



01

FREE RESOURCE

The Growth Mindset Starter Kit

The exact language Mini Ivy educators use every day, and how to bring it home starting tonight.

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What is a growth mindset, and why does it start now?

In 1988, psychologist Carol Dweck asked a simple question: why do some children embrace challenge while others collapse under it? Her answer changed how we understand human potential forever.

FIXED MINDSET

Believes ability is fixed at birth. Avoids challenge. Gives up when things get hard. Feels threatened by other children's success.

GROWTH MINDSET

Believes ability develops through effort. Embraces challenge. Persists when things get hard. Is inspired by others' success.

"The brain is not a vessel to be filled. It is a muscle to be exercised, and it grows strongest when it is challenged."

Based on Dweck's research, Stanford University

Children praised for effort, not intelligence, consistently outperform those who believe they are either "smart" or "not smart." They choose harder tasks, persist longer, and recover faster from failure.

THE RESEARCH

Jason Moser, Michigan State: brains holding a growth mindset were **more active after making mistakes**, literally building new connections from failure.

THE WINDOW

Harvard's Center on Developing Child: the brain forms **over 1 million neural connections per second** in the first five years of life. This window matters.

At Mini Ivy, growth mindset is embedded into every session, every transition, and every interaction. This guide gives you the tools to bring it home.

5 phrases that change what happens in your child's brain

Research shows the difference between a growth and fixed mindset often comes down to a single phrase at a critical moment. These five swaps are where to start. Each one replaces a habit you probably already have.

01

~~"You're so clever / You're so smart"~~

Replace with: "I love how hard you worked on that."

Intelligence praise creates fragility. Children praised for being "smart" avoid challenges to protect that label. Effort praise builds the persistence that lasts a lifetime.

02

~~"Be careful / Don't do that"~~

Replace with: "What do you think will happen if you try it that way?"

Curiosity before caution. This invites prediction and problem-solving. Let their brain figure it out before you rescue them. That fifteen seconds is where development happens.

03

~~"It's okay, you don't have to do it"~~

Replace with: "This is hard, and you can do hard things. What is one small step you could try?"

Releasing children from challenge teaches them that difficulty is a reason to stop. Reframe difficulty as a signal to slow down and try differently. Not a reason to quit.

Phrases 4 and 5

04

~~"Let me do it for you / Here, I will fix it"~~

Replace with: "I will sit right here while you try. I am not going anywhere."

Presence without rescue. The most powerful gift a parent can give a child is the experience of succeeding at something they thought they could not do. Stay in the room. But do not solve it for them.

05

~~"I can't do this" (said by you)~~

Replace with: "I can't do this yet. I am going to keep trying."

Model it yourself. Children learn more from watching you navigate challenge than from anything you tell them. Let them see you use growth mindset language about your own mistakes and struggles. That is the most powerful lesson in this entire guide.

START HERE

Pick one swap and use it consistently for a week before adding the next. Trying to change five habits at once is a fixed mindset approach to a growth mindset problem.

THE 3-WEEK MARK

Research shows consistent effort-praise over three weeks begins to measurably shift children's responses to challenge. Three weeks. That is the commitment this guide is asking you to make.

"You will not get this right every time. That is the point. When you use growth mindset language about your own mistakes in front of your child, you teach it more powerfully than any script ever could."

What to say when it actually matters

Knowing the theory is one thing. Knowing what to say when your child is crying on the floor because their drawing "did not work" is something else. These scripts are for the real moments.

WHEN YOUR CHILD SAYS: "I CAN'T DO IT"

Avoid: ~~"Yes you can! You are amazing!"~~

"You can't do it yet. What part feels hard right now?"

Naming the specific hard part gives the brain something to work with. Vague encouragement slides off. Specific support sticks.

WHEN YOUR CHILD GIVES UP MID-TASK

Avoid: ~~"Come on, you are nearly there!"~~

"It looks like you hit a hard bit. Should we take a breath and try once more, or come back to it in a little while?"

Choice gives agency. Returning to it later is not giving up. It is self-regulation. Both options are valid growth mindset responses.

WHEN YOUR CHILD MAKES A MISTAKE THEY ARE UPSET ABOUT

Avoid: ~~"It does not matter, it is fine!"~~

"That felt really big. Mistakes are how your brain grows. What did you learn from it?"

Validating the emotion AND reframing the mistake is the double move that builds resilience. Dismissing the feeling teaches children that their emotions are inconvenient.

WHEN YOUR CHILD SUCCEEDS AT SOMETHING HARD

Avoid: ~~"See? I knew you could do it!"~~

"You did it. How does it feel to have worked that hard and got there?"

The goal is for the child to connect their effort to the outcome. That success belongs to them, not to your belief in them.

Cut out and keep this

Pin this on your fridge, your car sun visor, or anywhere you will see it on a hard morning. You do not need to use all five every day. One swap, used consistently, is enough to start shifting things.

Mini Ivy Growth Mindset Quick Reference

"You're so smart"

Try: "I love how hard you worked on that"

"Be careful!"

Try: "What do you think will happen?"

"You don't have to"

Try: "This is hard, and you can do hard things"

"I'll fix it"

Try: "I'll sit here while you try"

"I can't do this" (said by you)

Try: "I can't do this yet. I am going to keep trying."

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AT MINI IVY

Our educators use growth mindset language in every single interaction with children aged 3 to 6. It is not a concept we teach. It is an environment we create. Come and see it for yourself.

THE SCIENCE

A 2011 Michigan State study found that growth mindset brains were more active after making a mistake, processing it, learning from it. This changes how the brain develops at a neurological level.

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See growth mindset in action, every single session.

At Mini Ivy, growth mindset is not a concept we talk about. It is built into every guided art experience, every transition, and every word our educators say. Book a trial session and watch your child discover that yet is the most powerful word in the room.

Want all 5 guides?

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