

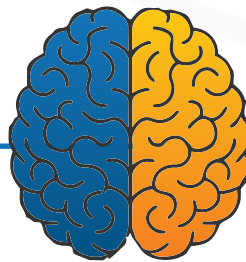
# HOW PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN REINFORCE A GROWTH MINDSET

One of the best lessons athletes can learn through sports is how to navigate and overcome adversity on and off the field. As a parent or caregiver, you play a vital role in helping your athlete build a growth mindset - the belief that their abilities are not fixed, but can develop through effort, new strategies, and persistence. When athletes embrace this mindset, they believe hard moments won't last forever and see challenges as opportunities to improve.

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## UNDERSTANDING GROWTH MINDSET VS. FIXED MINDSET

A **growth mindset** guides a person's response to challenges and their ability to reflect and gather feedback when facing setbacks. <sup>1</sup> It helps them see mistakes as part of growth, so they stay motivated, bounce back from adversity, and remain open to feedback.



A **fixed mindset** is the belief that abilities are set and unchangeable. People with a fixed mindset think that success comes from natural talent rather than effort, learning, or practice. When someone feels this way, they often avoid challenges because they're afraid of failing and looking 'untalented'.

## TOOLS TO BUILD YOUR ATHLETE'S GROWTH MINDSET

### PRaise THE PROCESS — NOT JUST THE RESULTS

Focus your praise on what your athlete can control: their effort, focus, preparation, and response to mistakes. This helps them see improvement as something they do, not something they either have or don't have.

#### INSTEAD OF: "GREAT GOAL!" TRY:

"I loved how you got into position to take that shot. Your practice is paying off!"

### NORMALIZE THE STRUGGLE

Remind your athlete that frustration and setbacks are part of getting better. When mistakes are treated as information rather than failure, athletes stay engaged in their process, feel safer taking the risks necessary to grow, and are willing to keep trying.

#### INSTEAD OF: "YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TRIED THAT SPIN-MOVE," TRY:

"Way to try a new move! I know that's been hard for you. If you keep working on it, you're sure to get it right."

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## ASK, DON'T TELL (SELF-REFLECTION)

When your athlete is ready to talk about a performance, use open-ended questions to guide their reflection. Bring their awareness to the type of language they use when encountering setbacks and help them shift it to be more growth-focused.

**INSTEAD OF: "IT SEEMED LIKE YOU WEREN'T ABLE TO CONNECT WITH ANY OF THE OFF-SPEED PITCHES," TRY:**  
"Next time you get off-speed pitches, what do you think you could do?"

## USE "YET" LANGUAGE

When your athlete says, "I can't do this," help them add "yet." This simple shift keeps their brain in learning mode and reinforces that growth takes time.

**INSTEAD OF "I CAN'T FINISH A LEFT-HANDED LAYUP," SHIFT THEM TO:**  
"I can't finish a left-handed layup, yet."

## SET "STRETCH" GOALS <sup>2</sup>

Collaborate with your athlete to set goals that focus on their own progress and present a reasonable challenge. Tracking development against their own past performance - rather than against teammates - helps build sustainable confidence.

**INSTEAD OF: "SCORE THE MOST GOALS ON MY TEAM THIS YEAR," TRY:**  
"Get better control with my weak-footed shot."

By reinforcing these principles, you can create an environment where your athlete feels valued, emotionally safe to fail, learn, and ultimately build the resilience they need to succeed both on and off the field.

1. Dweck, C. (2015). Carol Dweck Revisits the 'Growth Mindset.' *Education Week*, 35(5), 20-24.
2. Rogers, H. (n.d.). How coaches can help young athletes develop a growth mindset? *Balance is Better*. <https://balanceisbetter.org.nz/how-coaches-can-help-young-athletes-develop-a-growth-mindset/>