Chapter 5

BUSINESS: MINDSET AND LEADERSHIP

ENRON AND THE TALENT MINDSET

In 2001 came the announcement that shocked the corporate world. Enron—the corporate poster child, the company of the future—had gone belly-up. What happened? How did such spectacular promise turn into such a spectacular disaster? Was it incompetence? Was it corruption?

It was mindset. According to Malcolm Gladwell, writing in *The New Yorker,* American corporations had become obsessed with talent. Indeed, the gurus at McKinsey & Company, the premier management consulting firm in the country, were insisting that corporate success today *requires* the "talent mind-set." Just as there are naturals in sports, they maintained, there are naturals in business. Just as sports teams write huge checks to sign outsized talent, so, too, should corporations spare no expense in recruiting talent, for this is the secret weapon, the key to beating the competition.

As Gladwell writes, "This 'talent mind-set' is the new orthodoxy of American management." It created the blueprint for the Enron culture—and sowed the seeds of its demise.

Enron recruited big talent, mostly people with fancy degrees, which is not in itself so bad. It paid them big money, which is not that terrible. But by putting complete faith in talent, Enron did a fatal thing: It created a culture that worshiped talent, thereby forcing its employees to look and act extraordinarily talented. Basically, it forced them into the fixed mindset. And we know a lot about that. We know from our studies that people with the fixed mindset do not admit and correct their deficiencies.

Remember the study where we interviewed students from the University of Hong Kong, where everything is in English? Students with the fixed mindset were so worried about appearing deficient that they refused to take a course that would improve their English. They did not live in a psychological world where they could take this risk.

And remember how we put students into a fixed mindset by praising their intelligence—much as Enron had done with its star employees? Later, after some hard problems, we asked the students to write a letter to someone in

another school describing their experience in our study. When we read their letters, we were shocked: Almost 40 percent of them had lied about their scores—always in the upward direction. The fixed mindset had made a flaw intolerable.

Gladwell concludes that when people live in an environment that esteems them for their innate talent, they have grave difficulty when their image is threatened: "They will not take the remedial course. They will not stand up to investors and the public and admit that they were wrong. They'd sooner lie."

Obviously, a company that cannot self-correct cannot thrive.

If Enron was done in by its fixed mindset, does it follow that companies that thrive have a growth mindset? Let's see.

ORGANIZATIONS THAT GROW

Jim Collins set out to discover what made some companies move from being good to being great. What was it that allowed them to make the leap to greatness—and stay there—while other, comparable companies just held steady at good?

To answer this question, he and his research team embarked on a five-year study. They selected eleven companies whose stock returns had skyrocketed relative to other companies in their industry, and who had maintained this edge for at least fifteen years. They matched each company to another one in the same industry that had similar resources, but did not make the leap. He also studied a third group of companies: ones that had made a leap from good to great but did not sustain it.

What distinguished the thriving companies from the others? There were several important factors, as Collins reports in his book, *Good to Great,* but one that was absolutely key was the type of leader who *in every case* led the company into greatness. These were not the larger-than-life, charismatic types who oozed ego and self-proclaimed talent. They were self-effacing people who constantly asked questions and had the ability to confront the most brutal answers—that is, to look failures in the face, even their own, while maintaining faith that they would succeed in the end.

Does this sound familiar? Collins wonders why his effective leaders have these particular qualities. And why these qualities go together the way they do. And how these leaders came to acquire them. But we know. They have the growth mindset. They believe in human development. And these are the hallmarks:

They're not constantly trying to prove they're better than others. For example, they don't highlight the pecking order with themselves at the top, they don't claim credit for other people's contributions, and they don't undermine others to feel powerful.

Instead, they are constantly trying to *improve.* They surround themselves with the most able people they can find, they look squarely at their own

mistakes and deficiencies, and they ask frankly what skills they and the company will need in the future. And because of this, they can move forward with confidence that's grounded in the facts, not built on fantasies about their talent.

Collins reports that Alan Wurtzel, the CEO of the giant electronics chain Circuit City, held debates in his boardroom. Rather than simply trying to impress his board of directors, he used them to learn. With his executive team as well, he questioned, debated, prodded until he slowly gained a clearer picture of where the company was and where it needed to go. "They used to call me the prosecutor, because I would hone in on a question," Wurtzel told Collins. "You know, like a bulldog. I wouldn't let go until I understood. Why, why, why?"

Wurtzel considered himself a "plow horse," a hardworking, no-nonsense normal kind of guy, but he took a company that was close to bankruptcy and over the next fifteen years turned it into one that delivered the highest total return to its stockholders of any firm on the New York Stock Exchange.

A STUDY OF MINDSET AND MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

Robert Wood and Albert Bandura did a fascinating study with graduate students in business, many of whom had management experience. In their study, they *created* Enron-type managers and Wurtzel-type managers by putting people into different mindsets.

Wood and Bandura gave these budding business leaders a complex management task in which they had to run a simulated organization, a furniture company. In this computerized task, they had to place employees in the right jobs and decide how best to guide and motivate these workers. To discover the best ways, they had to keep revising their decisions based on the feedback they got about employee productivity.

The researchers divided the business students into two groups. One group was given a fixed mindset. They were told that the task measured their basic, underlying capabilities. The higher their capacity, the better their performance. The other group was given a growth mindset. They were told that management skills were developed through practice and that the task would give them an opportunity to cultivate these skills.

The task was hard because students were given high production standards to meet, and—especially in their early attempts—they fell short. As at Enron, those with the fixed mindset did not profit from their mistakes.

But those with the growth mindset kept on learning. Not worried about measuring—or protecting—their fixed abilities, they looked directly at their mistakes, used the feedback, and altered their strategies accordingly. They became better and better at understanding how to deploy and motivate their workers, and their productivity kept pace. In fact, they ended up way more productive than those with the fixed mindset. What's more, throughout this rather grueling task, they maintained a healthy sense of confidence. They operated like Alan Wurtzel.

LEADERSHIP AND THE FIXED MINDSET

In contrast to Alan Wurtzel, the leaders of Collins's comparison companies had every symptom of the fixed mindset writ large.

Fixed-mindset leaders, like fixed-mindset people in general, live in a world where some people are superior and some are inferior. They must repeatedly affirm that they are superior, and the company is simply a platform for this.

Collins's comparison leaders were typically concerned with their "reputation for personal greatness"—so much so that they often set the company up to fail when their regime ended. As Collins puts it, "After all, what better testament to your own personal greatness than that the place falls apart after you leave?"

In more than two-thirds of these leaders, the researchers saw a "gargantuan personal ego" that either hastened the demise of the company or kept it second-rate. Once such leader was Lee Iacocca, head of Chrysler, who achieved a miraculous turnaround for his company, then spent so much time grooming his fame that in the second half of his tenure, the company plunged back into mediocrity.

Many of these comparison companies operated on what Collins calls a "genius with a thousand helpers" model. Instead of building an extraordinary management team like the good-to-great companies, they operated on the fixed-mindset premise that great geniuses do not need great teams. They just need little helpers to carry out their brilliant ideas.

Don't forget that these great geniuses don't *want* great teams, either. Fixed-mindset people want to be the only big fish so that when they compare themselves to those around them, they can feel a cut above the rest. In not one autobiography of a fixed-mindset CEO did I read much about mentoring or employee development programs. In every growth-mindset autobiography, there was deep concern with personnel development and extensive discussion of it.

Finally, as with Enron, the geniuses refused to look at their deficiencies. Says Collins: The good-to-great Kroger grocery chain looked bravely at the

danger signs in the 1970s—signs that the old-fashioned grocery store was becoming extinct. Meanwhile, its counterpart, A&P, once the largest retailing organization in the world, shut its eyes. For example, when A&P opened a new kind of store, a superstore, and it seemed to be more successful than the old kind, they closed it down. It was not what they wanted to hear. In contrast, Kroger eliminated or changed every single store that did not fit the new superstore model and by the end of the 1990s it had become the number one grocery chain in the country.

CEOs and the Big Ego

How did *CEO* and *gargantuan ego* become synonymous? If it's the more self-effacing growth-minded people who are the true shepherds of industry, why are so many companies out looking for larger-than-life leaders—even when these leaders may in the end be more committed to themselves than to the company?

Blame Iacocca. According to James Surowiecki, writing in *Slate,* Iacocca's rise to prominence was a turning point for American business. Before him, the days of tycoons and moguls seemed long past. In the public's mind, *CEO* meant "a buttoned-down organization man, well-treated and well-paid, but essentially bland and characterless." With Iacocca, all of that changed. Business journalists began dubbing executives "the next J. P. Morgan" or "the next Henry Ford." And fixed-mindset executives started vying for those labels.

Surowiecki even traces the recent corporate scandals to this change, for as the trend continued, CEOs became superheroes. But the people who preen their egos and look for the next self-image boost are not the same people who foster long-term corporate health.

Maybe Iacocca is just a charismatic guy who, like rock and roll, is being blamed for the demise of civilization. Is that fair? Let's look at him more closely. And let's look at some other fixed-mindset CEOs: Albert Dunlap of Scott Paper and Sunbeam; Jerry Levin and Steve Case of AOL Time Warner; and Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling of Enron.

You'll see they all start with the belief that some people are superior; they all have the need to prove and display *their* superiority; they all use their subordinates to feed this need, rather than fostering the development of their workers; and they all end by sacrificing their companies to this need. The fixed mindset helps us understand where gargantuan egos come from, how they operate, and why they become self-defeating.

FIXED-MINDSET LEADERS IN ACTION

Iacocca: I'm a Hero

Warren Bennis, the leadership guru, studied the world's greatest corporate leaders. These great leaders said they didn't set out to be leaders. They'd had no interest in proving themselves. They just did what they loved—with tremendous drive and enthusiasm—and it led where it led.

Iacocca wasn't like that. Yes, he loved the car business, but more than anything he yearned to be a muckamuck at Ford. He craved the approval of Henry Ford II and the royal trappings of office. These were the things he could measure himself by, the things that would prove he was somebody. I use the term *royal* with good reason. Iacocca tells us the Glass House, Ford corporate headquarters, was a palace and Henry Ford was the king. What's more, "If Henry was king, I was the crown prince." "I was His Majesty's special protégé." "All of us…lived the good life in the royal court. We were part of something beyond first class—royal class….White coated waiters were on call throughout the day, and we all ate lunch together in the executive dining room…Dover sole was flown over from England on a daily basis."

Iacocca achieved great things at Ford, like nurturing and promoting the Ford Mustang, and he dreamed of succeeding Henry Ford as the CEO of the company. But Henry Ford had other ideas and, much to Iacocca's shock and rage, he eventually forced Iacocca out. It's interesting that Iacocca was shocked and that he harbored an enduring rage against Henry Ford. After all, he had seen Henry Ford fire top people, and he, Iacocca, had used the ax quite liberally on others. He knew the corporate game. Yet his fixed mindset clouded his vision: "I had always clung to the idea that I was different, that somehow *I was smarter or luckier* than the rest. I didn't think it would ever happen to me." (Italics added.)

His belief in his inherent superiority had blinded him. Now the other side of the fixed mindset kicked in. He wondered whether Henry Ford had detected a flaw in him. Maybe he wasn't superior after all. And that's why he couldn't let go. Years later, his second wife told him to get over it. "You don't

realize what a favor Henry Ford did for you. Getting fired from Ford brought you to greatness. You're richer, more famous and more influential because of Henry Ford. Thank him." Shortly thereafter, he divorced her.

So the king who had defined him as competent and worthy now rejected him as flawed. With ferocious energy, Iacocca applied himself to the monumental task of saving face and, in the process, Chrysler Motors. Chrysler, the once thriving Ford rival, was on the brink of death, but Iacocca as its new CEO acted quickly to hire the right people, bring out new models, and lobby the government for bailout loans. Just a few years after his humiliating exit from Ford, he was able to write a triumphant autobiography and in it declare, "Today, I'm a hero."

Within a short time, however, Chrysler was in trouble again. Iacocca's fixed mindset would not stay put. He needed to prove his greatness—to himself, to Henry Ford, to the world—on a larger and larger scale. He spent his company time on things that would enhance his public image, and he spent the company's money on things that would impress Wall Street and hike up Chrysler's stock prices. But he did this instead of investing in new car designs or manufacturing improvements that would keep the company profitable in the long run.

He also looked to history, to how he would be judged and remembered. But he did not address this concern by building the company. Quite the contrary. According to one of his biographers, he worried that his underlings might get credit for successful new designs, so he balked at approving them. He worried, as Chrysler faltered, that his underlings might be seen as the new saviors, so he tried to get rid of them. He worried that he would be written out of Chrysler history, so he desperately hung on as CEO long after he had lost his effectiveness.

Iacocca had a golden opportunity to make a difference, to leave a great legacy. The American auto industry was facing its biggest challenge ever. Japanese imports were taking over the American market. It was simple: They looked better and they ran better. Iacocca's own people had done a detailed study of Honda, and made excellent suggestions to him.

But rather than taking up the challenge and delivering better cars, Iacocca, mired in his fixed mindset, delivered blame and excuses. He went on the rampage, spewing angry diatribes against the Japanese and demanding that

the American government impose tariffs and quotas that would stop them. In an editorial against Iacocca, *The New York Times* scolded, "The solution lies in making better cars in this country, not in angrier excuses about Japan."

Nor was Iacocca growing as a leader of his workforce. In fact, he was shrinking into the insulated, petty, and punitive tyrant he had accused Henry Ford of being. Not only was he firing people who were critical of him, he'd done little to reward the workers who had sacrificed so much to save the company. Even when the money was rolling in, he seemed to have little interest in sharing it with them. Their pay remained low and their working conditions remained poor. Yet even when Chrysler was in trouble again, he maintained a regal lifestyle. Two million dollars were spent renovating his corporate suite at the Waldorf in New York.

Finally, while there was still time to save Chrysler, the board of directors eased Iacocca out. They gave him a grand pension, showered him with stock options, and continued many of his corporate perks. But he was beside himself with rage, especially since his successor seemed to be managing the company quite nicely. So in a bid to regain the throne, he joined a hostile takeover attempt, one that placed the future of Chrysler at risk. It failed. But for many, the suspicion that he put his ego before the welfare of the company was confirmed.

Iacocca lived the fixed mindset. Although he started out loving the car business and having breakthrough ideas, his need to prove his superiority started to dominate, eventually killing his enjoyment and stifling his creativity. As time went on and he became less and less responsive to challenges from competitors, he resorted to the key weapons of the fixed mindset—blame, excuses, and the stifling of critics and rivals.

And as is so often the case with the fixed mindset, because of these very things, Iacocca lost the validation he craved.

When students fail tests or athletes lose games, it tells them that they've dropped the ball. But the power that CEOs wield allows them to create a world that caters night and day to their need for validation. It allows them to surround themselves only with the good news of their perfection and the company's success, no matter what the warning signs may be. This, as you may recall, is CEO disease and a peril of the fixed mindset.

You know, lately I've wondered whether Iacocca has recuperated from CEO disease. He's raising money (and giving a lot of his own) for innovative diabetes research. He's working for the development of environment-friendly vehicles. Maybe, released from the task of trying to prove himself, he's now going for things he deeply values.

Albert Dunlap: I'm a Superstar

Albert Dunlap saved dying companies, although I'm not sure *saved* is the right word. He didn't get them ready to thrive in the future. He got them ready to sell for a profit, for example by firing thousands of workers. And profit he did. He got a hundred million dollars from the turnaround and sale of Scott Paper. One hundred million for little more than a year and a half of work. "Did I earn it? Damn right I did. I'm a superstar in my field, much like Michael Jordan in basketball and Bruce Springsteen in rock 'n' roll."

Iacocca paid lip service to teamwork, the importance of the little guy, and other good things. Albert Dunlap didn't even pay lip service: "If you're in business, you're in business for one thing—to make money."

He proudly reports an incident at an employee meeting at Scott Paper. A woman stood up and asked, "Now that the company is improving, can we restart charitable donations?" To which he replied, "If you want to give on your own, that is your business and I encourage you to do it. But this company is here to make a buck….The answer, in a word, is no."

I'm not here to argue that business isn't about money, but I do want to ask: Why was Dunlap so focused on it?

Let's let him tell us. "Making my way in the world became a matter of self-respect for me, of a kid trying to prove he was worth something….To this day, I feel I have to prove and reprove myself." And if he has to prove himself, he needs a yardstick. Employee satisfaction or community responsibility or charitable contributions are not good yardsticks. They cannot be reduced to one number that represents his self-worth. But shareholder profits can.

In his own words, "The most ridiculous term heard in boardrooms these days is 'stakeholders.' " The term refers to the employees, the community, and the other companies, such as suppliers, that the company deals with. "You can't measure success by the interest of multiple stakeholders. You *can* measure success by how the shareholder fares."

