

Pushing Past Perfectionism

Wellness Workshop

Student Wellness Services



Acknowledging the Land and the People

We acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes

the **Blackfoot Confederacy** (the **Siksika**, **Piikani**, and **Kainai First Nations**), the **Tsuut'ina First Nation**, the **Stoney Nakoda** (the **Chiniki**, **Bearspaw**, and **Goodstoney First Nations**), and **Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III**.

The University of Calgary is situated on land adjacent to where the Bow River meets the Elbow River. The traditional Blackfoot name of this place is “**Moh'kins'tsis**.”

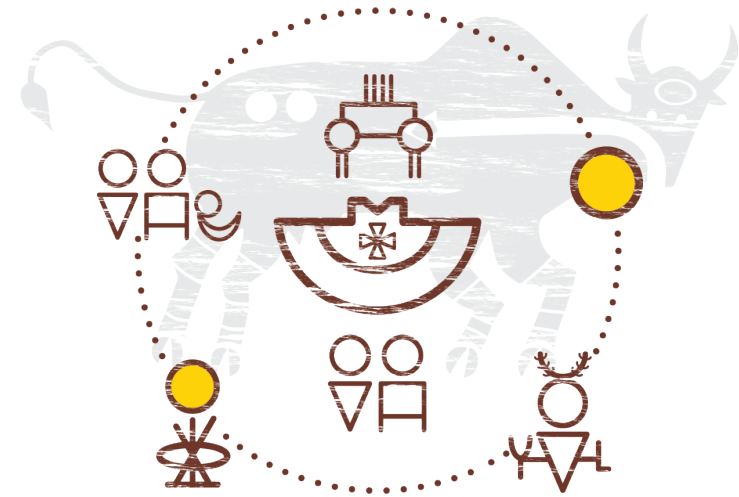


Image: The Cultural Model for the University of Calgary's Indigenous Strategy, ii' taa'poh'to'p

Learning Objectives

- Explore perfectionism and shame
- Learn about fixed vs. growth mindsets
- Learn about imposture syndrome
- Build a self-compassion practice as an antidote to perfectionism and shame

**“When perfectionism is driving us,
shame is riding shotgun and fear is that
annoying backseat driver.”**

Brene Brown

Learning to Recognize Perfectionism

Perfectionism is “The compulsive need to achieve and accomplish one’s goals, with no allowance for falling short of one’s ideals” (Neff, 2011)

Consider:

- Do I have trouble meeting my own standards?
- Do I often feel frustrated, depressed, anxious, or angry while trying to meet my standards?
- Have I been told that my standards are too high?
- Do my standards get in my own way? For example, do they make it difficult for me to meet deadlines, finish a task, trust others, or do anything spontaneously?



What is Perfectionism?

- Perfectionism is:
 - Aimed at minimizing or avoiding feeling of blame, judgment, and shame
 - Protective; shields self-esteem from any vulnerability
 - Other-focused – seeking approval and acceptance
- Perfectionism is not:
 - Striving to be your best
 - Self-improvement



The Mindset Survey (adapted from Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, 2006)

Intelligence Questions:

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

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	2	1

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

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	2	1

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

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	2	1

4. You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	2	1

Character Questions:

