

Activity 1: Your Path to Growth

Ultimately the activities we do on EduGuide are about not only helping to equip you with skills for success but to also help others find their greatness too.

That’s because this path will train you to mentor people around you as part of your daily life: friends, family members and others.

Who would you like to help in your life?

Why would you like to help the people you listed?

The activities on EduGuide give keys to helping people grow to their potential. This is what mentoring is all about.

In the activities you are given regular opportunities to improve your mentoring skills.

You practice by mentoring “Quinn,” whom you can picture as a slightly younger version of yourself.

So, let’s get started mentoring, by giving Quinn a little advice.

Think about it this way, if you could pass a note to a younger you, what would you say?

Activity 2: Your Mind is Like a Muscle

Researchers have discovered that your mind is like a muscle: the more you exercise it, the stronger it grows.

So, let's start learning how to mentor others in core learning skills. These skills empower people to overcome obstacles and achieve their goals.

Understanding how our brains work is a good place to begin.

Video: *How We Learn - Synapses and Neural Pathways*

<http://www.eduguide.org/video/view/4>

“Learning something new means rearranging how our brain works. Our brain has an astonishing 100 billion neurons or brain cells all connected together. Learning is about creating or strengthening these pathways through these neurons. But between each of these neurons is a tiny gap called a synapse. For any of us to learn something new, the electric signal has to jump across this gap to continue its journey. The gap between the two brain cells is tiny but that doesn't mean it's straightforward for a signal to get from one side to the other. For us, it's like crossing a deep ravine. Getting from one side to the other should tell us something about the way we learn. The first time a signal crosses from one side to the other demands the most effort... the first trip across is the hardest. Having crossed the ravine once, the journey gets easier and easier. A similar thing happens with learning. To start with learning is difficult, but as the signal crosses the path again and again we establish a more solid pathway. By the time we make the crossing over and over again, it becomes effortless. We can do it whenever we like. We've finally learned something.”

Now, we will practice mentoring.
Remember Quinn.

Quinn is a bit younger than you and hasn't heard about how the brain forms neural connections. Using what you learned from the video, what would you say to help Quinn understand what to do when struggling to learn something new?

Activity 3: Your core purpose

The world is sometimes unjust. How could it be better? Many students say they would like to see less violence, pollution or poverty. How about you? How would you like the world to be a better place?

When you're younger, everything gets decided for you. But as you get older, you make more decisions on your own about what you think is important. You start to take charge of your future and the role you want to play in the world. You realize that you're responsible for choosing the kind of person you want to be.

One decision students must make is what they're going to work hard on. Most everyone works hard at school sometimes, but why do students choose to work hard? What do they want to get out of school?

It's worth taking some time to reflect on your own core purpose. You may still be forming it. And it may change over time as you come to see it more clearly. But you start to discover it by just asking a few questions and seeing where the answers lead.

First, how will learning in school help you become the person you want to be? We're not asking about things like fame and fortune, even though those can be important too. But rather, how what you learn helps you to become someone who has a positive impact on the people around you or the world in general?

Let's dig a little deeper. Picture what specific differences you could make for yourself and others by fulfilling your core purpose?

Finally, take a minute to imagine fulfilling your purpose: how would that make you feel?

If you were mentoring Quinn, whom you can picture as a younger version of yourself, what would you say about your purpose in life and what it means to you?

Activity 4: Fixed vs. Growth Mindset

As we discussed earlier, researchers have shown that your mind is like a muscle.

The more you exercise your mind, the stronger it grows.

One key factor is our **mindset**.

Mindset = Attitude + Beliefs

Shaping how we look at the world

But you can also be proactive. When you want to, you can choose to change your mindset and over time gain greater control over it.

Stanford researcher Dr. Carol Dwek discovered that those who learn to approach life with a “growth” mindset, learn faster and more freely than those with a “fixed,” or some would say “stuck,” mindset.

That’s true not only in school, but in sports, work and even relationships.

So what’s the difference between a “growth” vs. a “fixed” mindset?

Fixed Mindset

Well, when people have a “**fixed**” **mindset**, they believe they are **stuck** with a set amount of talent. They think they **can’t grow** to meet new challenges. And they think that if they make **mistakes** or have to **work hard at something**, it **means** they must be **dumb** or **weak**.