The long haul held no interest for Dunlap. Really learning about a company and figuring out how to make it grow didn't give him the big blast of superhero juice. "Eventually, I have gotten bored every place I have been." In his book, there is a whole chapter called "Impressing the Analysts," but there is no chapter about making a business work. In other words, it's always about Dunlap proving his genius.

Then in 1996, Dunlap took over Sunbeam. In his typical "Chainsaw Al" style, he closed or sold two-thirds of Sunbeam's plants and fired half of the twelve thousand employees. Ironically, the Sunbeam stock rose so high, it ruined his plan to sell the company. It was too expensive to buy! Uh-oh, now he had to run the company. Now he had to keep it profitable, or at least looking profitable. But instead of turning to his staff or learning what to do, he inflated revenues, fired people who questioned him, and covered up the increasingly dire straits his company was in. Less than two years after the self-proclaimed superstardom in his book (and one year after an even more self-congratulatory revision), Dunlap fell apart and was kicked out. As he left, Sunbeam was under investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission and was expected to be in technical default on a $1.7 billion bank loan.

Dunlap deeply misunderstood Michael Jordan and Bruce Springsteen. Both of these superstars reached the pinnacle and stayed there a long time because they constantly dug down, faced challenges, and kept growing. Al Dunlap thought that he was inherently superior, so he opted out of the kind of learning that would have helped him succeed.

The Smartest Guys in the Room

Yes, it seems as though history led inevitably from Iacocca to the moguls of the 1990s, and none more so than Kenneth Lay and Jeffrey Skilling, the leaders of Enron.

Ken Lay, the company's founder, chairman, and CEO, considered himself a great visionary. According to Bethany McLean and Peter Elkind, authors of *The Smartest Guys in the Room,* Lay looked down his nose at the people who actually made the company run, much the way a king might look at his serfs. He looked down on Rich Kinder, the Enron president, who rolled up his sleeves and tried to make sure the company would reach its earning targets. Kinder was the man who made Lay's royal lifestyle possible. Kinder was also the only person at the top who constantly asked if they were fooling themselves: "Are we smoking our own dope? Are we drinking our own whiskey?"

Naturally, his days were numbered. But in his sensible and astute way, as he departed he arranged to buy the one Enron asset that was inherently valuable, the energy pipelines—the asset that Enron held in disdain. By the middle of 2003, Kinder's company had a market value of seven billion dollars.

Even as Lay was consumed by his view of himself and the regal manner in which he wished to support it, he wanted to be seen as a "good and thoughtful man" with a credo of respect and integrity. Even as Enron merrily sucked the life out of its victims, he wrote to his staff, "Ruthlessness, callousness and arrogance don't belong here….We work with customers and prospects openly, honestly and sincerely." As with Iacocca and the others, the perception—usually Wall Street's perception—was all-important. The reality less so.

Right there with Lay was Jeff Skilling, successor to Rich Kinder as president and chief operating officer, and later the CEO. Skilling was not just smart, he was said to be "the smartest person I ever met" and "incandescently brilliant." He used his brainpower, however, not to learn but to intimidate. When he thought he was smarter than others, which was almost always, he

treated them harshly. And anyone who disagreed with him was just not bright enough to "get it." When a co-CEO with superb management skills was brought in to help Skilling during a hard time in his life, Skilling was contemptuous of him: "Ron doesn't get it." When financial analysts or Wall Street traders tried to press Skilling to go beyond his pat explanations, he treated them as though they were stupid. "Well, it's so obvious. How can you not get it?" In most cases, the Wall Street guys, ever concerned about their own intellect, made believe they got it.

As resident genius, Skilling had unlimited faith in his ideas. He had so much regard for his ideas that he believed Enron should be able to proclaim profits as soon as he or his people had the idea that might lead to profits. This is a radical extension of the fixed mindset: *My genius not only defines and validates me. It defines and validates the company. It is what creates value. My genius* is *profit.* Wow!

And in fact, this is how Enron came to operate. As McLean and Elkind report, Enron recorded "millions of dollars in profits on a business before it had generated a penny in actual revenues." Of course, after the creative act no one cared about follow-through. That was beneath them. So, often as not, the profit never occurred. If genius equaled profit, it didn't matter that Enron people sometimes wasted millions competing against each other. Said Amanda Martin, an Enron executive, "To put one over on one of your own was a sign of creativity and greatness."

Skilling not only thought he was smarter than everyone else but, like Iacocca, also thought he was luckier. According to insiders, he thought he could beat the odds. Why should he feel vulnerable? There was never anything wrong. Skilling still does not admit that there was anything wrong. The world simply didn't get it.

Two Geniuses Collide

Resident geniuses almost brought down AOL and Time Warner, too. Steve Case of AOL and Jerry Levin of Time Warner were *two* CEOs with the fixed mindset who merged their companies. Can you see it coming?

Case and Levin had a lot in common. Both of them cultivated an aura of supreme intelligence. Both tried to intimidate people with their brilliance. And both were known to take more credit than they deserved. As resident geniuses, neither wanted to hear complaints, and both were ready to fire people who weren't "team players," meaning people who wouldn't keep up the façade that they had erected.

When the merger actually took place, AOL was in such debt that the merged company was on the brink of ruin. You would think that the two CEOs might work together, marshaling their resources to save the company they created. Instead, Levin and Case scrambled for personal power.

Levin was the first to fall. But Case was still not trying to make things work. In fact, when the new CEO, Richard Parsons, sent someone down to fix AOL, Case was intensely against it. If someone else fixed AOL, someone else would get the credit. As with Iacocca, better to let the company collapse than let another prince be crowned. When Case was finally counseled to resign, he was furious. Like Iacocca, he denied all responsibility for the company's problems and vowed to get back at those who had turned against him.

Because of the resident geniuses, AOL Time Warner ended the year 2002 with a loss of almost one hundred billion dollars. It was the largest yearly loss in American history.

Iacocca, Dunlap, Lay and Skilling, Case and Levin. They show what can happen when people with the fixed mindset are put in charge of companies. In each case, a brilliant man put his company in jeopardy because measuring himself and his legacy outweighed everything else. They were not evil in the usual sense. They didn't set out to do harm. But at critical decision points, they opted for what would make them feel good and look good over what would serve the longer-term corporate goals. Blame others, cover mistakes, pump up the stock prices, crush rivals and critics, screw the little guy—these were the standard operating procedures.

What is fascinating is that as they led their companies toward ruin, all of these leaders felt invulnerable and invincible. In many cases, they were in highly competitive industries, facing onslaughts from fierce rivals. But they lived in a different reality.

It was a world of personal greatness and entitlement. Kenneth Lay felt a powerful sense of entitlement. Even as he was getting millions a year in compensation from Enron, he took large personal loans from the company, gave jobs and contracts to his relatives, and used the corporate jets as his family fleet. Even during bad years at Chrysler, Iacocca threw lavish Christmas parties for the company elite. At every party, as king, he presented himself with an expensive gift, which the executives were later billed for. Speaking about AOL executives, a former official said, "You're talking about men who thought they had a right to anything."

As these leaders cloaked themselves in the trappings of royalty, surrounded themselves with flatterers who extolled their virtues, and hid from problems, it is no wonder they felt invincible. Their fixed mindset created a magic realm in which the brilliance and perfection of the king were constantly validated. Within that mindset, they were completely fulfilled. Why would they want to step outside that realm to face the uglier reality of warts and failures?

As Morgan McCall, in his book *High Flyers,* points out, "Unfortunately, people often *like* the things that work against their growth….People like to use their strengths…to achieve quick, dramatic results, even if…they aren't

developing the new skills they will need later on. People like to believe they are as good as everyone says…and not take their weaknesses as seriously as they might. People don't like to hear bad news or get criticism….There is tremendous risk…in leaving what one does well to attempt to master something new." And the fixed mindset makes it seem all that much riskier.

Brutal Bosses

McCall goes on to point out that when leaders feel they are inherently better than others, they may start to believe that the needs or feelings of the lesser people can be ignored. None of our fixed-mindset leaders cared much about the little guy, and many were outright contemptuous of those beneath them on the corporate ladder. Where does this lead? In the guise of "keeping people on their toes," these bosses may mistreat workers.

Iacocca played painful games with his executives to keep them off balance. Jerry Levin of Time Warner was likened by his colleagues to the brutal Roman emperor Caligula. Skilling was known for his harsh ridicule of those less intelligent than he.

Harvey Hornstein, an expert on corporate leadership, writes in his book *Brutal Bosses* that this kind of abuse represents the bosses' desire "to enhance their own feelings of power, competence, and value at the subordinate's expense." Do you remember in our studies how people with the fixed mindset wanted to compare themselves with people who were worse off than they were? The principle is the same, but there is an important difference: These bosses have the power to *make* people worse off. And when they do, they feel better about themselves.

Hornstein describes Paul Kazarian, the former CEO of Sunbeam-Oster. He called himself a "perfectionist," but that was a euphemism for "abuser." He threw things at subordinates when they upset him. One day, the comptroller, after displeasing Mr. Kazarian, saw an orange juice container flying toward him.

Sometimes the victims are people the bosses consider to be less talented. This can feed their sense of superiority. But often the victims are the *most* competent people, because these are the ones who pose the greatest threat to a fixed-mindset boss. An engineer at a major aircraft builder, interviewed by Hornstein, talked about his boss: "His targets were usually those of us who were most competent. I mean, if you're really concerned about our performance, you don't pick on those who are performing best." But if you're really concerned about your competence, you do.

When bosses mete out humiliation, a change comes over the place. Everything starts revolving around pleasing the boss. In *Good to Great,* Collins notes that in many of his comparison companies (the ones that didn't go from good to great, or that went there and declined again), the leader became the main thing people worried about. "The minute a leader allows himself to become the primary reality people worry about, rather than reality being the primary reality, you have a recipe for mediocrity, or worse."

In the 1960s and '70s, the Chase Manhattan Bank was ruled by David Rockefeller, an excessively controlling leader. According to Collins and Porras in *Built to Last,* his managers lived day to day in fear of his disapproval. At the end of each day, they breathed a sigh of relief: "Whew! One more day gone and I'm not in trouble." Even long past his heyday, senior managers refused to venture a new idea because "David might not like it." Ray Macdonald of Burroughs, Collins and Porras report, publicly ridiculed managers for mistakes to the point where he inhibited them from innovating. As a result, even though Burroughs was ahead of IBM in the early stages of the computer industry, the company lost out. The same thing happened at Texas Instruments, another leader in the exciting early days of the computer. If they didn't like a presentation, Mark Shepherd and Fred Bucy would yell, bang on tables, insult the speaker, and hurl things. No wonder their people lost their enterprising spirit.

When bosses become controlling and abusive, they put everyone into a fixed mindset. This means that instead of learning, growing, and moving the company forward, everyone starts worrying about being judged. It starts with the bosses' worry about being judged, but it winds up being everybody's fear about being judged. It's hard for courage and innovation to survive a companywide fixed mindset.

GROWTH-MINDSET LEADERS IN ACTION

Andrew Carnegie once said, "I wish to have as my epitaph: 'Here lies a man who was wise enough to bring into his service men who knew more than he.' "

Okay, let's open the windows and let some air in. The fixed mindset feels so stifling. Even when those leaders are globe-trotting and hobnobbing with world figures, their world seems so small and confining—because their minds are always on one thing: *Validate me!*

When you enter the world of the growth-mindset leaders, everything changes. It brightens, it expands, it fills with energy, with possibility. You think, *Gee, that seems like fun!* It has never entered my mind to lead a corporation, but when I learned about what these leaders had done, it sounded like the most exciting thing in the world.

I've chosen three of these leaders to explore as a contrast to the fixed-mindset leaders. I chose Jack Welch of General Electric because he is a larger-than-life figure with an ego he held in check—not your straight-ahead naturally self-effacing growth-minded guy. And I chose Lou Gerstner (the man who came in and saved IBM) and Anne Mulcahy (the woman who brought Xerox back to life) as contrasts to Alfred Dunlap, the other turnaround expert.

Jack Welch, Lou Gerstner, and Anne Mulcahy are also fascinating because they transformed their companies. They did this by rooting out the fixed mindset and putting a culture of growth and teamwork in its place. With Gerstner and IBM, it's like watching Enron morph into a growth-mindset mecca.

As growth-minded leaders, they start with a belief in human potential and development—both their own and other people's. Instead of using the company as a vehicle for their greatness, they use it as an engine of growth—for themselves, the employees, and the company as a whole.

Warren Bennis has said that too many bosses are driven and driving but going nowhere. Not these people. They don't talk royalty. They talk journey.

An inclusive, learning-filled, rollicking journey.

Jack: Listening, Crediting, Nurturing

When Jack Welch took over GE in 1980, the company was valued at fourteen billion dollars. Twenty years later, it was valued by Wall Street at $490 billion. It was the most valuable company in the world. *Fortune* magazine called Welch "the most widely admired, studied, and imitated CEO of his time….His total economic impact is impossible to calculate but must be a staggering multiple of his GE performance."

But to me even more impressive was an op-ed piece in *The New York Times* by Steve Bennett, the CEO of Intuit. "I learned about nurturing employees from my time at General Electric from Jack Welch….He'd go directly to the front-line employee to figure out what was going on. Sometime in the early 1990s, I saw him in a factory where they made refrigerators in Louisville….He went right to the workers in the assembly line to hear what they had to say. I do frequent CEO chats with front-line employees. I learned that from Jack."

This vignette says a lot. Jack was obviously a busy guy. An important guy. But he didn't run things like Iacocca—from the luxurious corporate headquarters where his most frequent contacts were the white-gloved waiters. Welch never stopped visiting the factories and hearing from the workers. These were people he respected, learned from, and, in turn, nurtured.

Then there is the emphasis on teamwork, not the royal *I.* Right away—right from the "Dedication" and the "Author's Note" of Welch's autobiography—you know something is different. It's not the "I'm a hero" of Lee Iacocca or the "I'm a superstar" of Alfred Dunlap—although he could easily lay claim to both.

Instead, it's "I hate having to use the first person. Nearly everything I've done in my life has been accomplished with other people….Please remember that every time you see the word *I* in these pages, it refers to all those colleagues and friends and some I might have missed."

Or "[These people] filled my journey with great fun and learning. They often made me look better than I am."

Already we see the *me me me* of the validation-hungry CEO becoming the *we* and *us* of the growth-minded leader.

Interestingly, before Welch could root the fixed mindset out of the company, he had to root it out of himself. And believe me, Welch had a long way to go. He was not always the leader he learned to be. In 1971, Welch was being considered for a promotion when the head of GE human resources wrote a cautioning memo. He noted that despite Welch's many strengths, the appointment "carries with it more than the usual degree of risk." He went on to say that Welch was arrogant, couldn't take criticism, and depended too much on his talent instead of hard work and his knowledgeable staff. Not good signs.

Fortunately, every time his success went to his head, he got a wake-up call. One day, young "Dr." Welch, decked out in his fancy suit, got into his new convertible. He proceeded to put the top down and was promptly squirted with dark, grungy oil that ruined both his suit and the paint job on his beloved car. "There I was, thinking I was larger than life, and smack came the reminder that brought me back to reality. It was a great lesson."

There is a whole chapter titled "Too Full of Myself" about the time he was on an acquisition roll and felt he could do no wrong. Then he bought Kidder, Peabody, a Wall Street investment banking firm with an Enron-type culture. It was a disaster that lost hundreds of millions of dollars for GE. "The Kidder experience never left me." It taught him that "there's only a razor's edge between self-confidence and hubris. This time hubris won and taught me a lesson I would never forget."

What he learned was this: True self-confidence is "the courage to be open—to welcome change and new ideas regardless of their source." Real self-confidence is not reflected in a title, an expensive suit, a fancy car, or a series of acquisitions. It is reflected in your mindset: your readiness to grow.

Well, humility is a start, but what about the management skills?

From his experiences, Welch learned more and more about the kind of manager he wanted to be: a growth-minded manager—a guide, not a judge. When Welch was a young engineer at GE, he caused a chemical explosion that blew the roof off the building he worked in. Emotionally shaken by what happened, he nervously drove the hundred miles to company headquarters to face the music and explain himself to the boss. But when he got there, the

treatment he received was understanding and supportive. He never forgot it. "Charlie's reaction made a huge impression on me….If we're managing good people who are clearly eating themselves up over an error, our job is to help them through it."

He learned how to select people: for their mindset, not their pedigrees. Originally, academic pedigrees impressed him. He hired engineers from MIT, Princeton, and Caltech. But after a while, he realized that wasn't what counted. "Eventually I learned that I was really looking for people who were filled with passion and a desire to get things done. A resume didn't tell me much about that inner hunger."

Then came a chance to become the CEO. Each of the three candidates had to convince the reigning CEO he was best for the job. Welch made the pitch on the basis of his capacity to grow. He didn't claim that he was a genius or that he was the greatest leader who ever lived. He promised to develop. He got the job and made good on his promise.

