

Statements and Scenarios Worksheet (Teacher Version)

Read the following scenarios and answer the questions. Be honest when you answer these questions as there are no right or wrong answers.

1. You notice that one of your friends is playing with their phone throughout the whole of your science lesson. The next day you see the same friend in the library looking really upset. You ask them what is wrong and they say that they can't do their science homework because they are just not clever enough.
 - a) Why do you think your friend might not pay attention in science lessons?
 - b) What advice could you give your friend?

Key points to discuss:

- The pupils that disengage in class tend to be those with a fixed mindset.
- Pupils with a fixed mindset perceive failure and/or effort as being a sign of low ability.
- Pupils with a fixed mindset tend to disengage because this works as a self-protection strategy (i.e. if they decrease their efforts and don't try to understand then they can't "fail" as they can always blame not doing well on the fact that they "don't care").
- Avoiding work and challenges is not an effective long-term strategy (i.e. the pupil may have felt better whilst they were disengaging in class, but by doing this they have made it much more difficult for themselves as they now can't do their homework, which then has a knock-on effect on how they cope in that subject).
- Taking responsibility for your own learning is a vital part of having a growth mindset.

2. You get a piece of maths homework back and you got 95%. You're teacher says to you "Well done, you are obviously a natural at maths"
 - a) How do you think this comment make you feel at the time?
 - b) How would this comment make you feel if you had put a lot of effort into that piece of homework?

- c) How confident would you feel about your ability to do well on the next piece of maths homework?
- d) You find the next piece of maths homework really difficult. How does this make you feel and what would you do?

Key points to discuss:

- Being told that we are “a natural” at something makes us feel good, especially in the short-term!
- However, comments like this neglect the effort that went into a piece of work.
- When we receive feedback like this on a piece of work that required a lot of effort, it creates a sense of expectation that work should always be that good because it is perceived as ‘natural ability’ that the individual has no control over, and this in turn can cause anxiety.
- If we don’t do as well on the next piece of work, or we find it really hard, this can lead to us questioning our ability and feeling like we aren’t good enough anymore – as if we have reached our own ‘glass ceiling’.
- This can then lead to avoidance behaviours and decreased self-esteem with regards to learning.
- Having a growth mindset and using your internal voice to counteract fixed mindset language like this prevents comments like this having a negative effect.

- 3. You find French really hard at school and you are struggling with your French homework. You ask your mum for help but she says that she was rubbish at French when she was at school too, and that you shouldn’t worry about not being good at French because no one in the family is good with languages.

- a) How does this make you feel?
- b) How does this influence your motivation to do well at French?
- c) What would someone with a growth mindset say about this?

Key points to discuss:

- Comments like this can be comforting and reassuring at the time.

- However, adopting this sort of attitude removes motivation to try, which in turn makes failure inevitable as avoidance/self-protection strategies set in.
 - Being “good with languages” is not determined by genetics – it can be the result of lots of different factors, including the confidence to ‘give it a go’ and previous experiences.
 - Someone with a growth mindset would say that the way to deal with this situation would be to seek help from your teacher, and to work extra hard at improving the things that you find most difficult, as this is what leads to mastery.
4. When you were at primary school you were always told that you were such a talented artist. You would always get top marks for your art work, and you won the painting competition every year. You rush your first piece of art homework at secondary school and your teacher marks it as a “C” grade.
- a) How does this make you feel?
- b) How do you think you would you react to this?

Key points to discuss:

- Research has shown that pupils who have a growth mindset show more improvement than those with a fixed mindset following important transitions (such as from junior school to secondary school).
- This is hypothesised to be because pupils face more academic challenges during these transitions. Those with a fixed mindset adopt a helpless orientation in the face of these challenges and withdraw or give up when they reach these sorts of stumbling blocks, whereas those with a growth mindset are able to be more resilient and are not fazed by challenges and set-backs, instead they continue to work hard.
- For pupils with a fixed mindset who are used to doing well, the impact of these challenges and set-backs can be even more detrimental and can make them feel like they just aren’t clever enough anymore.
- Therefore, in this example, a pupil with a fixed mindset may react to this by thinking that maybe they aren’t as talented as their primary school teachers thought, and that they might as well give up trying now because this ‘natural’ talent has reached its limit. A pupil with a growth mindset however might use this as an opportunity to learn from. They might ask the teacher why they only got a C and how they could improve that piece of work to receive a higher grade. Following this they would put more effort into the next piece of work (especially as they know that this piece of work was a bit rushed) and not feel threatened by this situation or future hard work.

5. You have just got your mock exam results back and you are disappointed because you didn't do as well as you thought you would. Your teacher says that you should treat this as an opportunity to learn.
- a) What do you think your teacher means?
 - b) How do you think someone with a fixed mindset might feel about sitting their real exams, and what do you think they would do?
 - c) How do you think someone with a growth mindset might feel about sitting their real exams, and what do you think they would do?

Key points to discuss:

- The teacher in this scenario obviously intends for the pupil to think about why they didn't do as well as they had expected, and from this to work out how they can improve.
- Pupils with a fixed mindset will tend to feel very demotivated by set-backs such as not doing as well as they expected to in exams as their focus is on performance.
- This can also lead to pupils lowering their own expectations of themselves, and giving in before they even try.
- Pupils with a growth mindset may feel disappointed too, but this will motivate them to try harder for their real exams, because for them, their focus is on learning, and they see mistakes and set-backs as being an opportunity to learn.
- Pupils with a growth mindset will tend to think about why they didn't do as well as they had expected to in their exams and will develop a plan to make sure that they improve in time for their real exams.
- Pupils in this sort of situation should be asking themselves questions such as: 'Did I do enough revision?' 'Am I revising in the right way?' 'Are there any areas that I am particularly struggling with?'