When people are stuck with a **fixed mindset**, they often **avoid challenges** that might show their weakness. If they’re playing a sport, they try to **stick to easy things** they’ve **already mastered**. If they’re in school, they try to **avoid subjects that are hard** for them.

Growth Mindset

But people with a **growth mindset** understand that their **intelligence** and **skills grow** with exercise **over time**, so they’re **not afraid to try** new things. Mistakes are just part of the process. They know that you can’t get stronger by lifting feathers; you get **stronger by pushing yourself** to your limit.

When people have a **growth mindset** they know that if something is **easy** for you, you’re **not learning** much. To grow your mind, you need to **find** things that are **challenging** and then **keep working** at them to **build new neural connections** in your **brain**.

In your own words, what would you say to help your friends understand the difference between being stuck with a fixed mindset and having a growth mindset?

The first step is to recognize the fixed mindset voice in your head when you hear it.

Let's practice by mentoring Quinn again. Picture Quinn as someone who's a lot like you, just slightly younger. Quinn often struggles between two voices in his head.

The **fixed mindset voice avoids challenges**, because **it's afraid of failure**. So, when Quinn's teacher asks for a volunteer to answer a question, the fixed mindset voice will say, "Keep your mouth shut, and you'll be safe."

In your own words, what else do you think the fixed mindset voice might say to get Quinn to avoid the challenge?

But Quinn's **growth mindset voice embraces challenges**, even when they're a little scary. That's because it knows that **tackling challenges is the only way to grow**. So Quinn's growth mindset will say, "I'm not sure what the answer is, but if I try, even if I'm wrong, I'll remember the correct answer better."

In your own words, what else do you think the growth mindset could say to encourage Quinn to try?

Activity 5: Talking Back to the Fixed Mindset

Earlier, we talked about the difference between having two kinds of mindsets:

- **Fixed mindset (afraid of challenges)**
- **Growth mindset (embracing challenges).**

Let's look more closely at how that works.

Scientists have found we can actually rewire our brain to change the way you think. It's called **neuroplasticity**.

Neuroplasticity means the neural wiring in our **brains is moldable and can be changed. This means we can change the way we think.**

Video: *Neuroplasticity*

<http://www.eduguide.org/video/view/7>

"Not so long ago, many scientists believed that the brain did not change after childhood. That it was hardwired and fixed by the time we became adults. But recent advances in only the last decade, now tell us that this is simply not true. The brain can and does change throughout our lives. It is adaptable like plastic; hence, neuroscientists call this 'neuroplasticity'. How does neuroplasticity work?"

If you think of your brain as a dynamic connected power grid, there are billions of pathways, or roads, lighting up every time you think, feel or do something. Some of these roads are well traveled. These are our habits, our established ways of thinking, feeling and doing. Every time we think in a certain way, practice a particular task or feel a specific emotion, we strengthen this road. It becomes easier for our brains to travel this pathway.

Say we think about something differently, learn a new task or choose a different emotion. We start carving out a new road. If we keep traveling that road, our brains begin to use that pathway more and this new way of thinking, feeling or doing becomes second nature. The old pathway gets used less and less and weakens. This process of rewiring your brain by forming new connections and weakening old ones is 'neuroplasticity' in action.

The good news is we all have the ability to learn and change by rewiring our brains. If you have ever changed a bad habit or thought about something differently, you have carved a new pathway in your brain and experienced neuroplasticity firsthand. With repeated and directed attention towards your desired change, you can rewire your brain."

Let's practice mentoring Quinn about neuroplasticity. What could you share from the video about how to rewire your brain?

To change a fixed mindset there are **2 simple steps to rewire your brain**:

1. Hear the fixed mindset.
2. Talk back to it.

Let's practice helping Quinn take these two steps.

When Quinn's teacher points out a mistake on a math problem, the **fixed mindset voice** in Quinn's head says, "It's not my fault; that teacher just doesn't like me."

What other excuses might Quinn hear the fixed mindset voice say to keep from admitting mistakes?