Immediately, he opened up dialogue and the channels for honest feedback. He quickly set to work asking executives what they liked and disliked about the company and what they thought needed changing. Boy, were they surprised. In fact, they'd been so used to kissing up to the bosses that they couldn't even get their minds around these questions.

Then he spread the word: This company is about growth, not self-importance.

He shut down elitism—quite the opposite of our fixed-mindset leaders. One evening, Welch addressed an elite executive club at GE that was *the* place for movers and shakers to see and be seen. To their shock, he did not tell them how wonderful they were. He told them, "I can't find any value in what you're doing." Instead, he asked them to think of a role that made more sense for them and for the company. A month later, the president of the club came to Welch with a new idea: to turn the club into a force of community volunteers. Twenty years later that program, open to all employees, had forty-two thousand members. They were running mentoring programs in inner-city schools and building parks, playgrounds, and libraries for communities in need. They were now making a contribution to others' growth, not to their own egos.

He got rid of brutal bosses. Iacocca tolerated and even admired brutal bosses who could make the workers produce. It served his bottom line. Welch admitted that he, too, had often looked the other way. But in the organization he now envisioned, he could not do that. In front of five hundred managers, "I explained why four corporate officers were asked to leave during the prior year—even though they delivered good financial performance….[They] were asked to go because they didn't practice our values." The approved way to foster productivity was now through mentoring, not through terror.

And he rewarded teamwork rather than individual genius. For years, GE, like Enron, had rewarded the single originator of an idea, but now Welch wanted to reward the team that brought the ideas to fruition. "As a result, leaders were encouraged to share the credit for ideas with their teams rather than take full credit themselves. It made a huge difference in how we all related to one another."

Jack Welch was not a perfect person, but he was devoted to growth. This devotion kept his ego in check, kept him connected to reality, and kept him in touch with his humanity. In the end, it made his journey prosperous and fulfilling for thousands of people.

Lou: Rooting Out the Fixed Mindset

By the late 1980s, IBM had become Enron, with one exception. The board of directors knew it was in trouble.

It had a culture of smugness and elitism. Within the company, it was the old *We are royalty, but I'm more royal than you are* syndrome. There was no teamwork, only turf wars. There were deals but no follow-up. There was no concern for the customer. Yet this probably wouldn't have bothered anyone if business weren't suffering.

In 1993, they turned to Lou Gerstner and asked him to be the new CEO. He said no. They asked him again. "You owe it to America. We're going to have President Clinton call and tell you to take the job. Please, please, please. We want exactly the kind of strategy and culture change you created at American Express and RJR."

In the end he caved, although he can't remember why. But IBM now had a leader who believed in personal growth and in creating a corporate culture that would foster it. How did he produce it at IBM?

First, as Welch had done, he opened the channels of communication up and down the company. Six days after he arrived, he sent a memo to every IBM worker, telling them: "Over the next few months, I plan to visit as many of our operations and offices as I can. And whenever possible, I plan to meet with many of you to talk about how together we can strengthen the company."

He dedicated his book to them: "This book is dedicated to the thousands of IBMers who never gave up on their company, their colleagues, and themselves. They are the real heroes of the reinvention of IBM."

As Welch had done, he attacked the elitism. Like Enron, the whole culture was about grappling for personal status within the company. Gerstner disbanded the management committee, the ultimate power role for IBM executives, and often went outside the upper echelons for expertise. From a growth mindset, it's not only the select few that have something to offer.

“Hierarchy means very little to me. Let’s put together in meetings the people who can help solve a problem, regardless of position.”

Then came teamwork. Gerstner fired politicians, those who indulged in internal intrigue, and instead rewarded people who helped their colleagues. He stopped IBM sales divisions from putting each other down to clients to win business for themselves. He started basing executives’ bonuses more on IBM’s overall performance and less on the performance of their individual units. The message: We’re not looking to crown a few princes; we need to work as a team.

As at Enron, the deal was the glamorous thing; the rest was pedestrian. Gerstner was appalled by the endless failure to follow through on deals and decisions, and the company’s unlimited tolerance of it. He demanded and inspired better execution. Message: Genius is not enough; we need to get the job done.

Finally, Gerstner focused on the customer. IBM customers felt betrayed and angry. IBM was so into itself that it was no longer serving their computer needs. They were upset about pricing. They were frustrated by the bureaucracy at IBM. They were irritated that IBM was not helping them to integrate their systems. At a meeting of 175 chief information officers of the largest U.S. companies, Gerstner announced that IBM would now put the customer first and backed it up by announcing a drastic cut in their mainframe computer prices. Message: We are not hereditary royalty; we serve at the pleasure of our clients.

At the end of his first three arduous months, Gerstner received his report card from Wall Street: “[IBM stock] has done nothing, because he has done nothing.”

Ticked off but undaunted, Gerstner continued his anti-royalty campaign and brought IBM back from its “near-death experience.” This was the sprint. This is when Dunlap would have taken his money and run. What lay ahead was the even harder task of maintaining his policies until IBM regained industry leadership. That was the marathon. By the time he gave IBM back to the IBMers in March 2002, the stock had increased in value by 800 percent and IBM was “number one in the world in IT services, hardware, enterprise software (excluding PCs), and custom-designed, high performance computer

chips.” What’s more, IBM was once again defining the future direction of the industry.

Anne: Learning, Toughness, and Compassion

Take IBM. Plunge it into debt to the tune of seventeen billion. Destroy its credit rating. Make it the target of SEC investigations. And drop its stock from $63.69 to $4.43 a share. What do you get? Xerox.

That was the Xerox Anne Mulcahy took over in 2000. Not only had the company failed to diversify, it could no longer even sell its copy machines. But three years later, Xerox had had four straight profitable quarters, and in 2004 *Fortune* named Mulcahy "the hottest turnaround act since Lou Gerstner." How did she do it?

She went into an incredible learning mode, *making* herself into the CEO Xerox needed to survive. She and her top people, like Ursula Burns, learned the nitty-gritty of every part of the business. For example, as *Fortune* writer Betsy Morris explains, Mulcahy took Balance Sheet 101. She learned about debt, inventory, taxes, and currency so she could predict how each decision she made would play out on the balance sheet. Every weekend, she took home large binders and pored over them as though her final exam was on Monday. When she took the helm, people at Xerox units couldn't give her simple answers about what they had, what they sold, or who was in charge. She became a CEO who knew those answers or knew where to get them.

She was tough. She told everyone the cold, hard truth they didn't want to know—like how the Xerox business model was not viable or how close the company was to running out of money. She cut the employee rolls by 30 percent. But she was no Chainsaw Al. Instead, she bore the emotional brunt of her decisions, roaming the halls, hanging out with the employees, and saying "I'm sorry." She was tough but compassionate. In fact, she'd wake up in the middle of the night worrying about what would happen to the remaining employees and retirees if the company folded.

She worried constantly about the morale and development of her people, so that even with the cuts, she refused to sacrifice the unique and wonderful parts of the Xerox culture. Xerox was known throughout the industry as the company that gave retirement parties and hosted retiree reunions. As the employees struggled side by side with her, she refused to abolish their raises

and, in a morale-boosting gesture, gave them all their birthdays off. She wanted to save the company in body *and* spirit. And not for herself or her ego, but for all her people who were stretching themselves to the limit for the company.

After slaving away for two years, Mulcahy opened *Time* magazine only to see a picture of herself grouped with the notorious heads of Tyco and WorldCom, men responsible for two of the biggest corporate management disasters of our time.

But a year later she knew her hard work was finally paying off when one of her board members, the former CEO of Procter & Gamble, told her, "I never thought I would be proud to have my name associated with this company again. I was wrong."

Mulcahy was winning the sprint. Next came the marathon. Could Xerox win that, too? Maybe it had rested on its laurels too long, resisting change and letting too many chances go by. Or maybe the growth mindset—Mulcahy's mission to transform herself and her company—would help save another American institution.

Jack, Lou, and Anne—all believing in growth, all brimming with passion. And all believing that leadership is about growth and passion, not about brilliance. The fixed-mindset leaders were, in the end, full of bitterness, but the growth-minded leaders were full of gratitude. They looked up with gratitude to their workers who had made their amazing journey possible. They called them the real heroes.

Are CEO and Male Synonymous?

When you look at the books written by and about CEOs, you would think so. Jim Collins's good-to-great leaders (and his comparison to not-so-great leaders) were all men. Perhaps that's because men are the ones who've been at the top for a long while.

A few years ago, you'd have been hard-pressed to think of women at the top of big companies. In fact, many women who've run big companies had to create them, like Mary Kay Ash (the cosmetics tycoon), Martha Stewart, or Oprah Winfrey. Or inherit them, like Katharine Graham, the former head of *The Washington Post.*

Things are beginning to change. Women now hold more key positions in big business. They've been the CEOs of not only Xerox, but also eBay, Hewlett-Packard, Viacom's MTV Networks, Time Warner's Time, Inc., Lucent Technologies, and Rite Aid. Women have been the presidents or chief financial officers of Citigroup, PepsiCo, and Verizon. In fact, *Fortune* magazine called Meg Whitman of eBay "maybe…the best CEO in America" of the "world's hottest company."

I wonder whether, in a few years, I'll be able to write this whole chapter with women as the main characters. On the other hand, I hope not. I hope that in a few years, it will be hard to find fixed-mindset leaders—men *or* women—at the top of our most important companies.

A STUDY OF GROUP PROCESSES

Researcher Robert Wood and his colleagues did another great study. This time they created management *groups,* thirty groups with three people each. Half of the groups had three people with a fixed mindset and half had three people with a growth mindset.

Those with the fixed mindset believed that: "People have a certain fixed amount of management ability and they cannot do much to change it." In contrast, those with the growth mindset believed: "People can always substantially change their basic skills for managing other people." So one group thought that you have it or you don't; the other thought your skills could grow with experience.

Every group had worked together for some weeks when they were given, jointly, the task I talked about before: a complex management task in which they ran a simulated organization, a furniture company. If you remember, on this task people had to figure out how to match workers with jobs and how to motivate them for maximum productivity. But this time, instead of working individually, people could discuss their choices and the feedback they got, and work together to improve their decisions.

The fixed- and growth-mindset groups started with the same ability, but as time went on the growth-mindset groups clearly outperformed the fixed-mindset ones. And this difference became ever larger the longer the groups worked. Once again, those with the growth mindset profited from their mistakes and feedback far more than the fixed-mindset people. But what was even more interesting was how the groups functioned.

The members of the growth-mindset groups were much more likely to state their honest opinions and openly express their disagreements as they communicated about their management decisions. Everyone was part of the learning process. For the fixed-mindset groups—with their concern about who was smart or dumb or their anxiety about disapproval for their ideas—that open, productive discussion did not happen. Instead, it was more like groupthink.

GROUPTHINK VERSUS WE THINK

In the early 1970s, Irving Janis popularized the term *groupthink.* It's when everyone in a group starts thinking alike. No one disagrees. No one takes a critical stance. It can lead to catastrophic decisions, and, as the Wood study suggests, it often can come right out of a fixed mindset.

Groupthink can occur when people put unlimited faith in a talented leader, a genius. This is what led to the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion, America's half-baked secret plan to invade Cuba and topple Castro. President Kennedy's normally astute advisers suspended their judgment. Why? Because they thought he was golden and everything he did was bound to succeed.

According to Arthur Schlesinger, an insider, the men around Kennedy had unbounded faith in his ability and luck. "Everything had broken right for him since 1956. He had won the nomination and the election against all the odds in the book. Everyone around him thought he had the Midas touch and could not lose."

Schlesinger also said, "Had one senior advisor opposed the adventure, I believe that Kennedy would have canceled it. No one spoke against it." To prevent this from happening to him, Winston Churchill set up a special department. Others might be in awe of his titanic persona, but the job of this department, Jim Collins reports, was to give Churchill all the worst news. Then Churchill could sleep well at night, knowing he had not been groupthinked into a false sense of security.

Groupthink can happen when the group gets carried away with its brilliance and superiority. At Enron, the executives believed that because they were brilliant, all of their ideas were brilliant. Nothing would ever go wrong. An outside consultant kept asking Enron people, "Where do you think you're vulnerable?" Nobody answered him. Nobody even understood the question. "We got to the point," said a top executive, "where we thought we were bullet proof."

Alfred P. Sloan, the former CEO of General Motors, presents a nice contrast. He was leading a group of high-level policy makers who seemed to

have reached a consensus. “Gentlemen,” he said, “I take it we are all in complete agreement on the decision here….Then I propose we postpone further discussion of this matter until our next meeting to give ourselves time to develop disagreement and perhaps gain some understanding of what the decision is all about.”

Herodotus, writing in the fifth century B.C., reported that the ancient Persians used a version of Sloan’s techniques to prevent groupthink. Whenever a group reached a decision while sober, they later reconsidered it while intoxicated.

Groupthink can also happen when a fixed-mindset leader punishes dissent. People may not stop thinking critically, but they stop speaking up. Iacocca tried to silence (or get rid of) people who were critical of his ideas and decisions. He said the new, rounder cars looked like flying potatoes, and that was the end of it. No one was allowed to differ, as Chrysler and its square cars lost more and more of the market share.

David Packard, on the other hand, gave an employee a medal for defying him. The co-founder of Hewlett-Packard tells this story. Years ago at a Hewlett-Packard lab, they told a young engineer to give up work on a display monitor he was developing. In response, he went “on vacation,” touring California and dropping in on potential customers to show them the monitor and gauge their interest. The customers loved it, he continued working on it, and then he somehow persuaded his manager to put it into production. The company sold more than seventeen thousand of his monitors and reaped a sales revenue of thirty-five million dollars. Later, at a meeting of Hewlett-Packard engineers, Packard gave the young man a medal “for extraordinary contempt and defiance beyond the normal call of engineering duty.”

There are so many ways the fixed mindset creates groupthink. Leaders are seen as gods who never err. A group invests itself with special talents and powers. Leaders, to bolster their ego, suppress dissent. Or workers, seeking validation from leaders, fall into line behind them. That’s why it’s critical to be in a growth mindset when important decisions are made. As Robert Wood showed in his study, a growth mindset—by relieving people of the illusions or the burdens of fixed ability—leads to a full and open discussion of the information and to enhanced decision making.

THE PRAISED GENERATION HITS THE WORKFORCE

Are we going to have a problem finding leaders in the future? You can't pick up a magazine or turn on the radio without hearing about the problem of praise in the workplace. We could have seen it coming.

We've talked about all the well-meaning parents who've tried to boost their children's self-esteem by telling them how smart and talented they are. And we've talked about all the negative effects of this kind of praise. Well, these children of praise have now entered the workforce, and sure enough, many can't function without getting a sticker for their every move. Instead of yearly bonuses, some companies are giving quarterly or even monthly bonuses. Instead of employee of the month, it's the employee of the day. Companies are calling in consultants to teach them how best to lavish rewards on this overpraised generation. We now have a workforce full of people who need constant reassurance and can't take criticism. Not a recipe for success in business, where taking on challenges, showing persistence, and admitting and correcting mistakes are essential.

Why are businesses perpetuating the problem? Why are they continuing the same misguided practices of the overpraising parents, and paying money to consultants to show them how to do it? Maybe we need to step back from this problem and take another perspective.

If the wrong kinds of praise lead kids down the path of entitlement, dependence, and fragility, maybe the right kinds of praise can lead them down the path of hard work and greater hardiness. We have shown in our research that with the right kinds of feedback even adults can be motivated to choose challenging tasks and confront their mistakes.

What would this feedback look or sound like in the workplace? Instead of just giving employees an award for the smartest idea or praise for a brilliant performance, they would get praise for taking initiative, for seeing a difficult task through, for struggling and learning something new, for being undaunted by a setback, or for being open to and acting on criticism. Maybe it could be praise for not needing constant praise!

Through a skewed sense of how to love their children, many parents in the ’90s (and, unfortunately, many parents of the ’00s) abdicated their responsibility. Although corporations are not usually in the business of picking up where parents left off, they may need to this time. If businesses don’t play a role in developing a more mature and growth-minded workforce, where will the leaders of the future come from?

ARE NEGOTIATORS BORN OR MADE?

One of the key things that the successful businessperson must be good at is negotiation. In fact, it's hard to imagine how a business could thrive without skilled negotiators at the helm. Laura Kray and Michael Haselhuhn have shown that mindsets have an important impact on negotiation success. In one study, they taught people either a fixed or a growth mindset about negotiation skills. Half of the participants read an article called "Negotiation Ability, Like Plaster, Is Pretty Stable Over Time." The other half read one called "Negotiation Ability Is Changeable and Can Be Developed." To give you a flavor for the articles, the growth mindset article started by saying, "While it used to be believed that negotiating was a fixed skill that people were either born with or not, experts in the field now believe that negotiating is a dynamic skill that can be cultivated and developed over a lifetime."

