

Chess Mindset

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Aims



- To provide a (very) brief introduction to mindset theory
- To relate mindset theory to chess development



Prof Carol S Dweck, Stanford University

“The hallmark of successful individuals is that they love learning, they seek challenges, they value effort, and they persist in the face of obstacles.”
(Carol Dweck, 2000)

Mindset:	Fixed ←	Growth →
Your belief:	Chess ability is a fixed trait	Chess ability is cultivated through learning
Your priority:	Look clever, not stupid	Become cleverer, through learning
You feel clever:	Achieving easy, low effort wins and outscoring others	Engaging fully with a tough challenge, exerting effort, stretching and applying skills
You avoid:	Effort, difficulty, setbacks, higher-graded players	Easy, quick wins against weaker players

Looking Intelligent vs. Learning

Fixed Mindset Player:

“The main thing I want when I play chess is to show how good I am at it.”

Growth Mindset Player:

“It’s much more important for me to learn things than it is to get the best result.”

(Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007)

"If everything feels easy we aren't pushing ourselves hard enough or being challenged enough."



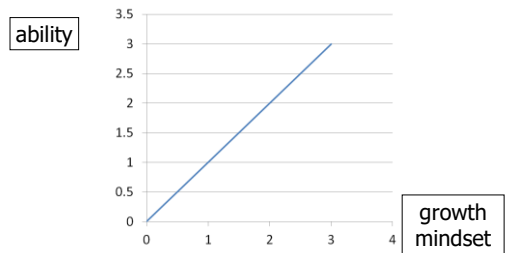
(Kasparov, *How Life Imitates Chess*)

Fixed mindsets – the longer-term consequences (Dweck, 1999)

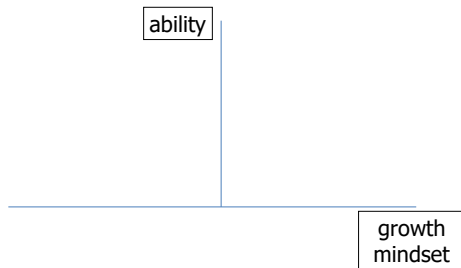
- Over-generalising from one experience
- Exaggerating failures relative to successes
- Categorising themselves in unflattering ways
- Setting self-worth contingencies
- Losing faith in ability to perform tasks
- Underestimating the efficacy of effort

There is no significant correlation between 'ability' and mindset

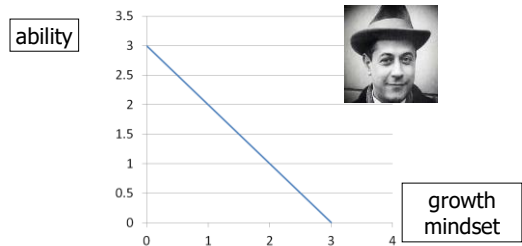
It's less this...



Than this ...



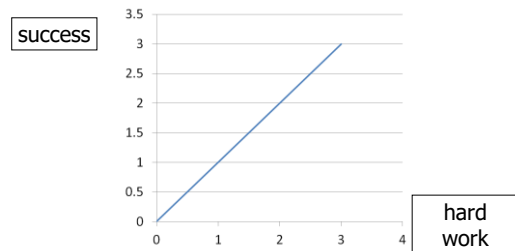
And in some cases it's ...



Three mindset myths:

- Natural ability/talent doesn't exist
- Natural ability/talent doesn't matter
- Hard work guarantees ultimate success

Beware the easy promise



"It's not enough to work hard and study late into the night. You must also become intimately aware of the methods you use to reach your decisions."

(Gary Kasparov, *How Life Imitates Chess*)



Other candidates in the mix:

- Opportunity
- Metacognitive strategies
- Quality of teaching
- Prior skills
- Strategic vision
- Nature of task/challenge
- Genes / 'Ability'
- 'Luck' ...

"What we make of the future is defined not only by our past but by how well we understand and make use of that past.

Our pasts create a map not only of where we come from, but of where we are going. But the most wondrous thing about this map is that it is not engraved in stone. With insight and effort we can shape it to our will."

(Kasparov, *How Life Imitates Chess*)

Recommended reading

- Boyd, P., Hymer, B. & Lockney, K. (2015); *Learning Teaching*
- Dweck, C. (2000); *Self Theories*
- Dweck, C. (2006); *Mindset*
- Hymer, B. (2009); *Gifted & Talented Pocketbook*
- Hymer, B. & Gershon, M. (2014); *Growth Mindset Pocketbook*