But Quinn's **growth mindset** craves constructive criticism. A **growth mindset** wants to know what it did wrong so that it can figure out what to do differently next time. It replies to the teacher's remarks with, "That's interesting, I wonder how I could do this better."

What else could Quinn's growth mindset say to encourage valuing feedback from others, even if it's about things Quinn did wrong?

Activity 6: Effective encouragement

Encouragement can backfire if it's not done the right way. Simply telling someone "you're smart" may make them feel good for the moment, but can actually hurt their future performance. That's because it prompts them to worry later about taking on new challenges: "people think I'm smart, so I shouldn't risk looking stupid." Researchers have actually measured the damage.

Why is misguided encouragement so bad? Well, that's a deep question. One way to think about it is that it judges and labels people for who they "are:" smart, talented or otherwise. Even when it means well, the problem is that it focuses people on being judged and judging themselves, something that none of us is very good at really. Perhaps that's why we're sometimes warned about being quick to judge others, or ourselves. It tends to make us defensive, raising fears that distract us from opportunities to grow.

How do you think you could use this research to provide more powerful encouragement to the people around you?

What kind of powerful encouragement could people give to support you to help you effectively accomplish your goals?

Who are some people in your life you could support through effective encouragement?

Activity 7: Encouragement mentoring

How do you think encouragement effects learning?

Encouragement gives us perspective to see things that are hard to see for ourselves. It enables us to tap energy we didn't know we had to achieve things we didn't know we could.

That's why effective encouragement is a critical mentoring skill to help the people you care about. So let's take some time to develop this skill by practicing four different ways to give Quinn effective encouragement.

Instead of judging people for who they "are," effective encouragement focuses on what they "did:" their effort, their perseverance or the strategies they used. It sounds like: "good job" "way to give your all" or "nice pass; you guys are really working as a team out there."

So when Quinn learns a new and difficult song, what encouragement could you say focused on effort instead of ability?

Effective encouragement is also as specific as possible. That's because when we succeed at something, we're often not really sure why.

Effective encouragement points out exactly what worked well, so that it's easier to do it again. It sounds like: "Love your design for the poster, each revision you did got better and better. Now the image makes people look twice and the rhyming, short slogan is so memorable; I can tell you put a lot of thought into it."

So when Quinn gets a good grade on an English paper, imagine what encouragement you could give.

To really focus people on what they did right, often the most effective encouragement is the gift of a question that provides time to pause and reflect: “Nice work on the science test and I’m really proud of the way you kept trying different strategies to learn it. I’m curious, what seemed to work best for you?”

So when Quinn apologizes for a mistake and repairs a relationship with a friend after a fight, what encouragement could you give in the form of a question?

Of course, we also need encouragement when we feel overwhelmed. Effective encouragement helps us to focus on a way forward: “I know math used to be easy for you, and it isn’t right now, but that also means that you’ll grow more by taking on this challenge. This is your next big step. It might feel a little scary, but I’m excited for what you’ll discover you can learn when you really work your hardest.”

So when Quinn is worried about a new teacher who grades harder, what encouragement could you give?

What would you say to teach Quinn how to use effective encouragement?

Now that you’ve been given this superpower, it’s up to you how you use it to reshape the lives of the people around you. How would you like to start using it?

Activity 8: Neurons that fire together, wire together.

To make your mind stronger, you have to exercise it. And you exercise it by building new connections to new information and skills.

In fact, your mind is doing just that, right now as you read this. The more connections you make, the more you're able to see things that other people can't. Today, you'll start to see inside people's heads to get a better understanding of how their brains work.

How the Brain Works

<http://www.eduguide.org/video/view/3>

The newer the information was to you, the more you needed to re-watch it to form those connections. That's because your brain can only focus on so much new information at a time. But as your neurons fire together and wire together to form stronger connections, your brain is then able to see things that it didn't before. The picture becomes clearer.

Your mind is incredibly powerful. Its neural network has more connections than the entire global phone network. And it can grow to do great things when you exercise it.

What would you tell Quinn to explain how neurons fire together to wire together so that you can learn new things, develop a skill or build a habit?

What's a specific example from your life that you could tell Quinn about to help explain this phenomenon of neurons firing together to wire together from personal experience?

Activity 9: Neurons that wire together, inspire together.