The participants were then asked to select the kind of negotiation task they wanted. They could choose one that showed off their negotiation skills, although they would not learn anything new. Or they could choose one in which they might make mistakes and get confused, but they would learn some useful negotiation skills. Almost half (47 percent) of the people who were taught the fixed mindset about negotiation skills chose the task that simply showed off their skills, but only 12 percent of those who were taught the growth mindset cared to pursue this show-offy task. This means that 88 percent of the people who learned a growth mindset wanted to dig into the task that would improve their negotiation skills.

In their next study, Kray and Haselhuhn monitored people as they engaged in negotiations. Again, half of the people were given a fixed mindset about negotiation skills and the other half were given a growth mindset. The people, two at a time, engaged in an employment negotiation. In each pair, one person was the job candidate and the other was the recruiter, and they negotiated on eight issues, including salary, vacation time, and benefits. By the end of the negotiation, those with the growth mindset were the clear winners, doing almost twice as well as those with the fixed mindset. The

people who had learned the growth mindset persevered through the rough spots and stalemates to gain more favorable outcomes.

In three final studies, the researchers looked at MBA students enrolled in a course on negotiation. Here they measured the mindsets the MBA students already had, asking them how much they agreed with fixed mindset statements ("The kind of negotiator someone is is very basic and it can't be changed very much," "Good negotiators are born that way") and growth mindset statements ("All people can change even their most basic negotiation qualities," "In negotiations, experience is a great teacher"). Similar to before, they found that the more of a growth mindset the student had, the better he or she did on the negotiation task.

But does a growth mindset make people good just at getting their own way? Often negotiations require people to understand and try to serve the other person's interests as well. Ideally, at the end of a negotiation, both parties feel their needs have been met. In a study with a more challenging negotiation task, those with a growth mindset were able to get beyond initial failures by constructing a deal that addressed *both* parties' underlying interests. So, not only do those with a growth mindset gain more lucrative outcomes for themselves, but, more important, they also come up with more creative solutions that confer benefits all around.

Finally, a growth mindset promoted greater learning. Those MBA students who endorsed a growth mindset on the first day of the negotiation course earned higher final grades in the course weeks later. This grade was based on performance on written assignments, in class discussions, and during class presentations, and reflected a deeper comprehension of negotiation theory and practice.

CORPORATE TRAINING: ARE MANAGERS BORN OR MADE?

Millions of dollars and thousands of hours are spent each year trying to teach leaders and managers how to coach their employees and give them effective feedback. Yet much of this training is ineffective, and many leaders and managers remain poor coaches. Is that because this can't be trained? No, that's not the reason. Research sheds light on why corporate training often fails.

Studies by Peter Heslin, Don VandeWalle, and Gary Latham show that many managers do not believe in personal change. These fixed-mindset managers simply look for existing talent—they judge employees as competent or incompetent at the start and that's that. They do relatively little developmental coaching and when employees *do* improve, they may fail to take notice, remaining stuck in their initial impression. What's more (like managers at Enron), they are far less likely to seek or accept critical feedback from their employees. Why bother to coach employees if they can't change and why get feedback from them if you can't change?

Managers with a growth mindset think it's nice to have talent, but that's just the starting point. These managers are more committed to their employees' development, and to their own. They give a great deal more developmental coaching, they notice improvement in employees' performance, and they welcome critiques from their employees.

Most exciting, the growth mindset can be taught to managers. Heslin and his colleagues conducted a brief workshop based on well-established psychological principles. (By the way, with a few changes, it could just as easily be used to promote a growth mindset in teachers or coaches.) The workshop starts off with a video and a scientific article about how the brain changes with learning. As with our "Brainology" workshop (described in chapter 8), it's always compelling for people to understand how dynamic the brain is and how it changes with learning. The article goes on to talk about how change is possible throughout life and how people can develop their abilities at most tasks with coaching and practice. Although managers, of course, want to find the right person for a job, the exactly right person doesn't

always come along. However, training and experience can often draw out and develop the qualities required for successful performance.

The workshop then takes managers through a series of exercises in which a) they consider why it's important to understand that people can develop their abilities, b) they think of areas in which they once had low ability but now perform well, c) they write to a struggling protégé about how his or her abilities can be developed, and d) they recall times they have seen people learn to do things they never thought these people could do. In each case, they reflect upon why and how change takes place.

After the workshop, there was a rapid change in how readily the participating managers detected improvement in employee performance, in how willing they were to coach a poor performer, and in the quantity and quality of their coaching suggestions. What's more, these changes persisted over the six-week period in which they were followed up.

What does this mean? First, it means that our best bet is not simply to hire the most talented managers we can find and turn them loose, but to look for managers who also embody a growth mindset: a zest for teaching and learning, an openness to giving and receiving feedback, and an ability to confront and surmount obstacles.

It also means we need to train leaders, managers, and employees to believe in growth, in addition to training them in the specifics of effective communication and mentoring. Indeed, a growth mindset workshop might be a good first step in any major training program.

Finally, it means creating a growth-mindset environment in which people can thrive. This involves:

- Presenting skills as learnable
- Conveying that the organization values learning and perseverance, not just ready-made genius or talent
- Giving feedback in a way that promotes learning and future success
- Presenting managers as resources for learning

Without a belief in human development, many corporate training programs become exercises of limited value. With a belief in development, such

programs give meaning to the term “human resources” and become a means of tapping enormous potential.

ARE LEADERS BORN OR MADE?

When Warren Bennis interviewed great leaders, "They all agreed leaders are made, not born, and made more by themselves than by any external means." Bennis concurred: "I believe…that everyone, of whatever age and circumstance, is capable of self-transformation." Not that everyone *will* become a leader. Sadly, most managers and even CEOs become bosses, not leaders. They wield power instead of transforming themselves, their workers, and their organization.

Why is this? John Zenger and Joseph Folkman point out that most people, when they first become managers, enter a period of great learning. They get lots of training and coaching, they are open to ideas, and they think long and hard about how to do their jobs. They are looking to develop. But once they've learned the basics, they stop trying to improve. It may seem like too much trouble, or they may not see where improvement will take them. They are content to do their jobs rather than making themselves into leaders.

Or, as Morgan McCall argues, many organizations believe in natural talent and don't look for people with the *potential* to develop. Not only are these organizations missing out on a big pool of possible leaders, but their belief in natural talent might actually squash the very people they think are the naturals, making them into arrogant, defensive nonlearners. The lesson is: Create an organization that prizes the development of ability—and watch the leaders emerge.

ORGANIZATIONAL MINDSETS

When we talked about Lou Gerstner and Anne Mulcahy, we saw the kind of company they wanted to create—and did create. These were companies that embraced the development of all employees and not the worship of a handful of anointed "geniuses." This raised a question.

Clearly the leader of an organization can hold a fixed or growth mindset, but can an organization as a whole have a mindset? Can it have a pervasive belief that talent is just fixed or, instead, a pervasive belief that talent can and should be developed in all employees? And, if so, what impact will this have on the organization and its employees? To find out, we studied a group of large corporations consisting of *Fortune* 500 and *Fortune* 1000 companies.

An organization might embody a fixed mindset, conveying that employees either "have it" or they don't: We called this a "culture of genius." Or it might embody more of a growth mindset, conveying that people can grow and improve with effort, good strategies, and good mentoring: We call this a "culture of development."

To determine a company's mindset, we asked a diverse sample of employees at each organization how much they agreed with statements like these: *When it comes to being successful, this company seems to believe that people have a certain amount of talent, and they can't really do much to change it* (fixed mindset). *This company values natural intelligence and business talent more than any other characteristics* (also fixed mindset). *This company genuinely values the personal development and growth of its employees* (growth mindset).

We then compiled the responses and they revealed something important: There was a strong consensus within each company about whether the company had fixed- or growth-mindset beliefs and values. We were now ready to examine the impact of the company's mindset—on employees' trust in the company, on their sense of empowerment and commitment, and on the level of collaboration, innovation, and ethical behavior that was embraced in the organization.

What we found was fascinating. People who work in growth-mindset organizations have far more trust in their company and a much greater sense of empowerment, ownership, and commitment. For example, when employees were asked to rate statements such as *"People are trustworthy in this organization,"* those in growth-mindset companies expressed far higher agreement. Right in line with this, employees in growth-mindset companies also reported that they were much more committed to their company and more willing to go the extra mile for it: *"I feel a strong sense of ownership and commitment to the future of this company."* Those who worked in fixed-mindset companies, however, expressed greater interest in leaving their company for another.

It's nice that employees in growth-mindset organizations feel trusting and committed, but what about agility and innovation? That's something that organizations should and do care greatly about these days. Perhaps a company has to sacrifice some comfort and loyalty to be on the leading edge. Perhaps a belief in fixed talent motivates innovation.

It doesn't look that way.

It's actually the employees in the growth-mindset companies who say that their organization supports (reasonable) risk-taking, innovation, and creativity. For example, they agreed *far* more strongly with statements like this: *"This company genuinely supports risk-taking and will support me even if I fail"* and *"People are encouraged to be innovative in this company—creativity is welcomed."*

Employees in the fixed-mindset companies not only say that their companies are less likely to support them in risk-taking and innovation, they are also far more likely to agree that their organizations are rife with cutthroat or unethical behavior: "In this company there is a lot of cheating, taking shortcuts, and cutting corners" or "In this company people often hide information and keep secrets." It makes a lot of sense when you think about it. When organizations put the premium on natural talent, then everyone wants to be the superstar, everyone wants to shine brighter than the others, and people may be more likely to cheat or cut corners to do so. Teamwork can take a nosedive.

So, employees in growth-mindset companies have more positive views of their organizations, but is that admiration reciprocated? Yes, it is. Supervisors

in growth-mindset companies had significantly more positive views of their employees—and on dimensions companies should care about. Supervisors in growth-mindset companies rated their employees as more collaborative and more committed to learning and growing. And as more innovative. And as having far greater management potential. These are all things that make a company more agile and more likely to stay in the vanguard.

I love this last finding: Supervisors in growth-mindset companies saw their team members as having far greater management potential than did supervisors in fixed-mindset companies. They saw future leaders in the making. I love the irony. The fixed-mindset companies presumably searched for the talent, hired the talent, and rewarded the talent—but now they were looking around and saying, "Where's the talent?" The talent wasn't flourishing.

Our findings tell us that it's possible to weave a fixed or growth mindset into the very fabric of an organization to create a culture of genius or a culture of development. Everybody knows that the business models of the past are no longer valid and that modern companies must constantly reinvent themselves to stay alive. Which companies do you think have a better chance of thriving in today's world?

Grow Your Mindset

- Are you in a fixed-mindset or growth-mindset workplace? Do you feel people are just judging you or are they helping you develop? Maybe you could try making it a more growth-mindset place, starting with yourself. Are there ways you could be less defensive about your mistakes? Could you profit more from the feedback you get? Are there ways you can create more learning experiences for yourself?
- How do *you* act toward others in your workplace? Are you a fixed-mindset boss, focused on your power more than on your employees' well-being? Do you ever reaffirm your status by demeaning others? Do you ever try to hold back high-performing employees because they threaten you?

  Consider ways to help your employees develop on the job: Apprenticeships? Workshops? Coaching sessions? Think about how you can start seeing and treating your employees as your collaborators, as a team. Make a list of strategies and try them out. Do this even if you already think of yourself as a growth-mindset boss. Well-placed support and growth-promoting feedback never hurt.

- If you run a company, look at it from a mindset perspective. Does it need you to do a Lou Gerstner on it? Think seriously about how to root out elitism and create a culture of self-examination, open communication, and teamwork. Read Gerstner's excellent book *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance?* to see how it's done.
- Is your workplace set up to promote groupthink? If so, the whole decision-making process is in trouble. Create ways

to foster alternative views and constructive criticism. Assign people to play the devil's advocate, taking opposing viewpoints so you can see the holes in your position. Get people to wage debates that argue different sides of the issue. Have an anonymous suggestion box that employees must contribute to as part of the decision-making process. Remember, people can be independent thinkers and team players at the same time. Help them fill both roles.

Chapter 7

PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND COACHES: WHERE DO MINDSETS COME FROM?

No parent thinks, "I wonder what I can do today to undermine my children, subvert their effort, turn them off learning, and limit their achievement." Of course not. They think, "I would do anything, give anything, to make my children successful." Yet many of the things they do boomerang. Their helpful judgments, their lessons, their motivating techniques often send the wrong message.

In fact, every word and action can send a message. It tells children—or students, or athletes—how to think about themselves. It can be a fixed-mindset message that says: *You have permanent traits and I'm judging them.* Or it can be a growth-mindset message that says: *You are a developing person and I am committed to your development.*

It's remarkable how sensitive children are to these messages, and how concerned they are about them. Haim Ginott, the child-rearing sage of the 1950s through '70s, tells this story. Bruce, age five, went with his mother to his new kindergarten. When they arrived, Bruce looked up at the paintings on the wall and said, "Who made those ugly pictures?" His mother rushed to correct him: "It's not nice to call pictures ugly when they are so pretty." But his teacher knew exactly what he meant. "In here," she said, "you don't have to paint pretty pictures. You can paint mean pictures if you feel like it." Bruce gave her a big smile. She had answered his real question: What happens to a boy who doesn't paint well?

Next, Bruce spotted a broken fire engine. He picked it up and asked in a self-righteous tone, "Who broke this fire engine?" Again his mother rushed in: "What difference does it make to you who broke it? You don't know anyone here." But the teacher understood. "Toys are for playing," she told

him. “Sometimes they get broken. It happens.” Again, his question was answered: What happens to boys who break toys?

Bruce waved to his mother and went off to start his first day of kindergarten. This was not a place where he would be judged and labeled.

You know, we never outgrow our sensitivity to these messages. Several years ago, my husband and I spent two weeks in Provence, in the south of France. Everyone was wonderful to us—very kind and very generous. But on the last day, we drove to Italy for lunch. When we got there and found a little family restaurant, tears started streaming down my face. I felt so nurtured. I said to David, “You know, in France, when they’re nice to you, you feel like you’ve passed a test. But in Italy, there is no test.”

Parents and teachers who send fixed-mindset messages are like France, and parents and teachers who send growth-mindset messages are like Italy.

Let’s start with the messages parents send to their children—but, you know, they are also messages that teachers can send to their students or coaches can send to their athletes.

PARENTS (AND TEACHERS): MESSAGES ABOUT SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Messages About Success

Listen for the messages in the following examples:

"You learned that so quickly! You're so smart!"

"Look at that drawing. Martha, is he the next Picasso or what?"

"You're so brilliant, you got an A without even studying!"

If you're like most parents, you hear these as supportive, esteem-boosting messages. But listen more closely. See if you can hear another message. It's the one that children hear:

If I don't learn something quickly, I'm not smart.

I shouldn't try drawing anything hard or they'll see I'm no Picasso.

I'd better quit studying or they won't think I'm brilliant.

How do I know this? Remember chapter 3, how I was thinking about all the praise parents were lavishing on their kids in the hope of encouraging confidence and achievement? You're so smart. You're so talented. You're such a natural athlete. And I thought, wait a minute. Isn't it the kids with the fixed mindset—the vulnerable kids—who are obsessed with this? Wouldn't harping on intelligence or talent make kids—all kids—even more obsessed with it?

That's why we set out to study this. After seven experiments with hundreds of children, we had some of the clearest findings I've ever seen: Praising children's intelligence harms their motivation and it harms their performance.

How can that be? Don't children love to be praised?

Yes, children love praise. And they especially love to be praised for their intelligence and talent. It really does give them a boost, a special glow—but only for the moment. The minute they hit a snag, their confidence goes out the window and their motivation hits rock bottom. If success means they're smart, then failure means they're dumb. That's the fixed mindset.

Here is the voice of a mother who saw the effects of well-meant praise for intelligence:

> I want to share my real-life experience with you. I am the mother of a very intelligent fifth grader. He consistently scores in the 99 percentile on standardized school tests in math, language and science, but he has had some very real "self-worth" problems. My husband, who is also an intelligent person, felt his parents never valued intellect and he has overcompensated with our son in attempting to praise him for "being smart." Over the past years, I have suspected this was causing a problem, because my son, while he easily excels in school, is reluctant to take on more difficult work or projects (just as your studies show) because then he would think he's not smart. He projects an over-inflated view of his abilities and claims he can perform better than others (both intellectually and in physical activities), but will not attempt such activities, because of course, in his failure he would be shattered.

And here is the voice of one of my Columbia students reflecting on his history:

> I remember often being praised for my intelligence rather than my efforts, and slowly but surely I developed an aversion to difficult challenges. Most surprisingly, this extended beyond academic and even athletic challenges to emotional challenges. This was my greatest learning disability—this tendency to see performance as a reflection of character and, if I could not accomplish something right away, to avoid that task or treat it with contempt.

I know, it feels almost impossible to resist this kind of praise. We want our loved ones to know that we prize them and appreciate their successes. Even I have fallen into the trap.