5. You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	2	1

6. No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	2	1

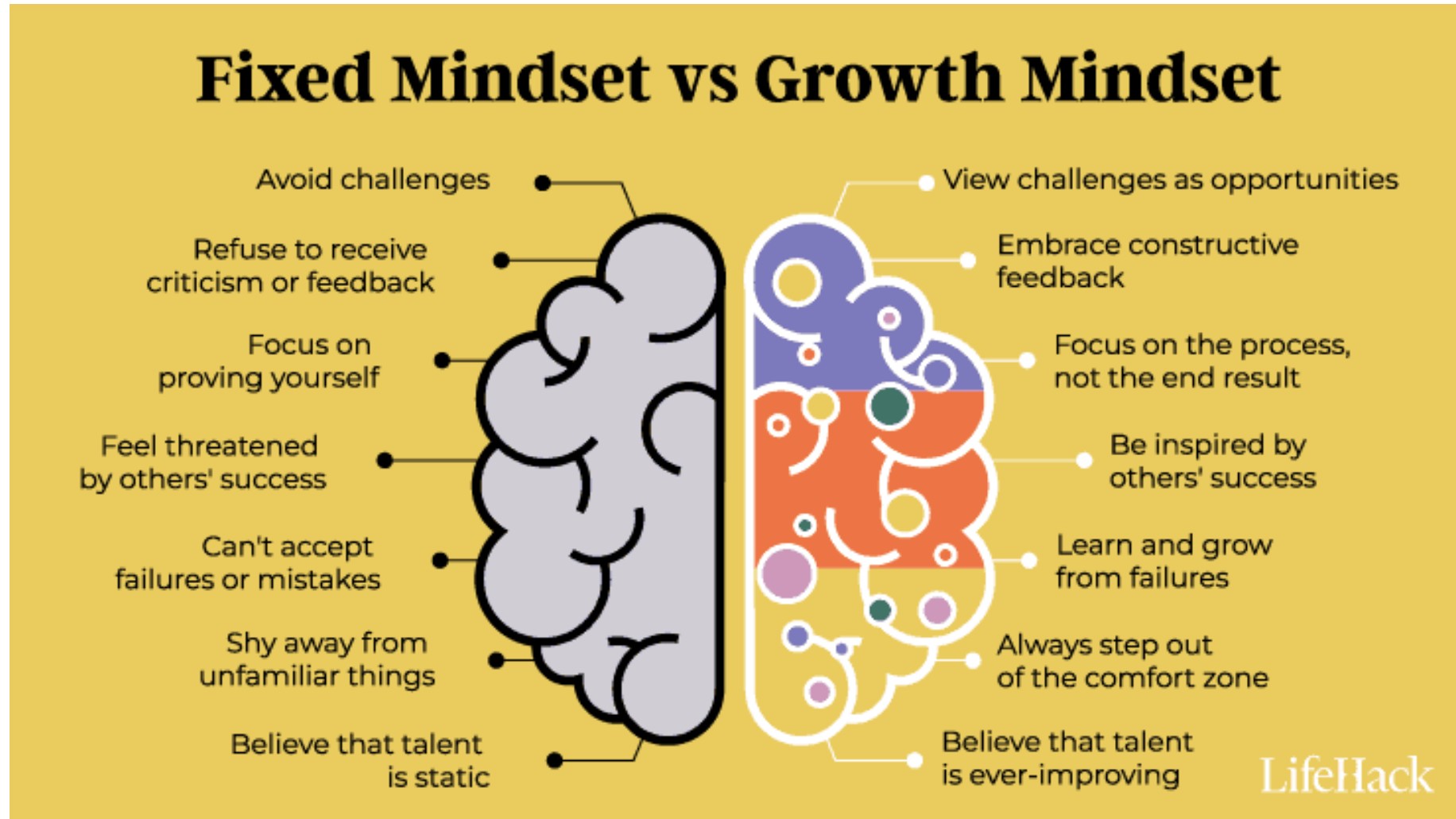
7. You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	2	1

8. You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
4	3	2	1

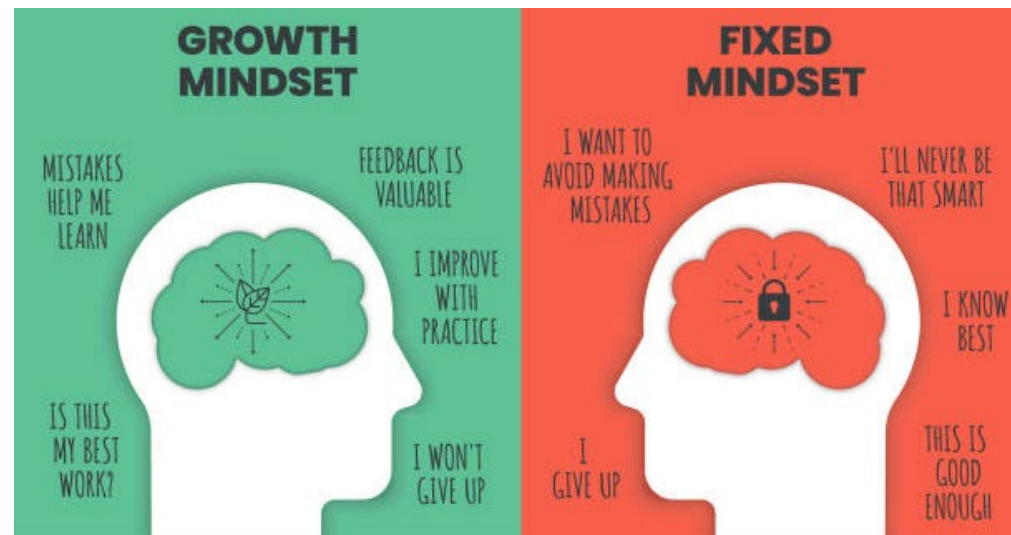
Growth vs. Fixed Mindset



Case Example

You go in for an evaluation with your supervisor and you receive negative feedback. Your supervisor thinks you aren't putting in enough effort, or you're making too many mistakes.

- What is an example of a fixed mindset thought or statement?
- What is an example of a growth mindset statement ?



What is Shame?



The Antidote

Self-Compassion (a.k.a. shame resilience)

- Self-Compassion is experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking a nonjudgmental attitude toward one's own inadequacies and failure, and recognizing that one's own experience is part of the common human experience (Neff, 2003)
- In contrast to self-esteem, self-compassion is not based on self-evaluations. People feel compassion for themselves because all human beings deserve compassion and understanding, not because they possess a particular set of traits. (Neff, K. 2017)



Mindfulness

Being aware of the physical, emotional, or mental pain of the moment.



Self-kindness

Treating ourselves with kindness, considering our own needs.



Common Humanity

Recognizing that these experiences are a normal part of being human.