Have you ever noticed how when you re-listen to a song, re-watch a movie or re-read a book you'll sometimes discover things you didn't even know were there the first time? What do you think is going on there?

That's why when we are learning something new, we review it, practice it, and study it over and over again. Because each time our neurons fire together, they wire together stronger connections in our brains that enable us to see and do new things, like a hero in a video game gaining a level.

Just like re-watching a movie, sometimes in real life you suddenly see things for the first time that were there all along. That's because, in a way, we are blind to things that our brain has not yet made connections to.

How We Learn - Synapses and Neural Pathways

<http://www.eduguide.org/video/view/4>

Finally, what could you say to encourage Quinn to keep practicing and studying things that Quinn hasn't learned yet?

Think of a specific time from your life where you learned something because you kept practicing and studying. Use this example to support what you explained to Quinn.

Activity 11: Finding your way around the Change Curve.

You've probably noticed that when you're running around a sharp curve, you can't help but slow down. Your pace gets thrown off; you take smaller steps and brace yourself so you don't lose control. You have to push yourself to get back up to speed.

The same thing happens when you run into a curve in life whether it's a new school, class, college, job, setback or something else.

- 1. Anticipation:** As change approaches, excitement, anxiety and uncertainty throw off the normal pace of life.
- 2. Disruption:** As the change hits home, it gets harder to stay at the same level of performance.
- 3. Exploration:** In the midst of change, people look for ways to get back on track.
- 4. Reacceleration:** Persisting through the change, people emerge, often with greater resilience.

Understanding the Change Curve can help people find their way who are lost in its eddy.

Explain the 4 phases of the EduGuide Change Curve to Quinn who started at a new school this year.

Give Quinn examples of phases of change that you've experienced at some point in your life.

Activity 12: The road to success passes through failure.

Everyone has to fail many times to get to their wins, even champions. That’s true in sports and life. If they let the fear of failure hold them back they would never succeed at anything. But that’s easier said than done. When the pressure is on to beat a tough opponent you need to take never giving up to a whole new level.

How do champions do that?

What distinguishes champions is that they’ve learned to look at failure as an opportunity instead of something to fear. They do that in 3 ways:

- 1. Champions accept failure** as part of the game: to make some shots, they will miss others.
- 2. Champions study their failures** to learn how to improve.
- 3. Champions come back stronger**, using failure to rediscover a core purpose more powerful than their fears.

As a mentor these are critical skills to learn how to pass on. So, let’s practice with Quinn who has been struggling with a fear of failure in learning a second language, feeling foolish and freezing up when it’s time to speak.

In your own words, help Quinn understand the 3 ways that champions look at failure differently.

Champions know that they can’t score if they don’t shoot, so they learn it’s better to try early and often than to wait for the perfect opportunity. They have to build the courage to miss a lot to make it sometimes.

To encourage Quinn to practice speaking the new language more, share an example with Quinn from your own life: what’s something you’ve had to be willing to fail at sometimes in order to succeed?

Champions take more shots. In sports, they learn that you have to risk missing in order to make it. In class, they raise their hand more to answer questions and shoot for higher grades even if they don't always have the right answers. In life, they jump at opportunities to try new things to help them grow.

What's an area of your own life where you could take more shots?

Champions are always looking for ways to improve their game. So while nobody likes to lose, they know that it's not a total loss if they use it to learn how to get better.

Share an example with Quinn from your own life: what's something you've learned from one of your failures?

You only truly lose if you don't learn from your loss. Champions grab their future victories from the jaws of their past defeats.

Where could you get more out of your failures by taking time to learn from them?

Champions know that they can't afford to let failure slow them down. When we fail at something, we tend to pull back. You can see it in any sport.

When a team falls behind early in a game, they sometimes fall into a self-defeating spiral. Why do you think that is?

But champions have found a way to do the opposite, to use failure as a trigger to push harder, dig deeper and reach higher.

Champions step up to challenges instead of stepping back. They use challenges to bring out their best instead of their worst. How do you think they do that?

What distinguishes you as a champion?

How have you learned to look at failure?

How can you continue to come back stronger?

Activity 13: Rediscovering a core purpose more powerful than fear.