One day I came home and my husband, David, had solved a very difficult problem we had been puzzling over for a while. Before I could stop myself, I blurted out: "You're brilliant!" Needless to say, I was appalled at what I had done, and as the look of horror spread over my face, he rushed to reassure me. "I know you meant it in the most 'growth-minded' way. That I searched for strategies, kept at it, tried all kinds of solutions, and finally mastered it."

"Yes," I said, smiling sweetly, "that's *exactly* what I meant."

Parents think they can hand children permanent confidence—like a gift—by praising their brains and talent. It doesn't work, and in fact has the opposite effect. It makes children doubt themselves as soon as anything is hard or anything goes wrong. If parents want to give their children a gift, the best thing they can do is to teach their children to love challenges, be intrigued by mistakes, enjoy effort, seek new strategies, and keep on learning. That way, their children don't have to be slaves of praise. They will have a lifelong way to build and repair their own confidence.

SENDING MESSAGES ABOUT PROCESS AND GROWTH

So what's the alternative to praising talent or intelligence? David's reassurance gives us a hint. One of my students tells us more:

> I went home this weekend to find my 12-year-old sister ecstatic about school. I asked what she was so excited about and she said, "I got 102 on my social studies test!" I heard her repeat this phrase about five more times that weekend. At that point I decided to apply what we learned in class to this real-life situation. Rather than praising her intelligence or her grade, I asked questions that made her reflect on the effort she put into studying and on how she has improved from the year before. Last year, her grades dropped lower and lower as the year progressed so I thought it was important for me to intervene and steer her in the right direction at the beginning of this year.

Does this mean we can't praise our children enthusiastically when they do something great? Should we try to restrain our admiration for their successes? Not at all. It just means that we should keep away from a certain *kind* of praise—praise that judges their intelligence or talent. Or praise that implies that we're proud of them for their intelligence or talent rather than for the work they put in.

We can appreciate them as much as we want for the growth-oriented process—what they accomplished through practice, study, persistence, and good strategies. And we can ask them about their work in a way that recognizes and shows interest in their efforts and choices.

"You really studied for your test and your improvement shows it. You read the material over several times, you outlined it, and you tested yourself on it. It really worked!"

"I like the way you tried all kinds of strategies on that math problem until you finally got it. You thought of a lot of different ways to do it and found the one that worked!"

"I like that you took on that challenging project for your science class. It will take a lot of work—doing the research, designing the apparatus, buying the parts, and building it. Boy, you're going to learn a lot of great things."

"I know school used to be easy for you and you used to feel like the smart kid all the time. But the truth is that you weren't using your brain to the fullest. I'm really excited about how you're stretching yourself now and working to learn hard things."

"That homework was so long and involved. I really admire the way you concentrated and finished it."

"That picture has so many beautiful colors. Tell me about them."

"You put so much thought into this essay. It really makes me understand Shakespeare in a new way."

"The passion you put into that piano piece gives me a real feeling of joy. How do you feel when you play it?"

What about a student who worked hard and *didn't* do well?

"I liked the effort you put in, but let's work together some more and figure out what it is you don't understand."

"We all have different learning curves. It may take more time for you to catch on to this and be comfortable with this material, but if you keep at it like this you will."

"Everyone learns in a different way. Let's keep trying to find the way that works for you."

(This may be especially important for children with learning disabilities. Often for them it is not sheer effort that works but finding the right strategy.)

I was excited to learn recently that Haim Ginott, through his lifelong work with children, came to the same conclusion. "Praise should deal, not with the child's personality attributes, but with his efforts and achievements."

Sometimes people are careful to use growth-oriented praise with their children but then ruin it by the way they talk about others. I have heard parents say in front of their children, "He's just a born loser," "She's a natural genius," or "She's a pea-brain." When children hear their parents level fixed judgments at others, it communicates a fixed mindset. And they have to wonder, *Am I next?*

This caveat applies to teachers, too! In one study, we taught students a math lesson spiced up with some math history, namely, stories about great mathematicians. For half of the students, we talked about the mathematicians as geniuses who easily came up with their math discoveries. This alone propelled students into a fixed mindset. It sent the message: *There are some people who are born smart in math and everything is easy for them. Then there are the rest of you.* For the other half of the students, we talked about the mathematicians as people who became passionate about math and ended up making great discoveries. This brought students into a growth mindset. The message was: *Skills and achievement come through commitment and effort.* It's amazing how kids sniff out these messages from our innocent remarks.

One more thing about praise. When we say to children, "Wow, you did that so quickly!" or "Look, you didn't make any mistakes!" what message are we sending? We are telling them that what we prize are speed and perfection. Speed and perfection are the enemy of difficult learning: "If you think I'm smart when I'm fast and perfect, I'd better not take on anything challenging." So what *should* we say when children complete a task—say, math problems—quickly and perfectly? Should we deny them the praise they have earned? Yes. When this happens, I say, "Whoops. I guess that was too easy. I

apologize for wasting your time. Let's do something you can really learn from!"

REASSURING CHILDREN

How do you make a child feel secure before a test or performance? The same principle applies. Reassuring children about their intelligence or talent backfires. They'll only be more afraid to show a deficiency.

Kristina was a really bright high school student who, much to her shame, did terribly on tests. She always studied, she always knew the material, but every time it came to the test, she got so wound up that her mind went blank. Her grades suffered. She disappointed her teachers. She let her parents down. And it was only going to get worse as she faced the College Board tests that the schools she longed to attend prized so highly.

The night before each test, her parents, seeing how distraught she was, tried to build her confidence. "Look, *you* know how smart you are and *we* know how smart you are. You've got this nailed. Now, stop worrying."

They were as supportive as they knew how to be, but they were raising the stakes even higher. What could they have said instead?

"It must be a terrible thing to feel that everyone is evaluating you and you can't show what you know. We want you to know that we are not evaluating you. We care about your learning, and we know that you've learned your stuff. We're proud that you've stuck to it and kept learning."

Messages About Failure

Praising success should be the least of our problems, right? Failure seems like a much more delicate matter. Children may already feel discouraged and vulnerable. Let's tune in again, this time to the messages parents can send in times of failure.

Nine-year-old Elizabeth was on her way to her first gymnastics meet. Lanky, flexible, and energetic, she was just right for gymnastics, and she loved it. Of course, she was a little nervous about competing, but she was good at gymnastics and felt confident of doing well. She had even thought about the perfect place in her room to hang the ribbon she would win.

In the first event, the floor exercises, Elizabeth went first. Although she did a nice job, the scoring changed after the first few girls and she lost. Elizabeth also did well in the other events, but not well enough to win. By the end of the evening, she had received no ribbons and was devastated.

What would you do if you were Elizabeth's parents?

1. Tell Elizabeth *you* thought she was the best.
2. Tell her she was robbed of a ribbon that was rightfully hers.
3. Reassure her that gymnastics is not that important.
4. Tell her she has the ability and will surely win next time.
5. Tell her she didn't deserve to win.

There is a strong message in our society about how to boost children's self-esteem, and a main part of that message is: *Protect them from failure!* While this may help with the immediate problem of a child's disappointment, it can be harmful in the long run. Why?

Let's look at the five possible reactions from a mindset point of view—and listen to the messages:

The first (*you* thought she was the best) is basically insincere. She was not the best—you know it, and she does, too. This offers her no recipe for how to

recover or how to improve.

The second (she was robbed) places blame on others, when in fact the problem was mostly with her performance, not the judges. Do you want her to grow up blaming others for her deficiencies?

The third (reassure her that gymnastics doesn't really matter) teaches her to devalue something if she doesn't do well in it right away. Is this really the message you want to send?

The fourth (she has the ability) may be the most dangerous message of all. Does ability automatically take you where you want to go? If Elizabeth didn't win this meet, why should she win the next one?

The last option (tell her she didn't deserve to win) seems hardhearted under the circumstances. And of course you wouldn't say it quite that way. But that's pretty much what her growth-minded father told her.

Here's what he actually said: "Elizabeth, I know how you feel. It's so disappointing to have your hopes up and to perform your best but not to win. But you know, you haven't really earned it yet. There were many girls there who've been in gymnastics longer than you and who've worked a lot harder than you. If this is something you really want, then it's something you'll really have to work for."

He also let Elizabeth know that if she wanted to do gymnastics purely for fun, that was just fine. But if she wanted to excel in the competitions, more was required.

Elizabeth took this to heart, spending much more time repeating and perfecting her routines, especially the ones she was weakest in. At the next meet, there were eighty girls from all over the region. Elizabeth won five ribbons for the individual events and was the overall champion of the competition, hauling home a giant trophy. By now, her room is so covered with awards, you can hardly see the walls.

In essence, her father not only told her the truth, but also taught her how to learn from her failures and do what it takes to succeed in the future. He sympathized deeply with her disappointment, but he did not give her a phony boost that would only lead to further disappointment.

I've met with many coaches and they ask me: "What happened to the coachable athletes? Where did they go?" Many of the coaches lament that

when they give their athletes corrective feedback, the athletes grumble that their confidence is being undermined. Sometimes the athletes phone home and complain to their parents. They seem to want coaches who will simply tell them how talented they are and leave it at that.

The coaches say that in the old days after a little league game or a kiddie soccer game, parents used to review and analyze the game on the way home and give helpful (process) tips. Now on the ride home, they say, parents heap blame on the coaches and referees for the child's poor performance or the team's loss. They don't want to harm the child's confidence by putting the blame on the child.

But as in the example of Elizabeth above, children need honest and constructive feedback. If children are "protected" from it, they won't learn well. They will experience advice, coaching, and feedback as negative and undermining. Withholding constructive criticism does not help children's confidence; it harms their future.

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM: MORE ABOUT FAILURE MESSAGES

We always hear the term *constructive criticism.* But doesn't everyone think the criticism they give their children is constructive? Why would they give it if they didn't think it was helpful? Yet a lot if it is not helpful at all. It's full of judgment about the child. *Constructive* means helping the child to fix something, build a better product, or do a better job.

Billy rushed through his homework, skipping several questions and answering the others in a short, sloppy way. His father hit the roof. "*This* is your homework? Can't you ever get it right? You are either dense or irresponsible. Which is it?" The feedback managed to question his son's intelligence and character at the same time and to imply that the defects were permanent.

How could the dad have expressed his frustration and disappointment without assassinating his son's attributes? Here are some ways.

"Son, it really makes me upset when you don't do a full job. When do you think you can complete this?"

"Son, is there something you didn't understand in the assignment? Would you like me to go over it with you?"

"Son, I feel sad when I see you missing a chance to learn. Can you think of a way to do this that would help you learn more?"

"Son, this looks like a really boring assignment. You have my sympathy. Can you think of a way to make it more interesting?" or "Let's try to think of a way to lessen the pain and still do a good job. Do you have any ideas?"

"Son, remember I told you how tedious things help us learn to concentrate? This one is a real challenge. This will really take all your concentration skills. Let's see if you can concentrate through this whole assignment!"

Sometimes children will judge and label themselves. Ginott tells of Philip, age fourteen, who was working on a project with his father and accidentally spilled nails all over the floor. He guiltily looked at his dad and said:

PHILIP: Gee, I'm so clumsy.

FATHER: That's not what we say when nails spill.

PHILIP: What do you say?

FATHER: You say, the nails spilled—I'll pick them up!

PHILIP: Just like that?

FATHER: Just like that.

PHILIP: Thanks, Dad.

Children Learn the Messages

Kids with the fixed mindset tell us they get constant messages of judgment from their parents. They say they feel as though their traits are being measured all the time.

We asked them: "Suppose your parents offer to help you with your schoolwork. Why would they do this?"

They said: "The real reason is that they wanted to see how smart I was at the schoolwork I was working on."

We asked: "Suppose your parents are happy that you got a good grade. Why would that be?"

They said: "They were happy to see I was a smart kid."

We asked: "Suppose your parents discussed your performance with you when you did poorly on something in school. Why would they do this?"

They said: "They might have been worried I wasn't one of the bright kids," and "They think bad grades might mean I'm not smart."

So every time something happens, these children hear a message of judgment.

Maybe all kids think their parents are judging them. Isn't that what parents do—nag and judge? That's not what students with the growth mindset think. They think their parents are just trying to encourage learning and good study habits. Here's what they say about their parents' motives:

Q: Suppose your parents offer to help you with your school-work. Why would they do this?

A: They wanted to make sure I learned as much as I could from my schoolwork.

Q: Suppose your parents are happy that you got a good grade.

A: They're happy because a good grade means that I really stuck to my work.

Q: Suppose your parents discussed your performance with you when you did poorly on something in school.

A: They wanted to teach me ways to study better in the future.

Even when it was about their conduct or their relationships, the kids with the fixed mindset felt judged, but the kids with the growth mindset felt helped.

Q: Imagine that your parents became upset when you didn't do what they asked you to do. Why would they be this way?

FIXED-MINDSET CHILD: They were worried I might be a bad kid.

GROWTH-MINDSET CHILD: They wanted to help me learn ways of doing it better next time.

All kids misbehave. Research shows that normal young children misbehave every three minutes. Does it become an occasion for judgment of their character or an occasion for teaching?

Q: Imagine that your parents were unhappy when you didn't share with other kids. Why would they be this way?

FIXED-MINDSET CHILD: They thought it showed them what kind of person I was.

GROWTH-MINDSET CHILD: They wanted to help me learn better skills for getting along with other kids.

Children learn these lessons early. Children as young as toddlers pick up these messages from their parents, learning that their mistakes are worthy of judgment and punishment. Or learning that their mistakes are an occasion for suggestions and teaching.

Here's a kindergarten boy we will never forget. You will hear him role-playing different messages from his two parents. This is the situation: He wrote some numbers in school, they contained an error, and now he tells us how his parents would react.

MOTHER: Hello. What are you sad about?

BOY: I gave my teacher some numbers and I skipped the number 8 and now I'm feeling sad.

MOTHER: Well, there's one thing that can cheer you up.

BOY: What?

MOTHER: If you really tell your teacher that you tried your best, she wouldn't be mad at you. [Turning to father] We're not mad, are we?

FATHER: Oh, yes we are! Son, you better go right to your room.

I wish I could tell you he listened to his mother's growth-oriented message. But in our study, he seemed to heed the judgmental message of his dad, downgrading himself for his errors and having no good plan for fixing them. Yet at least he had his mother's effort message that he could, hopefully, put to use in the future.

Parents start interpreting and reacting to their child's behavior at minute one. A new mother tries to nurse her baby. The baby cries and won't nurse. Or takes a few sucks, gives up, and starts screaming. Is the baby stubborn? Is the baby deficient? After all, isn't nursing an inborn reflex? Aren't babies supposed to be "naturals" at nursing? What's wrong with my baby?

A new mother in this situation told me: "At first I got really frustrated. Then I kept your work in mind. I kept saying to my baby, 'We're both learning how to do this. I know you're hungry. I know it's frustrating, but we're learning.' This way of thinking helped me stay cool and guide her through till it worked. It also helped me understand my baby better so I knew how to teach her other things, too."

Don't judge. Teach. It's a learning process.

CHILDREN PASS ON THE MESSAGES

Another way we know that children learn these messages is that we can see how they pass them on. Even young children are ready to pass on the wisdom they've learned. We asked second-grade children: "What advice would you give to a child in your class who was having trouble in math?" Here's the advice from a child with the growth mindset:

> Do you quit a lot? Do you think for a minute and then stop? If you do, you should think for a long time—two minutes maybe and if you can't get it you should read the problem again. If you can't get it then, you should raise your hand and ask the teacher.

Isn't that the greatest? The advice from children with the fixed mindset was not nearly as useful. Since there's no recipe for success in the fixed mindset, their advice tended to be short and sweet. "I'm sorry" was the advice of one child as he offered his condolences.

Even *babies* can pass along the messages they've received. Mary Main and Carol George studied abused children, who had been judged and punished by their parents for crying or making a fuss. Abusive parents often don't understand that children's crying is a signal of their needs, or that babies can't stop crying on command. Instead, they judge the child as disobedient, willful, or bad for crying.

Main and George watched the abused children (who were one to three years old) in their day care setting, observing how they reacted when other children were in distress and crying. The abused children often became angry at the distressed children, and some even tried to assault them. They had gotten the message that children who cry are to be judged and punished.

We often think that the legacy of abuse gets passed on to others only when the victims of abuse become parents. But this amazing study shows that children learn lessons early and they act on them.

How did *non*abused children react to their distressed classmate, by the way? They showed sympathy. Many went over to the crying child to see what was wrong and to see if they could help out.

ISN'T DISCIPLINE TEACHING?

Many parents think that when they judge and punish, they *are* teaching, as in "I'll teach you a lesson you'll never forget." What are they teaching? They are teaching their children that if they go against the parents' rules or values, they'll be judged and punished. They're not teaching their children how to think through the issues and come to ethical, mature decisions on their own.

And chances are, they're not teaching their children that the channels of communication are open.

