that they are too afraid to try something for fear of failure. Helping our children with their mindset is huge parenting challenge. In this guide I welcome Natalie Costa from Power Thoughts to share her tips on how we can help shift our children's fixed mindsets into learning opportunities.

Francesca Geens, Creator The HappySelf Journal

Help your child find the 'magic' within their mistakes

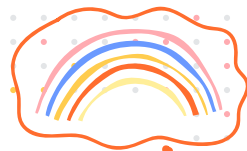
Making mistakes is not something that many children easily embrace. Homework, spellings or piano practice can quickly escalate into emotional meltdowns and feelings of despair. This is true not only for children but sometimes for parents too! Below I share a few proven strategies that you can use to support your child to look for the 'magic' within their mistakes, shifting from one that says, "I can't" to one that says "Bring it on! I'm ready to have another go."

Tell-tale signs of the fixed, 'I can't' mindset:

- ▶ Being afraid to try a new activity or anything that moves them out of their comfort zone
- ▶ Avoiding challenges and taking risks
- ▶ A reluctance to try again. When a task is challenging, they may have a go but then give up too soon
- ▶ The desire to be 'perfect.' Taking much longer than needed to complete a task because it's not 'perfect'. They are only happy if they achieve full marks, get the A+ and see anything less as a failure
- ▶ Emotional meltdowns when they can't solve a problem or when they make a mistake
- ▶ Let's failure or success define them. They value how 'smart' they appear to others
- ▶ Believing that they can't improve in certain areas, e.g.: 'I find maths hard, therefore I'll never be good at it')
- ▶ Saying statements such as, "I can't" or "I'm rubbish at..."

Having a growth (or opportunity), 'I can' mindset results in:

- ▶ Being curious, willing to take risks and try new things (e.g.: participating in a new activity, speaking to a new friend, going to a new club)
- ▶ Embracing a new challenge and valuing the process of learning
- ▶ Having another go and are less afraid of making mistakes
- ▶ Understanding that their skills can be improved
- ▶ Viewing their failure and mistakes as lessons and new opportunities to grow.
- ▶ Saying statements such as, "I can't do this YET," or "I'm learning to improve in ..."



Top tips to help your child develop an Opportunity (or Growth) Mindset, finding the magic within their mistakes.

Ask 'Power Questions'

When children make mistakes I often hear them say, "Why me?", "Why can't I get this right?" or "What's wrong with me?" I refer to these as 'closed questions.' They shut us down and they don't allow our brain to search for new solutions.

Instead, foster an attitude of curiosity and encourage your child to ask these questions instead: "What can I learn from this?" "How will this help me grow?" "What do I know now that I didn't know before?"

Using these open questions allows the brain to search for new solutions and information. It allows them to reflect on what they are learning and shifts them back into a space of action and empowerment.

How to use: Use these questions when children are doing their homework, if they've had a tough match on the sports pitch or even when experiencing challenges with their friendships. Write these out and put them up on a wall as a daily reminder so that children develop the habit of asking Power Questions.

Explore previous challenges

Help children explore previous challenges or setbacks. How did they prepare? What did they have to do in order to improve? Point out that it was a process. They had to prepare, practice and even make a few mistakes, but through consistency they were able to succeed.

Exercising my brain

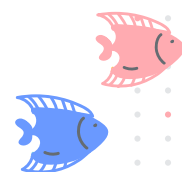
Our brain is malleable which means that it has the ability to grow and change. I tell children that our brain is made up of billions of little brain cells, called neurons. Neurons are always making new connections (and exercising our brain) when we learn and do new things.


Explore a previous challenge that your child faced, e.g: learning to swim and write down all the little things they learned as they practiced and improved. Keep this as a visual reminder of all the 'new connections' their brain had to make in order for them to succeed in this area.

Celebrate the 'Yes!' moments

Shift perspective and help children view their mistakes as new learning opportunities. Encourage them to do a silly dance, give themselves a high-five or call out, 'Yes!' whenever they've made a mistake or when facing a challenge.

Then explore what they've learned as a result from making the mistake? e.g. I now know that I need to keep my legs straight and toes pointed when doing a cartwheel, or that I need to write my numbers neatly in the correct column when doing column addition or subtraction.





Encourage children to record their 'mistake' and their 'yes moment' on a sheet of paper. Keep adding to this so that they have a visual reminder of all the new things they are learning as a result from making the mistakes.

The power of YET

This little word is a game changer and one that quickly shifts us back into a space of action and empowerment.

During conversations help your child reframe their negative and unhelpful statements, e.g.: "I can't do this" to "I can't do this YET" or "I'm terrible at ..." becomes, "I haven't learnt how to do this YET".

Praise their effort, not their intelligence

When praising our children, focus on their effort rather than on the outcome. Being specific is also key to effective praise.



Instead of this...

Say this instead.

You're so clever. You did a great job!

I like how you've tried different strategies to solve the maths problem until you finally got it.

Good job!

Thank you for helping me tidy. I liked how you lined up the shoes by the door, that will be very helpful in the morning.

Well done! You got full marks!

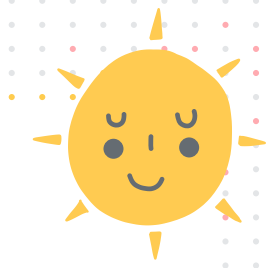
Those additional practice papers you did made a big difference!

Don't worry, you did your best

I can see you tried really hard. What do you know now that you didn't know before? What's one next step you can take to help you with your learning?

Don't get stuck in the comparison trap

Encourage your child to take action and stay in a space of empowerment. Instead of getting stuck in the comparison trap, thinking, "I will never be as smart as them," reframe and ask the question, "What can you learn from them?" Identify those little differences and then commit to taking action on one of those steps.



Additional tips

After school, instead of asking, "How was your day?" ask, "How did you exercise your brain today?" or "Name one thing you learned today that you didn't know this morning?"

Use yourself as a role-model

Share with your children how you can't do something yet, how you are 'exercising your brain', whether that is learning a new skill, having to speak to new people when networking, or doing something new at work.

Explore 'famous failures'

Walt Disney, Tomas Edison, Coca-Cola, and Colonel Sanders are examples of how numerous setbacks and 'failures' led to great success. Choose someone that your child admires (athlete, author, inventor, etc) and research the setbacks they faced, how many times they were rejected and how they overcame their challenges.

Further reading

Mindset: How You Can Fulfil Your Potential – Carol Dweck

The Yes Brain Child: Help Your Child be More Resilient, Independent and Creative – Dr Daniel J Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson

Your Fantastic Elastic Brain Stretch It, Shape It – JoAnne Deak

The Dot – Peter H. Reynolds

About the author

Natalie Costa is an award-winning coach, author and founder of Power Thoughts – a teaching and coaching service working with families and schools to give children the 'power' over their own thoughts!



With a background in psychology and having spent 12 years within the educational sector as well as becoming an accredited Performance Coach, Power Thoughts was born – which blends her past experience and deep understanding of children and their needs, now providing them with the tools to help them cope and thrive in the modern world.

Join Natalie's Community:

www.powerthoughts.co.uk

Instagram: @powerthoughtsnc

Facebook: @powerthoughtsnataliecosta

Twitter: @coach_costa

