

Reading With a Growth Mindset

Expanding the Brain

Did you know that the brain can expand and rewire itself? Although some of our intelligence originates from a fixed set of genes, much of it is cultivated by our environment.

Some people feel complacent with the intellect they have. Others feel imprisoned by the learning disabilities they have been diagnosed with. But truly, the brain can be strengthened, just as a muscle can be toned.

One of the greatest challenges your child will overcome is reading, and the mastery of language. Years are required to fully refine one's reading, writing, and speaking abilities.

If your child is struggling in the reading department, this may send you into a flurry of anxiety and confusion. But do not despair! Studies have shown that intelligence can increase, and skills can be fortified. Recent developments have advocated a novel view of the brain, referred to as the "growth mindset." Hence, if your child is struggling, these recent findings may restore your hopes for a better academic future.

How to Grow Your Child's Brain

One particular way to enforce this mindset is by changing your definition of "smart" or "intelligent." Many parents associate good grades with high intelligence. However, this association implies that low grades are equivalent to low intelligence. And communicating this can be damaging to your child's self-image and performance.

So, how do you approach this principle of "intelligence"? If your child brings home an A+, do not exclaim, "you're so smart," on every single occasion. Instead, rephrase your praise to, "great effort, I'm so proud of you." When you associate good grades with good effort, you encourage your child to work arduously and embrace challenge. When your child does this, brain expansion naturally occurs as a byproduct.

Reassure your child that he/she is as smart as they choose to be; and that the more effort they exert, the smarter they will become. Identify learning as a never-ending process, and never allow your child or yourself to become complacent. By validating your child's effort, you encourage your child to pursue more challenges in school and elsewhere.

Another simple and effective practice is that of high, but realistic expectations. Anticipate that your child will excel in every endeavor. If you expect failure, you will manifest this self-fulfilling prophecy. If your child does in fact perform poorly, regard this as a lack of effort, instead of a lack of intelligence.

Growth Mindset and Reading

If your child is struggling with reading, implement a growth mindset approach to the situation:

1. Tell your child that his/her current struggles are not indicative of their brain potential.
2. Teach your child that intelligence comes with effort.
3. Build upon your child's reading skills little by little, challenging your child more and more over time.
4. Praise your child for achievements and milestones during the learning process.
5. Inform your child that he/she can achieve anything they put their mind to.

Many children encounter learning barriers because they underestimate their own abilities. Yet, if you begin to instill a belief of unlimited potential and growth in your child at a very young age, your child will naturally excel.