

Happy 2021 from all of us at Kid Connects!

It feels as though a congratulations and a pat on the back for surviving 2020 is in order! As we embark on this new year with new goals and resolutions on our minds, we would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the perseverance the past year has required of us all. Most of us had to pivot, change gears, and reassess different aspects of our lives both professionally and personally. As author and speaker Ruby Dhal eloquently stated, “And while it’s been an incredibly difficult year that tested us in innumerable ways, it’s also been a time of immense healing. Of courage. Of human connection. Of forming new relations and taking some of the most unique journeys of our lives which we wouldn’t have, had this year had not happened¹.” As we reflect on the past year, it can be helpful to think about what helped us through this time, how we persevered, and about the things we have learned. Below we will discuss the power of a growth mindset, the importance of having grit, and how being reflective can help us hold hope and set intentions for 2021. What did you learn about yourself in 2020?



¹ Dahl, Ruby. *Dear Self: This is me being there for you when you need me the most*. Piction Books. (2020)

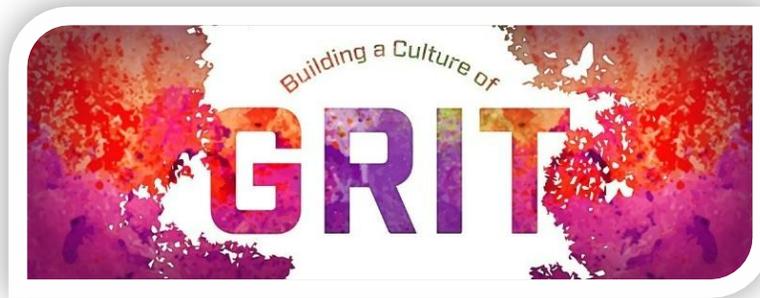
Growth versus Fixed Mindsets²



The way we praise or give feedback to children send messages that can impact the way children view effort, learning, failure, and success, and these messages can impact children's development and actualization of their potential. Phrases like, "Good job!" "You did it! You're so smart!" "Wow, you did that so quickly!" are so common, and in abundance, children can begin to think, "If I don't do that again as well or as fast, I must not be smart or good enough." If we get specific and pay attention to children's effort with responses like, "You worked really hard at coloring in the lines." "You fell down and got back up!" "The tower kept falling over and you didn't give up! You kept trying and got it to balance," children can develop a love for learning and explore their full potential. Is there a little more descriptive and effort-focused language you could start including? Try it out and notice how it might encourage children's development!

Thinking about the way we think and speak with ourselves and other adults is also powerful. Having a growth mindset can help adults move through challenges and face times of stress in a way that promotes resiliency, growth, and lifelong learning. And good news, if you've ever noticed yourself, another adult, or a child in your life approaching matters with a fixed mindset, mindsets are flexible. You can change your mindset and help others to do the same!

² Dweck, C.S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success. How we can learn to fulfill our potential.* Ballantine Books.



Grit is the combination of passion and perseverance for a singularly important goal.³ Building grit is unrelated to talent. Instead it correlates with individuals who possess a growth mindset and do not believe learning is a fixed concept and failing at something is not a permanent condition. It is a focus on learning from a motivational and psychological perspective. Angela Duckworth, a teacher, author and psychologist coined this term when she realized that the most successful students were not always the ones who displayed a natural aptitude or intelligence. Successful students showed grit. She developed a scale that can measure grit which has been shown to be a better predictor of success than I.Q. or SAT scores.

How do you develop grit?

Any man, woman, adult, or child can learn to be gritty.² She explains developing grit means discovering something that you have a genuine interest in. You cannot will yourself to be interested in something that you're not. Once you have formed a genuine interest then you focus on the difficult aspect of practicing this interest and building your skills. She points out the importance of practice that is consistent. Practice can often be frustrating but eventually shapes you to be better. Duckworth believes building grit involves maintaining a sense of hope or resilience even when there are setbacks.

There is also a direct connection between grit and positive emotions. Duckworth believes that parents can foster grit in their children by encouraging children to make their own decisions, while also providing a lot of emotional support. This allows for growth in children's confidence in their abilities when trying new things and willingness to try again if things do not go the way they wanted the first time.

³ Scelfo, Julie. Angela Duckworth on Passion, Grit and Success. *The New York Times*. (2016)

³ Shulevitz, Judith. Grit by Angela Duckworth. *The New York Times*. (2016)

Reflection Questions

“We do not learn from an experience... we learn from reflecting on an experience.” ~ John Dewey

Reflecting on the past year, consider these questions:

- *What did 2020 teach you? What lesson are you most grateful for?*
- *How did you preserve (or overcome)? What did it teach you about yourself?*
- *What new qualities, skills, or superpowers did you discover about yourself?*
- *What was your most courageous action?*
- *What did you notice or discover that supported your growth?*
- *What relationships most supported your growth?*

Contemplating the year ahead, consider these questions:

- *What new relationships do you want to call in?*
- *What creative projects do you want to bring into the world?*
- *What challenges may you encounter this next year? What are you committed to doing to overcome the challenges?*
- *What does success look like for you in the upcoming year and how do you need to redefine your definition of success?*
- *What 1-3 words best captures your intention for the next year?*

**Excerpt taken from www.BrandsForTheHeart.com/articles/19-new-years-eve-reflection-questions*

FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

Contact our warm line at,
(303) 245-4418, to talk directly
to an Early Childhood Mental
Health Consultant.