Comebacks are a critical moment in mentoring when you can change the direction of someone’s life. So, during this activity we’re going to focus on the 3rd step: how do we coach Quinn to come back stronger after failing a language test?

Coaches know that players are often defeated by themselves before they are ever defeated by their opponents. People who are afraid to fail don’t give 100% of their effort; as if their mind was saying “well, if I’m not going to win, I’m not going to try because I don’t want to be disappointed” or “I’d better not take this shot because I might miss and look bad.”

What might the fear of failure be saying to Quinn after failing a language test?

What might you say to motivate Quinn to overcome the fear of speaking a new language?

Whether or not you’re a leader in sports, you can play a crucial role in the lives of the people around you, and in your own, by confronting the fear of failure with compassionate coaching.

Think about one person you know who is struggling with a setback or fear of failure, what could you say to them?

What’s an area of your life right now where you’re not giving 100%, but you want to be?

Imagine you’re coaching yourself; what would you say to motivate you to give your all?

Activity 14: You only truly lose if you don't learn from your loss.

In this activity, we're going to focus on the second way that champions look at failure differently: they learn from it.

Champions know that the strategies that worked for them in one game might not work in the next. It's not enough just to learn good strategies; champions need to learn a way to analyze their own performance to adjust their game plan.

A simple tool to do that is the EduGuide Arrow. It points to the area you need to improve on the 3 factors that shape how fast people can grow to their potential.

- 1. Effort.** Are you putting in 100% effort and enough time to make progress?
- 2. Strategies.** Are you using the most effective strategies to grow?
- 3. Support.** Are you making the best use of coaches and other resources?

Champions don't just study their sport; they study themselves.

- They know that effort is critical so they push each other to give 100%.
- They make time to study how effective their strategies are.
- And they actively build a strong support network, getting advice and encouragement from multiple people around them.

First, describe the 3 factors to Quinn in the EdGuide Success Arrow.

Effort is like the fuel that fires your engine. If you give up when things get hard, if you're wrestling with a fear of failure, if you're distracted or not putting in enough time, you simply won't have the energy to get where you want to go.

List 2 or more questions you could ask Quinn to think about where to improve on effort?

Strategies are like the vehicle you use to reach your goal. If you're using the wrong strategy for the situation, it will take you a lot longer to get there. A racecar might move fast on the road, but off the road you may need a Jeep or even a horse. There are lots of strategies to learn new things, like a language, such as using flash cards, watching videos in the language or finding someone to talk to. But most people only use a couple strategies they're accustomed to.

List 2 or more questions you could ask Quinn to think about where to improve on strategies to learn a new language.

Support is like the map and advice that guides you to your destination. Some people are afraid to ask for directions. But champions know that they perform better when they are getting active coaching in their life and that asking for help is a sign of maturity and confidence. So they build a circle of supporters around them and are always looking for the latest advice on how to improve.

List 2 or more questions you could ask Quinn about where to get more support to learn a language.

What's an area of your life that you would like to work on improving?

What do you think you need to work on to reach your potential in this area? How?

Activity 15: Self-test is best.

The 3 factors in the EduGuide Arrow that shape how fast people can grow to their potential are:

- 1. Effort.** Are you putting in 100% effort and enough time to make progress?
- 2. Strategies.** Are you using the most effective strategies to grow?
- 3. Support.** Are you making the best use of coaches and other resources?

In this activity we're going to focus on strategies. There are many strategies to save yourself time and frustration in learning new things. But which one is best?

Scientific American magazine asked that question and reviewed more than 700 studies of learning strategies to find the most consistently effective method.

The answer: self-testing.

Any time you are trying new skills or answering questions on a topic or practicing explaining a new concept to someone else, you're giving yourself the chance to grow by testing yourself to see what you can do.

Have you ever noticed when you try to teach something to someone else, you end up learning more about it yourself? It's not always easy, but there's something about the process of trying to explain something in simple terms that helps our mind organize what it knows into a solid chunk that's easier to remember.

Let's practice that now by explaining to Quinn why self-testing is a faster way to learn.

What about answering more questions in class? How is that like a self-test and how might it help you learn?

What would you like to do differently with answering questions in class?