Sixteen-year-old Alyssa came to her mother and said that she and her friends wanted to try alcohol. Could she invite them over for a "cocktail party"? On the face of it, this might seem outrageous. But here's what Alyssa meant. She and her friends had been going to parties where alcohol was available, but they didn't want to try it in a setting where they didn't feel safe and in control. They also didn't want to drive home after drinking. They wanted to try it in a supervised setting, with their parents' permission, where their parents could come and pick them up afterward.

It doesn't matter whether Alyssa's parents said yes or no. They had a full discussion of the issues involved. They had a far more instructive discussion than what would have followed from an outraged, angry, and judgmental dismissal.

It's not that growth-minded parents indulge and coddle their children. Not at all. They set high standards, but they teach the children how to reach them. They say no, but it's a fair, thoughtful, and respectful no. Next time you're in a position to discipline, ask yourself, What is the message I'm sending here: *I will judge and punish you*? Or *I will help you think and learn*?

MINDSETS CAN BE A LIFE-AND-DEATH MATTER

Of course parents want the best for their children, but sometimes parents put their children in danger. As the director of undergraduate studies for my department at Columbia, I saw a lot of students in trouble. Here is the story of a great kid who almost didn't make it.

Sandy showed up in my office at Columbia one week before graduation. She wanted to change her major to psychology. This is basically a wacky request, but I sensed her desperation and listened carefully to her story. When I looked over her record, it was filled with A+'s and F's. What was going on?

Sandy had been groomed by her parents to go to Harvard. Because of their fixed mindset, the only goal of Sandy's education was to prove her worth and competence (and perhaps theirs) by gaining admission to Harvard. Going there would mean that she was truly intelligent. For them, it was not about

learning. It was not about pursuing her love of science. It was not even about making a great contribution. It was about the label. But she didn't get in. And she fell into a depression that had plagued her ever since. Sometimes she managed to work effectively (the A+'s), but sometimes she did not (the F's).

I knew that if I didn't help her she wouldn't graduate, and if she didn't graduate she wouldn't be able to face her parents. And if she couldn't face her parents, I didn't know what would happen.

I was legitimately able to help Sandy graduate, but that isn't really the point. It's a real tragedy to take a brilliant and wonderful kid like Sandy and crush her with the weight of these labels.

I hope these stories will teach parents to "want the best" for their children in the right way—by fostering their interests, growth, and learning.

WANTING THE BEST IN THE WORST WAY

Let's look more closely at the message from Sandy's parents: *We don't care about who you are, what you're interested in, and what you can become. We don't care about learning. We will love and respect you only if you go to Harvard.*

Mark's parents felt the same way. Mark was an exceptional math student, and as he finished junior high he was excited about going to Stuyvesant High School, a special high school in New York with a strong math-and-science curriculum. There, he would study math with the best teachers and talk math with the most advanced students in the city. Stuyvesant also had a program that would let him take college math courses at Columbia as soon as he was ready.

But at the last moment, his parents would not let him go. They had heard that it was hard to get into Harvard from Stuyvesant. So they made him go to a different high school.

It didn't matter that he wouldn't be able to pursue his interests or develop his talents as well. Only one thing mattered, and it starts with an *H.*

"WE LOVE YOU—ON OUR TERMS"

It's not just *I'm judging you.* It's *I'm judging you and I'll only love you if you succeed—on my terms.*

We've studied kids ranging from six years old to college age. Those with the fixed mindset feel their parents won't love and respect them unless they fulfill their parents' aspirations for them. The college students say:

"I often feel like my parents won't value me if I'm not as successful as they would like."

Or: "My parents say I can be anything I like, but deep down I feel they won't approve of me unless I pursue a profession they admire."

John McEnroe's father was like that. He was judgmental—everything was black-and-white—and he put on the pressure. "My parents pushed me….My dad was the one mainly. He seemed to live for my growing little junior career….I remember telling my dad that I wasn't enjoying it. I'd say, 'Do you have to come to every match? Do you have to come to this practice? Can't you take one off?' "

McEnroe brought his father the success he craved, but McEnroe didn't enjoy a moment of it. He says he enjoyed the *consequences* of his success—being at the top, the adulation, and the money. However, he says, "Many athletes seem truly to love to play their sport. I don't think I ever felt that way about tennis."

I think he did love it at the very beginning, because he talks about how at first he was fascinated by all the different ways you could hit a ball and create new shots. But we never hear about that kind of fascination again. Mr. McEnroe saw his boy was good at tennis and on went the pressure, the judgment, and the love that depended on his son's success.

Tiger Woods's father presents a contrast. There's no doubt that this guy is ambitious. He also sees his son as a chosen person with a God-given destiny, but he fostered Tiger's love of golf and raised Tiger to focus on growth and learning. "If Tiger had wanted to be a plumber, I wouldn't have minded, as long as he was a hell of a plumber. The goal was for him to be a good person. He's a great person." Tiger says in return, "My parents have been the biggest influence in my life. They taught me to give of myself, my time, talent, and, most of all, my love." This shows that you can have superinvolved parents

who still foster *the child's own growth,* rather than replacing it with their own pressure and judgments.

Dorothy DeLay, the famous violin teacher, encountered pressure-cooker parents all the time. Parents who cared more about talent, image, and labels than about the child's long-term learning.

One set of parents brought their eight-year-old boy to play for DeLay. Despite her warnings, they had made him memorize the Beethoven violin concerto. He was note-perfect, but he played like a frightened robot. They had, in fact, ruined his playing to suit their idea of talent, as in, "My eight-year-old can play the Beethoven violin concerto. What can yours do?"

DeLay spent countless hours with a mother who insisted it was time for her son to be signed by a fancy talent agency. But had she followed DeLay's advice? No. For quite a while, DeLay had been warning her that her son didn't have a large enough repertoire. Rather than heeding the expert advice and fostering her son's development, however, the mother refused to believe that anyone could turn down a talent like his for such a slight reason.

In sharp contrast was Yura Lee's mother. Mrs. Lee always sat serenely during Yura's lesson, without the tension and frantic note taking of some of the other parents. She smiled, she swayed to the music, she enjoyed herself. As a result, Yura did not develop the anxieties and insecurities that children with overinvested, judgmental parents do. Says Yura, "I'm always happy when I play."

IDEALS

Isn't it natural for parents to set goals and have ideals for their children? Yes, but some ideals are helpful and others are not. We asked college students to describe their ideal of a successful student. And we asked them to tell us how they thought they measured up to that ideal.

Students with the fixed mindset described ideals that could not be worked toward. You had it or you didn't.

"The ideal successful student is one who comes in with innate talent."

"Genius, physically fit and good at sports….They got there based on natural ability."

Did they think they measured up to their ideal? Mostly not. Instead, they said these ideals disrupted their thinking, made them procrastinate, made them give up, and made them stressed-out. They were demoralized by the ideal they could never hope to be.

Students with the growth mindset described ideals like these:

"A successful student is one whose primary goal is to expand their knowledge and their ways of thinking and investigating the world. They do not see grades as an end in themselves but as means to continue to grow."

Or: "The ideal student values knowledge for its own sake, as well as for its instrumental uses. He or she hopes to make a contribution to society at large."

Were they similar to their ideal? They were working toward it. "As similar as I can be—hey, it takes effort." Or: "I believed for many years that grades/tests were the most important thing but I am trying to move beyond that." Their ideals were inspiring to them.

When parents give their children a fixed-mindset ideal, they are asking them to fit the mold of the brilliant, talented child, or be deemed unworthy. There is no room for error. And there is no room for the children's individuality—their interests, their quirks, their desires and values. I can hardly count the times fixed-mindset parents have wrung their hands and told me how their children were rebelling or dropping out.

Haim Ginott describes Nicholas, age seventeen:

> In my father's mind there is a picture of an ideal son. When he compares him to me, he is deeply disappointed. I don't live up to my father's dream. Since early childhood, I sensed his disappointment. He tried to hide it, but it came out in a hundred little ways—in his tone, in his words, in his silence. He tried hard to make me a carbon copy of his dreams. When he failed he gave up on me. But he left a deep scar, a permanent feeling of failure.

When parents help their children construct growth-minded ideals, they are giving them something they can strive for. They are also giving their children growing room, room to grow into full human beings who will make their

contribution to society in a way that excites them. I have rarely heard a growth-minded parent say, “I am disappointed in my child.” Instead, with a beaming smile, they say, “I am amazed at the incredible person my child has become.”

Everything I’ve said about parents applies to teachers, too. But teachers have additional concerns. They face large classes of students with differing skills, whose past learning they’ve had no part in. What’s the best way to educate these students?

TEACHERS (AND PARENTS): WHAT MAKES A GREAT TEACHER (OR PARENT)?

Many educators think that lowering their standards will give students success experiences, boost their self-esteem, and raise their achievement. It comes from the same philosophy as the overpraising of students' intelligence. Well, it doesn't work. Lowering standards just leads to poorly educated students who feel entitled to easy work and lavish praise.

For thirty-five years, Sheila Schwartz taught aspiring English teachers. She tried to set high standards, especially since they were going to pass on their knowledge to generations of children. But they became indignant. "One student, whose writing was full of grammatical mistakes and misspellings," she says, "marched into my office with her husband from West Point—in a dress uniform, his chest covered with ribbons—because her feelings had been hurt by my insistence on correct spelling."

Another student was asked to summarize the theme of *To Kill a Mockingbird,* Harper Lee's novel about a southern lawyer fighting prejudice and (unsuccessfully) defending a black man accused of murder. The student insisted the theme was that "all people are basically nice." When Schwartz questioned that conclusion, the student left the class and reported her to the dean. Schwartz was reprimanded for having standards that were too high. Why, Schwartz asks, should the low standards of these future teachers be honored above the needs of the children they will one day teach?

On the other hand, simply raising standards in our schools, without giving students the means of reaching them, is a recipe for disaster. It just pushes the poorly prepared or poorly motivated students into failure and out of school.

Is there a way to set standards high *and* have students reach them?

In chapter 3, we saw in the work of Falko Rheinberg that teachers with the growth mindset brought many low achievers up into the high-achieving range. We saw in the growth-minded teaching of Jaime Escalante that inner-city high school students could learn college calculus, and in the growth-minded

teaching of Marva Collins that inner-city grade school children could read Shakespeare. In this chapter, we'll see more. We'll see *how* growth-oriented teaching unleashes children's minds.

I'll focus on three great teachers, two who worked with students who are considered "disadvantaged" and one who worked with students considered supertalented. What do these great teachers have in common?

Great Teachers

The great teachers believe in the growth of the intellect and talent, and they are fascinated with the process of learning.

Marva Collins taught Chicago children who had been judged and discarded. For many, her classroom was their last stop. One boy had been in and out of thirteen schools in four years. One stabbed children with pencils and had been thrown out of a mental health center. One eight-year-old would remove the blade from the pencil sharpener and cut up his classmates' coats, hats, gloves, and scarves. One child referred to killing himself in almost every sentence. One hit another student with a hammer on his first day. These children hadn't learned much in school, but everyone knew it was their own fault. Everyone but Collins.

When *60 Minutes* did a segment on Collins's classroom, Morley Safer tried his best to get a child to say he didn't like the school. "It's so hard here. There's no recess. There's no gym. They work you all day. You have only forty minutes for lunch. Why do you like it? It's just too hard." But the student replied, "That's why I like it, because it makes your brains bigger."

Chicago Sun-Times writer Zay Smith interviewed one of the children: "We do hard things here. They fill your brain."

As Collins looks back on how she got started, she says, "I have always been fascinated with learning, with the *process* of discovering something new, and it was exciting to share in the discoveries made by my…students." On the first day of school, she always promised her students—all students—that they would learn. She forged a contract with them.

"I know most of you can't spell your name. You don't know the alphabet, you don't know how to read, you don't know homonyms or how to syllabicate. I promise you that you will. None of you has ever failed. School may have failed you. Well, goodbye to failure, children. Welcome to success. You will read hard books in here and understand what you read. You will write every day….But you must help me to help you. If you don't give anything, don't expect anything. Success is not coming to you, you must come to it."

Her joy in her students' learning was enormous. As they changed from children who arrived with "toughened faces and glassed-over eyes" to children who were beginning to brim with enthusiasm, she told them, "I don't know what St. Peter has planned for me, but you children are giving me my heaven on earth."

Rafe Esquith teaches Los Angeles second graders from poor areas plagued with crime. Many live with people who have drug, alcohol, and emotional problems. Every day he tells his students that he is no smarter than they are—just more experienced. He constantly makes them see how much they have grown intellectually—how assignments that were once hard have become easier because of their practice and discipline.

Unlike Collins's school or Esquith's school, the Juilliard School of music accepts only the most talented students in the world. You would think the idea would be, *You're all talented, now let's get down to learning.* But if anything, the idea of talent and genius looms even larger there. In fact, many teachers mentally weeded out the students they weren't going to bother with. Except for Dorothy DeLay, the wondrous violin teacher of Itzhak Perlman, Midori, and Sarah Chang.

DeLay's husband always teased her about her "midwestern" belief that anything is possible. "Here is the empty prairie—let's build a city." That's exactly why she loved teaching. For her, teaching was about watching something grow before her very eyes. And the challenge was to figure out how to make it happen. If students didn't play in tune, it was because they hadn't learned how.

Her mentor and fellow teacher at Juilliard, Ivan Galamian, would say, "Oh, he has no ear. Don't waste your time." But she would insist on experimenting with different ways of changing that. (*How* can I do it?) And she usually found a way. As more and more students wanted a part of this mindset and as she "wasted" more and more of her time on these efforts, Galamian tried to get the president of Juilliard to fire her.

It's interesting. Both DeLay and Galamian valued talent, but Galamian believed that talent was inborn and DeLay believed that it was a quality that could be acquired. "I think it's too easy for a teacher to say, 'Oh this child wasn't born with it, so I won't waste my time.' Too many teachers hide their own lack of ability behind that statement."

DeLay gave her all to every one of her students. Itzhak Perlman was her student and so was his wife, Toby, who says that very few teachers get even a fraction of an Itzhak Perlman in a lifetime. “She got the whole thing, but I don’t believe she gave him more than she gave me…and I believe I am just one of many, many such people.” Once DeLay was asked, about another student, why she gave so much time to a pupil who showed so little promise. “I think she has something special….It’s in her person. There is some kind of dignity.” If DeLay could get her to put it into her playing, that student would be a special violinist.

High Standards and a Nurturing Atmosphere

Great teachers set high standards for all their students, not just the ones who are already achieving. Marva Collins set extremely high standards, right from the start. She introduced words and concepts that were, at first, way above what her students could grasp. Yet she established on Day One an atmosphere of genuine affection and concern as she promised students they would produce: "I'm gonna love you…I love you already, and I'm going to love you even when you don't love yourself," she said to the boy who wouldn't try.

Do teachers have to love all of their students? No, but they have to care about every single student.

Teachers with the fixed mindset create an atmosphere of judging. These teachers look at students' beginning performance and decide who's smart and who's dumb. Then they give up on the "dumb" ones. "They're not *my* responsibility."

These teachers don't believe in improvement, so they don't try to create it. Remember the fixed-mindset teachers in chapter 3 who said:

"According to my experience students' achievement mostly remains constant in the course of a year."

"As a teacher I have no influence on students' intellectual ability."

This is how stereotypes work. Stereotypes tell teachers which groups are bright and which groups are not. So teachers with the fixed mindset know which students to give up on before they've even met them.

More on High Standards and a Nurturing Atmosphere

When Benjamin Bloom studied his 120 world-class concert pianists, sculptors, swimmers, tennis players, mathematicians, and research neurologists, he found something fascinating. For most of them, their first teachers were incredibly warm and accepting. Not that they set low standards. Not at all, but they created an atmosphere of trust, not judgment. It was, "I'm going to teach you," not "I'm going to judge your talent."

As you look at what Collins and Esquith demanded of their students—all their students—it's almost shocking. When Collins expanded her school to include young children, she required that every four-year-old who started in September be reading by Christmas. And they all were. The three- and four-year-olds used a vocabulary book titled *Vocabulary for the High School Student.* The seven-year-olds were reading *The Wall Street Journal.* For older children, a discussion of Plato's *Republic* led to discussions of de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America,* Orwell's *Animal Farm,* Machiavelli, and the Chicago city council. Her reading list for the late-grade-school children included *The Complete Plays of Anton Chekhov, Physics Through Experiment,* and *The Canterbury Tales.* Oh, and always Shakespeare. Even the boys who picked their teeth with switchblades, she says, loved Shakespeare and always begged for more.

Yet Collins maintained an extremely nurturing atmosphere. A very strict and disciplined one, but a loving one. Realizing that her students were coming from teachers who made a career of telling them what was wrong with them, she quickly made known her complete commitment to them as her students and as people.