Overcoming perfectionism

- Learn to Recognize perfectionism- This helps you figure out if you have a problem with perfectionism.
- Realistic Thinking-Try to replace self-critical thoughts with more realistic or helpful statements
- Perspective taking-Learning to view situations as other people might see them can help you to change unhelpful beliefs.
- Look at the big picture: People who struggle with perfectionism tend to spend lots of time worrying about small details, try to focus on the big picture instead
- Compromise: Setting more realistic standards or being more flexible with your standards

Imposture Syndrome

- Imposter syndrome is the experience of feeling like a phony in some area of your life, despite any success that you have achieved in that area.
- People with imposter syndrome feel like frauds even though there is evidence of their success. Instead of acknowledging their capabilities, they often attribute their accomplishments to external factors such as luck or good timing.
- Imposter syndrome can be closely related to perfectionism
- Some common characteristics of imposter syndrome include: An inability to realistically assess your own skills, criticizing your performance, feeling afraid that you won't live up to expectations, Overachieving, self-doubt, and setting very challenging goals and feeling disappointed when you fall short



Overcoming Imposture Syndrome

- Reflecting on your achievements, sharing your feelings with a loved one , expecting to make mistakes at the beginning of a new experience, and seeking out a mentor who has charted a similar path are a few of the concrete steps that can fight imposter syndrome.
- Reaching out to people outside of one's academic or professional circle may be a way to reduce impostor syndrome. Those individuals can put the person's concerns into context, recalibrate their perspective, and offer support and love.
- Imposter syndrome can affect anyone—no matter their social status, work background, skill level, or degree of expertise.

Coping with Perfectionism & Imposture Syndrome

- Assess your abilities: make a realistic assessment of your abilities. Write down your accomplishments and what you are good at, then compare these with your self-assessment.
- Share your feelings: Talk to other people about how you are feeling. Irrational beliefs tend to get worse when they are hidden and not talked about.
- Question your thoughts: As you start to assess your abilities and take baby steps, question whether your thoughts are rational. Does it make sense to believe that you are a fraud given everything that you know?
- Stop comparing yourself to others: Every time you compare yourself to others in a social situation, you will find some fault with yourself that adds to the feeling of not being good enough or not belonging.
- Use social media moderately. We know that the overuse of social media may be related to feelings of inferiority.
- Refuse to let it hold you back: keep going and working towards your goals

Small Group Discussion

Question 1:

What is an example of something you learned how to do, or perhaps something you discovered about yourself, as a result of previously making a mistake or failing at something?

Question 2:

Is there someone who you've watched embrace their own vulnerability, make mistakes, and keep growing?

Practicing Self-Compassion

Skill 1: Develop Your Own Self-Compassion Mantra

- Mantra: set of memorized phrases that are repeated silently whenever you want to give yourself compassion
- Most useful when used in the heat of the moment



Practicing Self-Compassion

Skill 2: Compassionate Imagery

- To build self-compassion we need to first stimulate compassionate feelings, and then direct those feelings towards ourselves when we are struggling.
- Images are an effective way to activate feelings, and if we can find an image that elicits compassionate feelings within us, we can use this as a tool to help direct compassion towards ourselves.



Compassion Into Action

In the coming week:

1. Practice your own self-compassion mantra

2. Practice compassionate imagery

Thank you! Questions?

Check out our other wellness workshops:

- Healthy Thinking
- Motivation & Time Management
- Boosting Self-Compassion
- Managing Stress and Anxiety

For the most up-to-date information on our resources and services, visit our website!

<https://www.ucalgary.ca/wellness-services>

Conflict Management Digital Badge

Earn the Conflict Management Digital Badge

Conflict management is a key skill for relationship building and achieving success

Increase your confidence in your ability to manage conflicts at school, work and in other parts of your lives. Training within the Conflict Management Digital Badge includes learning about conflict styles, navigating conflict in relationships, and intercultural communication.

Get a virtual LinkedIn badge to show your skill development in this area!



References and Resources

- Anxiety Canada. How to overcome perfectionism
- Kristin Neff: *Self-compassion: the proven power of being kind to yourself*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Brene Brown: TED Talks, *Daring Greatly*, *The Gifts of Imperfection*,
- self-compassion.org
 - <http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/>
- Positive Psychology. The Mindset Survey
- Anxiety Canada: How to Overcome Perfectionism
- Psychology Today: Imposture Syndrome
- Imposture Syndrome Institute
- Practice mindfulness: UCalgary Groups

Image References

- <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZuVPj-LpbQ/>
- <https://www.livewellwithsharonmartin.com/choose-excellence-not-perfection/>
- <https://www.lifehack.org/861741/growth-mindset-vs-fixed-mindset>
- <https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/growth-mindset-vs-fixed-mindset-vector-for-slide-presentation-or-web-banner-gm1404229409-456509537>
- <https://attheu.utah.edu/facultystaff/how-to-practice-self-compassion/>
- <https://ppinaction.com/blog/f/three-gateways-to-self-compassion>
- <https://goodtherapysf.com/2019-1-21-self-compassion-a-useful-skill-to-help-you-stop-being-so-hard-on-yourself/>