of intelligence. Read them now and consider how much you agree or disagree with each:

Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can’t change very much.

You can learn new things, but you can’t really change how intelligent you are.

No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.

You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.

If you found yourself nodding affirmatively to the first two statements but shaking your head in disagreement with the last two, then Carol would say you have more of a fixed mindset. If you had the opposite reaction, then Carol would say you tend toward a growth mindset.

I like to think of a growth mindset this way: Some of us believe, deep down, that people really can change. These growth-oriented people assume that it’s possible, for example, to get smarter if you’re given the right opportunities and support and if you try hard enough and if you believe you can do it. Conversely, some people think you can learn skills, like how to ride a bike or do a sales pitch, but your capacity to learn skills—your talent—can’t be trained. The problem with holding the latter fixed-mindset view—and many people who consider themselves talented do—is that no road is without bumps. Eventually, you’re going to hit one. At that point, having a fixed mindset becomes a tremendous liability. This is when a C−, a rejection letter, a disappointing progress review at work, or any other setback can derail you. With a fixed mindset, you’re likely to interpret these setbacks as evidence that, after all, you don’t have “the right stuff”—you’re not good enough. With a growth mindset, you believe you can learn to do better.

Mindsets have been shown to make a difference in all the same life domains as optimism. For instance, if you have a growth mindset, you’re more likely to do well in school, enjoy better emotional and physical health, and have stronger, more positive social relationships with other people.

A few years ago, Carol and I asked more than two thousand high school seniors to complete a growth-mindset questionnaire. We’ve found that students with a growth mindset are significantly grittier than students with a fixed mindset. What’s more, grittier students earn higher report card grades and, after graduation, are more likely to enroll in and persist through college. I’ve since measured growth mindset and grit in both younger children and older adults, and in every sample, I’ve found that growth mindset and grit go together.

When you ask Carol where our mindsets come from, she’ll point to people’s personal histories of success and failure and how the people around them, particularly those in a position of authority, have responded to these outcomes.

Consider, for example, what people said to you when, as a child, you did something really well. Were you praised for your talent? Or were you praised for your effort? Either way, chances are you use the same language today when evaluating victories and defeats.

Praising effort and learning over “natural talent” is an explicit target of teacher training in the KIPP schools. KIPP stands for the Knowledge Is Power Program, and it was started in 1994 by Mike Feinberg and Dave Levin, two gritty young Teach For America teachers. Today, KIPP schools serve seventy thousand elementary, middle, and high school students across the country. The vast majority of KIPPsters, as they proudly refer to themselves, come from low-income families. Against the odds, almost all graduate from high school, and more than 80 percent go on to college.
KIPP teachers get a little thesaurus during training. On one side, there are encouragements teachers often use with the best of intentions. On the other, there is language that subtly sends the message that life is about challenging yourself and learning to do what you couldn’t do before. See below for examples appropriate for people of any age. Whether you’re a parent, manager, coach, or any other type of mentor, I suggest you observe your own language over the next few days, listening for the beliefs your words may be reinforcing in yourself and others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undermines Growth Mindset and Grit</th>
<th>Promotes Growth Mindset and Grit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You’re a natural! I love that.”</td>
<td>“You’re a learner! I love that.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Well, at least you tried!”</td>
<td>“That didn’t work. Let’s talk about how you approached it and what might work better.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Great job! You’re so talented!”</td>
<td>“Great job! What’s one thing that could have been even better?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This is hard. Don’t feel bad if you can’t do it.”</td>
<td>“This is hard. Don’t feel bad if you can’t do it yet.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Maybe this just isn’t your strength. Don’t worry—you have other things to contribute.”*</td>
<td>“I have high standards. I’m holding you to them because I know we can reach them together.”</td>
</tr>
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Language is one way to cultivate hope. But modeling a growth mindset—demonstrating by our actions that we truly believe people can learn to learn—may be even more important.

* There’s an expression in sports: “Rake your strengths and train your weaknesses.” I agree with the wisdom of this adage, but I also think it’s important that people recognize that skills improve with practice.

Author and activist James Baldwin once put it this way: “Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.” This is one of Dave Levin’s favorite quotes, and I’ve watched him begin many KIPP training workshops with it.

A psychologist in my lab, Daeun Park, recently found this to be exactly the case. In a yearlong study of first- and second-grade classrooms, she found that teachers who gave special privileges to higher-performing students and emphasized how they compared to others inadvertently inculcated a fixed mindset among the young students. Over the year, students of teachers who acted this way grew to prefer games and problems that were easy, “so you can get a lot right.” By year’s end, they were more likely to agree that “a person is a certain amount smart, and stays pretty much the same.”

Similarly, Carol and her collaborators are finding that children develop more of a fixed mindset when their parents react to mistakes as though they’re harmful and problematic. This is true even when these parents say they have a growth mindset. Our children are watching us, and they’re imitating what we do.

The same dynamics apply in a corporate setting. Berkeley professor Jennifer Chatman and her collaborators recently surveyed employees of Fortune 1000 companies about mindset, motivation, and well-being. They found that, in each company, there was a consensus about mindset. In fixed-mindset companies, employees agreed with statements like “When it comes to being successful, this company really can’t do much to change it.” They felt that only a few star performers were highly valued and that the company wasn’t truly invested in other employees’ development. These respondents also admitted to keeping secrets, cutting corners, and cheating to get ahead. By contrast, in growth-mindset cultures, employees were 47 percent more likely to say their colleagues were trustworthy, 49 percent more likely to say...