Esquith bemoans the lowering of standards. Recently, he tells us, his school celebrated reading scores that were twenty points below the national average. Why? Because they were a point or two higher than the year before. "Maybe it's important to look for the good and be optimistic," he says, "but delusion is not the answer. Those who celebrate failure will not be around to help today's students celebrate their jobs flipping burgers….Someone has to

tell children if they are behind, and lay out a plan of attack to help them catch up."

All of his fifth graders master a reading list that includes *Of Mice and Men, Native Son, Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, The Joy Luck Club, The Diary of Anne Frank, To Kill a Mockingbird,* and *A Separate Peace.* Every one of his sixth graders passes an algebra final that would reduce most eighth and ninth graders to tears. But again, all is achieved in an atmosphere of affection and deep personal commitment to every student.

"Challenge and nurture" describes DeLay's approach, too. One of her former students expresses it this way: "That is part of Miss DeLay's genius—to put people in the frame of mind where they can do their best….Very few teachers can actually get you to your ultimate potential. Miss DeLay has that gift. She challenges you at the same time that you feel you are being nurtured."

Hard Work and More Hard Work

But are challenge and love enough? Not quite. All great teachers teach students *how* to reach the high standards. Collins and Esquith didn't hand their students a reading list and wish them *bon voyage.* Collins's students read and discussed every line of *Macbeth* in class. Esquith spent hours planning what chapters they would read in class. "I know which child will handle the challenge of the most difficult paragraphs, and carefully plan a passage for the shy youngster…who will begin his journey as a good reader. Nothing is left to chance….It takes enormous energy, but to be in a room with young minds who hang on every word of a classic book and beg for more if I stop makes all the planning worthwhile."

What are they teaching the students en route? To love learning. To eventually learn and think for themselves. And to work hard on the fundamentals. Esquith's class often met before school, after school, and on school vacations to master the fundamentals of English and math, especially as the work got harder. His motto: "There are no shortcuts." Collins echoes that idea as she tells her class, "There is no magic here. Mrs. Collins is no miracle worker. I do not walk on water, I do not part the sea. I just love children and work harder than a lot of people, and so will you."

DeLay expected a lot from her students, but she, too, guided them there. Most students are intimidated by the idea of talent, and it keeps them in a fixed mindset. But DeLay demystified talent. One student was sure he couldn't play a piece as fast as Itzhak Perlman. So she didn't let him see the metronome until he had achieved it. "I know so surely that if he had been handling that metronome, as he approached that number he would have said to himself, I can never do this as fast as Itzhak Perlman, and he would have stopped himself."

Another student was intimidated by the beautiful sound made by talented violinists. "We were working on my sound, and there was this one note I played, and Miss DeLay stopped me and said, 'Now *that* is a beautiful sound.'" She then explained how every note has to have a beautiful beginning, middle, and end, leading into the next note. And he thought,

“Wow! If I can do it there, I can do it everywhere.” Suddenly the beautiful sound of Perlman made sense and was not just an overwhelming concept.

When students don’t know how to do something and others do, the gap seems unbridgeable. Some educators try to reassure their students that they’re just fine as they are. Growth-minded teachers tell students the truth and then give them the tools to close the gap. As Marva Collins said to a boy who was clowning around in class, “You are in sixth grade and your reading score is 1.1. I don’t hide your scores in a folder. I tell them to you so you know what you have to do. Now your clowning days are over.” Then they got down to work.

Students Who Don't Care

What about students who won't work, who don't care to learn? Here is a shortened version of an interaction between Collins and Gary, a student who refused to work, ripped up his homework assignments, and would not participate in class. Collins is trying to get him to go to the blackboard to do some problems:

COLLINS: Sweetheart, what are you going to do? Use your life or throw it away?

GARY: I'm not gonna do any damn work.

COLLINS: I am not going to give up on you. I am not going to let you give up on yourself. If you sit there leaning against this wall all day, you are going to end up leaning on something or someone all your life. And all that brilliance bottled up inside you will go to waste.

At that, Gary agreed to go to the board, but then refused to address the work there. After a while Collins said:

"If you do not want to participate, go to the telephone and tell your mother, 'Mother, in this school we have to learn, and Mrs. Collins says I can't fool around, so will you please pick me up.' "

Gary started writing. Eventually, Gary became an eager participant and an avid writer. Later that year, the class was discussing Macbeth and how his misguided thinking led him to commit murder. "It's sort of like Socrates says, isn't it, Miss Collins?" Gary piped up. "Macbeth should have known that 'Straight thinking leads to straight living.' " For a class assignment, he wrote, "Somnus, god of sleep, please awaken us. While we sleep, ignorance takes over the world….Take your spell off us. We don't have long before ignorance makes a coup d'état of the world."

When teachers are judging them, students will sabotage the teacher by not trying. But when students understand that school is for them—a way for them to grow their minds—they do not insist on sabotaging themselves.

In my work, I have seen tough guys shed tears when they realize they can become smarter. It's common for students to turn off to school and adopt an air of indifference, but we make a mistake if we think any student stops caring.

Growth-Minded Teachers: Who Are These People?

How can growth-minded teachers be so selfless, devoting untold hours to the worst students? Are they just saints? Is it reasonable to expect that everyone can become a saint? The answer is that they're not entirely selfless. They love to learn. And teaching is a wonderful way to learn. About people and how they tick. About what you teach. About yourself. And about life.

Fixed-minded teachers often think of themselves as finished products. Their role is simply to impart their knowledge. But doesn't that get boring year after year? Standing before yet another crowd of faces and imparting. Now, that's hard.

Seymour Sarason was a professor of mine when I was in graduate school. He was a wonderful educator, and he always told us to question assumptions. "There's an assumption," he said, "that schools are for students' learning. Well, why aren't they just as much for teachers' learning?" I never forgot that. In all of my teaching, I think about what *I* find fascinating and what *I* would love to learn more about. I use my teaching to grow, and that makes me, even after all these years, a fresh and eager teacher.

One of Marva Collins's first mentors taught her the same thing—that, above all, a good teacher is one who continues to learn along with the students. And she let her students know that right up front: "Sometimes I don't like other grown-ups very much because they think they know everything. I don't know everything. I can learn all the time."

It's been said that Dorothy DeLay was an extraordinary teacher because she was not interested in teaching. She was interested in learning.

So, are great teachers born or made? Can anyone be a Collins, Esquith, or DeLay? It starts with the growth mindset—about yourself and about children. Not just lip service to the idea that all children can learn, but a deep desire to reach in and ignite the mind of every child. Michael Lewis, in *The New York Times,* tells of a coach who did this for him. "I had a new taste for…extra work…and it didn't take long to figure out how much better my life could be if I applied this new zeal acquired on a baseball field to the rest of it. It was as

if this baseball coach had reached inside me, found a rusty switch marked Turn On Before Attempting to Use and flipped it."

Coaches are teachers, too, but their students' successes and failures are played out in front of crowds, published in the newspapers, and written into the record books. Their jobs rest on producing winners. Let's look closely at three legendary coaches to see their mindsets in action.

COACHES: WINNING THROUGH MINDSET

Everyone who knows me well laughs when I say someone is complicated. "What do you think of so-and-so?" "Oh, he's complicated." It's usually not a compliment. It means that so-and-so may be capable of great charm, warmth, and generosity, but there's an undercurrent of ego that can erupt at any time. You never really know when you can trust him.

The fixed mindset makes people complicated. It makes them worried about their fixed traits and creates the need to document them, sometimes at your expense. And it makes them judgmental.

The Fixed-Mindset Coach in Action

Bobby Knight, the famous and controversial college basketball coach, is complicated. He could be unbelievably kind. One time he passed up an important and lucrative opportunity to be a sportscaster, because a former player of his had been in a bad accident. Knight rushed to his side and saw him through the ordeal.

He could be extremely gracious. After the basketball team he coached won the Olympic gold medal, he insisted that the team pay homage first and foremost to Coach Henry Iba. Iba had never been given proper respect for his Olympic accomplishments, and in whatever way he could, Knight wanted to make up for it. He had the team carry Coach Iba around the floor on their shoulders.

Knight cared greatly about his players' academic records. He wanted them to get an education, and he had a firm rule against missing classes or tutoring sessions.

But he could also be cruel, and this cruelty came from the fixed mindset. John Feinstein, author of *Season on the Brink,* a book about Knight and his team, tells us: "Knight was incapable of accepting failure. Every defeat was personal; *his* team lost, a team *he* had selected and coached….Failure on any level all but destroyed him, especially failure in coaching because it was coaching that gave him his identity, made him special, set him apart." A loss made him a failure, obliterated his identity. So when he was your coach—when your wins and losses measured him—he was mercilessly judgmental. His demeaning of players who let him down was, hopefully, without parallel.

In Daryl Thomas, Feinstein says, "Knight saw a player of huge potential. Thomas had what coaches call a 'million dollar body.'" He was big and strong, but also fast. He could shoot the ball with his left hand or his right hand. Knight couldn't live with the thought that Thomas and his million-dollar body weren't bringing the team success:

"You know what you are Daryl? You are the worst f_pussy I've ever seen play basketball at this school. The absolute worst pussy ever. You have more goddam ability than 95 percent of the players we've had here but you are a

pussy from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. An absolute f pussy. That's my assessment of you after three years."

To make a similar point, Knight once put a Tampax in a player's locker.

Thomas was a sensitive guy. An assistant coach had given this advice: When he's calling you an asshole, don't listen. But when he starts telling you *why* you're an asshole, listen. That way, you'll get better. Thomas couldn't follow that advice. He heard everything, and, after the tirade, he broke down right there on the basketball court.

The ax of judgment came down on players who had the audacity to lose a game. Often Knight did not let the guilty parties ride back home with the rest of the team. They were no longer worthy of respectful treatment. One time, after his team reached the semifinals of a national tournament (but not *the* national tournament), he was asked by an interviewer what he liked best about the team. "What I like best about this team right now," Knight answered, "is the fact that I only have to watch it play one more time."

Some players could take it better than others. Steve Alford, who went on to have a professional career, had come to Indiana with clear goals in mind and was able to maintain a strong growth focus much of the time. He was able to hear and use Knight's wisdom and, for the most part, ignore the obscene or demeaning parts of the tirades. But even he describes how the team broke down under the yoke of Knight's judgments, and how he himself became so personally unhappy at some points that he lost his zest for the sport.

"The atmosphere was poisonous….When I had been playing well I had always stayed upbeat, no matter how much Coach yelled….But now his negativism, piled on top of my own, was drowning me….Mom and Dad were concerned. They could see the love of the game going out of me."

THE HOLY GRAIL: NO MISTAKES

Says Alford, "Coach's Holy Grail was the mistake-free game." Uh-oh. We know which mindset makes mistakes intolerable. And Knight's explosions were legendary. There was the time he threw the chair across the court. There was the time he yanked his player off the court by his jersey. There was the time he grabbed his player by the neck. He often tried to justify his

behavior by saying he was toughening the team up, preparing them to play under pressure. But the truth is, he couldn't control himself. Was the chair a teaching exercise? Was the chokehold educational?

He motivated his players, not through respect for them, but through intimidation—through fear. They feared his judgments and explosions. Did it work?

Sometimes it "worked." He had three championship teams. In the "season on the brink" described by John Feinstein, the team did not have size, experience, or quickness, but they were contenders. They won twenty-one games, thanks to Knight's great basketball knowledge and coaching skills.

But other times, it didn't work. Individual players or the team as a whole broke down. In the season on the brink, they collapsed at the end of the season. The year before, too, the team had collapsed under Knight's pressure. Over the years, some players had escaped by transferring to other schools, by breaking the rules (like cutting classes or skipping tutoring sessions), or by going early to the pros, like Isiah Thomas. On a world tour, the players often sat around fantasizing about where they *should* have gone to school, if they hadn't made the mistake of choosing Indiana.

It's not that Knight had a fixed mindset about his players' ability. He firmly believed in their capacity to develop. But he had a fixed mindset about himself and his coaching ability. The team was his product, and they had to prove his ability every time out. They were not allowed to lose games, make mistakes, or question him in any way, because that would reflect on his competence. Nor did he seem to analyze his motivational strategies when they weren't working. Maybe Daryl Thomas needed another kind of incentive aside from ridicule or humiliation.

What are we to make of this complicated man as a mentor to young players? His biggest star, Isiah Thomas, expresses his profound ambivalence about Knight. "You know there were times when if I had a gun, I think I would have shot him. And there were other times when I wanted to put my arms around him, hug him, and tell him I loved him."

I would not consider myself an unqualified success if my best student had considered shooting me.

The Growth-Mindset Coach in Action

A COACH FOR ALL SEASONS

Coach John Wooden produced one of the greatest championships records in sports. He led the UCLA basketball team to the NCAA Championship in 1964, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, and 1975. There were seasons when his team was undefeated, and they once had an eighty-eight-game winning streak. All this I sort of knew.

What I didn't know was that when Wooden arrived at UCLA, it was a far cry from a basketball dynasty. In fact, he didn't want to work at UCLA at all. He wanted to go to Minnesota. It was arranged that Minnesota would phone him at six o'clock on a certain evening to tell him if he had the job. He told UCLA to call him at seven. No one called at six, six thirty, or even six forty-five, so when UCLA called at seven, he said yes. No sooner had he hung up than the call from Minnesota came. A storm had messed up the phone lines and prevented the six o'clock phone call with the job offer from getting through.

UCLA had grossly inadequate facilities. For his first sixteen years, Wooden held practice in a crowded, dark, and poorly ventilated gym, known as the B.O. Barn because of the atmospheric effect of the sweating bodies. In the same gym, there were often wrestling matches, gymnastics training, trampoline jumping, and cheerleading workouts going on alongside basketball practice.

There was also no place for the games. For the first few years, they had to use the B.O. Barn, and then for fourteen more years, they had to travel around the region borrowing gyms from schools and towns.

Then there were the players. When he put them through their first practice, he was shattered. They were so bad that if he'd had an honorable way to back out of the job, he would have. The press had (perceptively) picked his team to finish last in their division, but Wooden went to work, and this laughable team did not finish last. It won the division title, with twenty-two wins and seven losses for the season. The next year, they went to the NCAA play-offs.

What did he give them? He gave them constant training in the basic skills, he gave them conditioning, and he gave them mindset.

THE HOLY GRAIL: FULL PREPARATION AND FULL EFFORT

Wooden was *not* complicated. He was wise and interesting, but not complicated. He was just a straight-ahead growth-mindset guy who lived by this rule: "You have to apply yourself each day to becoming a little better. By applying yourself to the task of becoming a little better each and every day over a period of time, you will become a *lot* better."

He didn't ask for mistake-free games. He didn't demand that his players never lose. He asked for full preparation and full effort from them. "Did I win? Did I lose? Those are the wrong questions. The correct question is: Did I make my best effort?" If so, he says, "You may be outscored but *you will never lose.*"

He was not a softy. He did not tolerate coasting. If the players were coasting during practice, he turned out the lights and left: "Gentlemen, practice is over." They had lost their opportunity to become better that day.

EQUAL TREATMENT

Like DeLay, Wooden gave equal time and attention to all of his players, regardless of their initial skills. They, in turn, gave all, and blossomed. Here is Wooden talking about two new players when they arrived at UCLA: "I looked at each one to see what he had and then said to myself, 'Oh gracious, if he can make a real contribution, a *playing* contribution, to our team then we must be pretty lousy.' However, what I couldn't see was what these men had inside." Both gave just about everything they could possibly give and both became starters, one as the starting center on a national championship team.

He respected all players equally. You know how some players' numbers are retired after they move on, in homage to their greatness? No player's number was retired while Wooden was coach, although he had some of the greatest players of all time, like Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Bill Walton. Later on,

when their numbers were retired, he was against it. “Other fellows who played on our team also wore those numbers. Some of those other players gave me close to everything they had….The jersey and the number on it never belong to just one single player, no matter how great or how big a ‘star’ that particular player is. It goes against the whole concept of what a team is.”

Wait a minute. He was in the business of winning games. Don’t you have to go with your talented players and give less to the second stringers? Well, he didn’t *play* all players equally, but he gave to all players equally. For example, when he recruited another player the same year as Bill Walton, he told him that he would play very little in actual games because of Walton. But he promised him, “By the time you graduate you’ll get a pro contract. You’ll be that good.” By his third year, the player was giving Bill Walton all he could handle in practice. And when he turned pro, he was named rookie of the year in his league.

PREPARING PLAYERS FOR LIFE

Was Wooden a genius, a magician able to turn mediocre players into champions? Actually, he admits that in terms of basketball tactics and strategies, he was quite average. What he was really good at was analyzing and motivating his players. With these skills he was able to help his players fulfill their potential, not just in basketball, but in life—something he found even more rewarding than winning games.

Did Wooden’s methods work? Aside from the ten championship titles, we have the testimony of his players, none of whom refer to firearms.

Bill Walton, Hall of Famer: “Of course, the real competition he was preparing us for was life….He taught us the values and characteristics that could make us not only good players, but also good people.”

