

KATHERINE LUMETTA MEd, BS, ELLEN ARNDT MD, MARTIN MUNTZ MD, KURT PFEIFER MD

PROBLEM STATEMENT

FIXED MINDSET	GROWTH MINDSET
Believe intelligence, characteristics, and abilities are innate and unchangeable	Believe intelligence, characteristics, and abilities can be improved with effort
Avoid challenges and mistakes	Seek out challenges; mistakes are part of learning

- Those with a growth mindset “on paper” may face barriers to practicing a growth mindset in medical education.
- We aimed to identify possible barriers to practicing a growth mindset and triggers for a fixed mindset in medical education.

APPROACH

- Following a faculty development session and small group session on mindset, participants in the Kern Institute Coaching for Character, Caring, and Competence (4C) Program were asked to identify barriers to practicing a growth mindset and triggers for a fixed mindset for M1/M2 students, M3/M4 students, and faculty members.
- Respondents included M1-M4 students and faculty members.
- Responses were analyzed for common themes identified for M1/M2 students, M3/M4 students, and faculty members.

LESSONS LEARNED

Level of Training	Number of Responses
M1/M2	26
M3/M4	4
Faculty	13
Total	43

Table 1. Survey responses received.

Most Common Barriers and Triggers

Comparison to peers	Fear of being wrong or embarrassed
Fear of failure	Competition
Focus on test scores/grades	Lack of emphasis on learning/growth
Pressure to prepare for the next step/residency	Lack of time

Table 2. Most common barriers to practicing a growth mindset and triggers for a fixed mindset identified overall.

M1/M2	M3/M4	Faculty
Comparison to peers	Pressure to prepare for the next step/residency	Lack of emphasis on learning/growth
Fear of failure	Fear of being wrong or embarrassed	Fear of being wrong or embarrassed
Focus on test scores/grades	Focus on test scores/grades	Promotion

Table 3. Most common barriers to practicing a growth mindset and triggers for a fixed mindset identified for M1/M2 students, M3/M4 students, and faculty members.

DISCUSSION

- Focus on test scores/grades was frequently identified as a barrier to practicing a growth mindset for M1-M4 students.
- Fear of being wrong or embarrassed was more frequently identified as a barrier to practicing a growth mindset for M3/M4 students and faculty members; this may be related to the clinical environment.
- The most commonly identified barriers to practicing a growth mindset for M1/M2 students, M3/M4 students, and faculty members reflect challenges at each level of training.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Learners practicing a growth mindset may be more willing to seek out challenges, work to improve, and focus on mastery rather than performance.
- Overcoming the identified barriers to practicing a growth mindset may require fostering a growth mindset at the individual and organizational level.
- Next steps include implementing 4C sessions that focus on removing judgment from approach to vulnerability and opportunities for growth.

REFERENCES

1. Osman NY and Hirsh DA. The organizational growth mindset: Animating improvement and innovation in medical education. *Med Educ.* 2021 Apr;55(4):416-418. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33377544/>
2. Wolcott MD, McLaughlin JE, Hann A, Miklavc A, Beck Dallaghan GL, Rhoney DH, and Zomorodi M. A review to characterise and map the growth mindset theory in health professions education. *Med Educ.* 2021 Apr;55(4):430-440. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32955728/>