Denny Crum, successful coach: “I can’t imagine what my life would have been had Coach Wooden not been my guiding light. As the years pass, I appreciate him more and more and can only pray that I can have half as much influence on the young people I coach as he has had on me.”

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Hall of Famer: “The wisdom of Coach Wooden had a profound influence on me as an athlete, but an even greater influence on

me as a human being. He is responsible, in part, for the person I am today."

Listen to this story.

It was the moment of victory. UCLA had just won its first national championship. But Coach Wooden was worried about Fred Slaughter, a player who had started every game and had had a brilliant year up until this final, championship game. The game had not been going well, and, as it got worse and worse, Wooden felt a change had to made. So he pulled Fred. The replacement player did a great job, and Wooden left him in until the game was virtually won.

The victory was a peak moment. Not only had they just won their first NCAA title by beating Duke, but they had ended the season with thirty wins and zero losses. Yet Wooden's concern for Fred dampened his euphoria. As Wooden left the press conference and went to find Fred, he opened the door to the dressing room. Fred was waiting for him. "Coach…I want you to know I understand. You had to leave Doug in there because he played so well, and I didn't. I wanted to play in the worst way, but I do understand, and if anyone says I was upset, it's not true. Disappointed, yes, but upset, no. And I was very happy for Doug."

"There are coaches out there," Wooden says, "who have won championships with the dictator approach, among them Vince Lombardi and Bobby Knight. I had a different philosophy….For me, concern, compassion, and consideration were always priorities of the highest order."

Read the story of Fred Slaughter again and you tell me whether, under the same circumstances, Coach Knight would have rushed to console Daryl Thomas. And would Knight have allowed Thomas to reach down to find his pride, dignity, and generosity in his moment of disappointment?

Which Is the Enemy: Success or Failure?

Pat Summitt was the coach of the Tennessee women's basketball team, the Lady Vols. She coached them to eight national championships. She didn't come into the game with Wooden's philosophical attitude, but was at first more Knight-like in her stance. Every time the team lost, she couldn't let go of it. She continued to live it, beating it to death and torturing herself and the team with it. Then she graduated to a love–hate relationship with losing. Emotionally, it still made her feel sick. But she loved what it did. It forces everyone, players and coaches, to develop a more complete game. It was success that had become the enemy.

Wooden calls it being "infected" with success. Pat Riley, former coach of the championship Los Angeles Lakers team, calls it the "disease of me"—thinking *you* are the success, and chucking the discipline and the work that got you there. Summitt explained, "Success lulls you. It makes the most ambitious of us complacent and sloppy." As Summitt spoke, Tennessee had won five NCAA Championships, but only *once* when they were favored to win. "On every other occasion, we were upset. We've lost as many as four or five titles that we were predicted to win."

After the 1996 championship, the team was complacent. The older players were the national champions, and the new players expected to be swept to victory merely by being at Tennessee. It was a disaster. They began to lose and lose badly. On December 15, they were crushed by Stanford on their own home court. A few games later, they were crushed again. Now they had five losses and everyone had given up on them. The North Carolina coach, meaning to comfort Summitt, told her, "Well, just hang in there 'til next year." HBO had come to Tennessee to film a documentary, but now the producers were looking for another team. Even her assistants were thinking they wouldn't make it into the March championship play-offs.

So before the next game, Summitt met with the team for five hours. That night, they played Old Dominion, the second-ranked team in the country. For the first time that season, they gave all. But they lost again. It was devastating. They had invested, gone for it, and still lost. Some were sobbing so hard, they

couldn't speak, or even breathe. "Get your heads up," Summitt told them. "If you give effort like this all the time, if you fight like this, I'm telling you, I *promise* you, we'll be there in March." Two months later they were the national champions.

Conclusion? Beware of success. It can knock you into a fixed mindset: "I won because I have talent. Therefore I will keep winning." Success can infect a team or it can infect an individual. Alex Rodriguez, the baseball star, was not infected with success. "You never stay the same," he says. "You either go one way or the other."

FALSE GROWTH MINDSET

I have seen many parents, teachers, and coaches apply growth-mindset concepts in the most spectacular ways, with wonderful results. Using mindset principles, many schools and sports teams have risen to the top—they've been recognized for their outstanding culture of learning (and teamwork) and for their exceptional achievements. Needless to say, this has been extremely gratifying.

Then, a couple of years ago, my colleague in Australia, Susan Mackie, told me she was seeing an outbreak—of "false growth mindset." I didn't know what she was talking about. In fact, I was a bit irritated. Isn't a growth mindset a pretty simple and straightforward idea? Why would anyone have a false growth mindset if they could have a real one?

But she had planted the seed, and as I went about my business, I soon realized what she meant. Some parents, teachers, and coaches were indeed misunderstanding the mindset ideas. All at once I became determined to understand their misunderstandings and to figure out how to correct them. So let's take a closer look at 1) what a growth mindset is and is not, 2) how to achieve it, and 3) how to pass it on to others.

What a Growth Mindset Is and Is Not

A growth mindset is about believing people can develop their abilities. It's that simple. It can have many repercussions, but that's what it is at its core. Nonetheless, many people project a different meaning onto it.

Misunderstanding #1. Many people take what they like about themselves and call it a "growth mindset." If they're open-minded or flexible, they say they have a growth mindset. I often hear people calling it an "open mindset." But there's a difference between being flexible or open-minded and being dedicated to growing talent. And if people drift away from the actual meaning of a growth mindset, they drift away from its benefits. They can bask in their own wonderful qualities but they may never do the hard work of cultivating their own abilities or the abilities of their children or students.

Misunderstanding #2. Many people believe that a growth mindset is only about effort, especially praising effort. I talked earlier about how praising the process children engage in—their hard work, strategies, focus, perseverance—can foster a growth mindset. In this way, children learn that the process they engage in brings about progress and learning, and that their learning does not just magically flow from some innate ability.

The first important thing to remember here is that the *process* includes more than just effort. Certainly, we want children to appreciate the fruits of hard work. But we also want them to understand the importance of trying new strategies when the one they're using isn't working. (We don't want them to just try harder with the same ineffective strategy.) And we want them to ask for help or input from others when it's needed. This is the *process* we want them to appreciate: hard work, trying new strategies, and seeking input from others.

Another pitfall is praising effort (or any part of the process) that's not there. More than once, parents have said to me, "I praise my child's effort but it's not working." I immediately ask, "Was your child *actually* trying hard?" "Well, not really," comes the sheepish reply. We should never think that praising a process that is not there will bring good results.

But a problem that's of even greater concern to me is the fact that some teachers and coaches are using effort praise as a consolation prize when kids are *not* learning. If a student has tried hard and made little or no progress, we can of course appreciate their effort, but we should never be content with effort that is not yielding further benefits. We need to figure out *why* that effort is not effective and guide kids toward other strategies and resources that can help them resume learning.

Recently, someone asked me, "What keeps you up at night?" And I said, "It's the fear that the mindset concept will be used to make kids feel good when they're not learning—just like the failed self-esteem movement." The growth mindset is meant to help kids learn, not to paper over the fact that they are not learning.

Finally, when people realize I'm the mindset person, they often say, "Oh, yea! Praise the process not the outcome, right?" Well, not quite. This is such a common misconception. In all of our research on praise, we indeed praise the process, but we *tie it to the outcome,* that is, to children's learning, progress, or achievements. Children need to understand that engaging in that process helped them learn.

Not long ago, a mother told me how very frustrating it was that she was not allowed to praise her daughter when the child did something wonderful—that she could only praise her when she was struggling. No! No! No! *Of course* you can appreciate your children's wonderful accomplishments, but then tie those accomplishments to the process they engaged in.

And remember, we don't have to always be praising. Inquiring about the child's process and just showing interest in it goes a very long way.

Misunderstanding #3. A growth mindset equals telling kids they can do anything. Many's the time I've heard educators say, "I've always had a growth mindset. I always tell my students, 'You can do anything!' " Few people believe in children's potential as much as I do, or yearn to see all children fulfill their enormous promise. But it doesn't happen by simply telling them, "You can do anything." It happens by helping them gain the skills and find the resources to make progress toward their goals. Otherwise, it's an empty reassurance. It puts the onus entirely on the student and may make them feel like a failure if they *don't* reach their goals.

One final word about putting the onus on the student. It broke my heart to learn that some educators and coaches were blaming kids for having a fixed mindset—scolding or criticizing them for not displaying growth-mindset qualities. Notice that these adults were absolving themselves of the responsibility, not only for teaching a growth mindset but also for the child's learning: "I can't teach this child. He has a fixed mindset." Let's be totally clear here. We as educators must take seriously our responsibility to create growth-mindset-friendly environments—where kids feel safe from judgment, where they understand that we believe in their potential to grow, and where they know that we are totally dedicated to collaborating with them on their learning. We are in the business of helping kids thrive, not finding reasons why they can't.

How Do You Get a (True) Growth Mindset?

You don't get a growth mindset by proclamation. You move toward it by taking a journey.

As a growth mindset gained currency and became the "correct" way to think in some quarters, more and more people claimed to have it. It sort of makes sense. Don't we all want to see ourselves as enlightened people who help children fulfill their potential? A noted educator told me that it had become politically incorrect for educators to even talk about (and maybe even think about) having a fixed mindset in any area. And a principal told me that he was recently giving some mild suggestions to a teacher when she looked at him indignantly and said, "Are you implying I have a fixed mindset?"

Although for simplicity I've talked as though some people *have* a growth mindset and some people *have* a fixed mindset, in truth we're all a mixture of the two. There's no point denying it. Sometimes we're in one mindset and sometimes we're in the other. Our task then becomes to understand what triggers our fixed mindset. What are the events or situations that take us to a place where we feel our (or other people's) abilities are fixed? What are the events or situations that take us to a place of judgment rather than to a place of development?

What happens when our fixed-mindset "persona" shows up—the character within who warns us to avoid challenges and beats us up when we fail at something? How does that persona make us feel? What does it make us think and how does it make us act? How do those thoughts, feelings, and actions affect us and those around us? And, most important, what can we do over time to keep that persona from interfering with our growth and that of our children? How can we persuade that fixed-mindset persona to get on board with the goals that spring from our growth mindset?

I'll address these questions in the final chapter as we examine the process of personal change. What I will emphasize here is that it is a long journey, one that takes commitment and persistence. But once we acknowledge that we all have recurrent fixed mindsets, we can talk to one another openly. We can talk about our fixed-mindset personas, when they show up, how they

affect us, and how we're learning to deal with them. And as we do, we will realize that we have lots of fellow travelers on our journey.

How Do You Pass a Growth Mindset On?

You would think that once adults adopted more of a growth mindset they would automatically pass it on to kids. It would simply ooze out in their words and deeds. That's what we thought, but it's not what we're finding. Many adults are not passing on their growth mindsets. How is that possible?

First, let's look at the findings. In a number of studies, we and researchers looked at the mindsets of parents and their children. In each case, many parents held a growth mindset, but they were not necessarily passing it on to their children. In other studies, researchers looked at the mindsets of teachers and their students. In each case, many teachers held a growth mindset, but they were not necessarily passing it on to their students. Something else was going on.

Of course, it's possible that some of these parents or teachers had false growth mindsets. But beyond that, we're finding something fascinating. Adults' mindsets are in their heads and are not directly visible to children. Adults' overt actions speak far louder, and this is what children are picking up on. Unfortunately, these actions often don't line up with the growth mindsets in adults' heads. So what are the actions that convey the different mindsets?

First, no surprise, it's the praise. Parents' praise molds their children's mindsets. It's interesting that this doesn't necessarily line up with the parents' mindsets. Even parents who hold a growth mindset can find themselves praising their child's ability—and neglecting to focus on their child's learning process. It can be hard to shake the idea that telling kids they're smart will build their confidence.

Second, it's the way adults respond to children's mistakes or failures. When a child has a setback and the parent reacts with anxiety or with concern about the child's ability, this fosters more of a fixed mindset in the child. The parent may try to gloss over the child's failure but the very act of doing so may convey that the failure is an issue. So, although parents may hold a growth mindset, they may still display worry about their child's confidence or morale when the child stumbles.

It's the parents who respond to their children's setbacks with interest and treat them as opportunities for learning who are transmitting a growth mindset to their children. These parents think setbacks are good things that should be embraced, and that setbacks should be used as a platform for learning. They address the setback head-on and talk to their children about the next steps for learning.

In other words, every single day parents are teaching their children whether mistakes, obstacles, and setbacks are bad things or good things. The parents who treat them as good things are more likely to pass on a growth mindset to their children.

Third, passing on a growth mindset is about whether teachers are teaching for understanding or are simply asking students to memorize facts, rules, and procedures. Research is showing that when teachers care about deeper understanding and work with students to achieve it, then students are more likely to believe that their abilities can be developed. One study found that when math teachers taught for conceptual understanding, gave feedback that deepened students' understanding, and then allowed students to revise their work (to experience and show their deeper understanding), their students moved toward a growth mindset in math. These students believed they could develop their basic mathematical ability.

On the other hand, when teachers thought of math as just a set of rules and procedures to memorize, they could emphasize the importance of effort or persistence, but students could not feel their abilities growing and did not tend to move toward a growth mindset. By the way, many of these teachers used the words "growth mindset" in their classrooms, but their teaching methods—their actions—did not foster that growth mindset in their students.

Other studies paint a similar picture. In one study, high school students talked about their math teachers. Some of them said that when they were stuck, their teacher sat down with them and said things like this: "Show me what you've done, let's try to understand how you're thinking, and then let's figure out what you should try next." The students who were treated like this —as though understanding was of paramount importance and could be achieved with support from the teacher—were moving toward a growth mindset in math.

Yet in this era of high-stakes testing, much teaching emphasizes memorization of facts, rules, and procedures to "insure" that students do well on the all-important tests. As we have seen, this may promote more fixed mindsets and perhaps, ironically, undermine students' performance on these very tests. There is nothing like deep learning to insure good outcomes.

Sadly, in this atmosphere many students are coming to equate learning with memorizing. I am hearing from many researchers and educators that students across the economic spectrum are becoming increasingly unable to grasp the difference between memorizing facts, rules, and procedures and truly understanding the concepts underlying the material. Aside from the bad news for growth mindsets, this also has disturbing implications for our nation. Great contributions to society are born of curiosity and deep understanding. If students no longer recognize and value deep learning, where will the great contributions of the future come from?

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We were initially surprised to find that many adults with growth mindsets were not passing them on. However, the moral of this story is that parents, teachers, and coaches pass on a growth mindset not by having a belief sitting in their heads but by embodying a growth mindset in their deeds: the way they praise (conveying the processes that lead to learning), the way they treat setbacks (as opportunities for learning), and the way they focus on deepening understanding (as the goal of learning).

OUR LEGACY

As parents, teachers, and coaches, we are entrusted with people's lives. They are our responsibility and our legacy. We now know that the growth mindset has a key role to play in helping *us* fulfill our mission and in helping *them* fulfill their potential.

Grow Your Mindset

- Every word and action from parent to child sends a message. Tomorrow, listen to what you say to your kids and tune in to the messages you're sending. Are they messages that say: *You have permanent traits and I'm judging them*? Or are they messages that say *You're a developing person and I'm interested in your development*?
- How do you use praise? Remember that praising children's intelligence or talent, tempting as it is, sends a fixed-mindset message. It makes their confidence and motivation more fragile. Instead, try to focus on the *processes* they used—their strategies, effort, or choices. Practice working the process praise into your interactions with your children.
- Watch and listen to yourself carefully when your child messes up. Remember that constructive criticism is feedback that helps the child understand how to fix something. It's not feedback that labels or simply excuses the child. At the end of each day, write down the constructive criticism (and the process praise) you've given your kids.
- Parents often set goals their children can work toward. Remember that having innate talent is not a goal. Expanding skills and knowledge is. Pay careful attention to the goals you set for your children.
- If you're a teacher, remember that lowering standards doesn't raise students' self-esteem. But neither does raising standards without giving students ways of reaching them. The growth mindset gives you a way to set high standards

and have students reach them. Try presenting topics in a growth framework and giving students process feedback. I think you'll like what happens.

- Do you think of your slower students as kids who will never be able to learn well? Do they think of themselves as permanently dumb? Instead, try to figure out what they don't understand and what learning strategies they don't have. Remember that great teachers believe in the growth of talent and intellect, and are fascinated by the process of learning.
- Are you a fixed-mindset coach? Do you think first and foremost about your record and your reputation? Are you intolerant of mistakes? Do you try to motivate your players through judgment? That may be what's holding up your athletes.

  Try on the growth mindset. Instead of asking for mistake-free games, ask for full commitment and full effort. Instead of judging the players, give them the respect and the coaching they need to develop.

- As parents, teachers, and coaches, our mission is developing people's potential. Let's use all the lessons of the growth mindset—and whatever else we can—to do this.