



## Episode 46: One Question to Shift into Growth Mindset

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Here are my questions today: As an adult, what is your relationship to learning? What would you like your relationship with learning to be?

Have you heard the terms growth mindset and fixed mindset? That's what we're talking about today. These terms were originally coined by psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck as she studied children in schools. Over the years, the phrases fixed mindset and growth mindset have become co-opted by the business world and recognized as important qualities that can make the difference between employees' stagnation or success.

A growth mindset is one of resilience. When we're in a growth mindset and seeing the world from a place of agency and learning, we see feedback and failures as opportunities for growth. We're committed to trying and learning.

This is in contrast to a fixed mindset. When we're in a fixed mindset and see the world as "I am who I am", we take feedback personally, tend to avoid challenges, and stick to what we know.

If I say that successful leaders and professionals know how to access and operate from growth mindset, I'm guessing you would agree. You know that that it can feel much more collaborative and innovative when working with people who are committed to increasing their skills and knowledge.

And, yet, it's easy to slip back into fixed mindset, especially when things are new and scary or don't initially go as planned. Stress and criticism are often a one-way ticket back to fixed mindset.

The trouble is that it's easy to get stuck in fixed mindset. It's easy to have our perspective narrowed and see ourselves, our thinking, and our abilities as unchangeable and set. It can feel familiar and it certainly uses less brain energy being in a fixed mindset.

What's often needed to move things forward and take on challenges is a growth mindset.

Having an easy way to shift from fixed mindset to growth mindset can benefit you and those you work with.

So let's talk about how to make that shift from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset – how to step into a new way of seeing yourself in relation to the world. Because, as I say to my clients, our perspectives are powerful. Our perspectives creates our reality.

Being in one perspective allows us to think certain things and not others. It invites us to act in certain ways and not others.

Depending on the different mindsets we're in, these ways of thinking and behaving can be vastly different and have vastly different outcomes.

Let's focus on what's in our control. Recognizing cues from our body alerting us to when we're in a narrow perspective is in our control. Stopping and naming the perspective we're in is in our control. Stepping into a new perspective – even for a few moments – is in our control.

So how do we shift a perspective? There are lots of ways. You can move your body, change your environment, talk to someone else, listen to music...and, you can ask yourself a question.

Our brains are question-answering machines. They love answering -- or trying to answer-- questions.

If you want to shift your perspective, you can ask your brain a powerful question to invite it to think differently. If you want to help someone else shift their perspective, you can ask them a powerful question to invite their brain to think in a different way.

Our thinking and communication tool today is a key question that can shift you immediately from fixed mindset to growth mindset.

Here it is:

What are my big realizations?

Or, if you're asking someone else, What are your big realizations?

Here's a short story illustrating the power of this question.

I was talking with a client, and he shared that he felt frustrated and stuck. He had a meeting at his company that had not gone well. His thoughts were fixed: His company wasn't going to change. He was never going to have power to make important decisions. He felt like he might as well give up. His stress and frustration had created a fixed mindset.

I asked him, what are your big realizations?

He considered the question and answered. One big realization, he said, is that it's very important to me to feel listened to. I realize that I have experience and knowledge to share for the benefit of others. Another big realization is that ambiguity is challenging for me; it can send me back to a fixed perspective. I realize that I need structure and a plan for times like these.

This question helped him shift into growth mindset. It allowed him to see himself as someone who is resilient, who is a learner, and who is capable.

In his answer to the question, what are your big realizations? were embedded learning opportunities. There was an opportunity to think about how to share his knowledge in other ways, maybe in smaller conversations or through an email. There was an opportunity for him to develop a more comfortable relationship with ambiguity by creating a concrete plan.

That's the power of the powerful question, What are your big realizations?

Asking this question assumes that your brain is capable of reflection, stretching itself, and learning. It assumes that your brain can make new connections and create new thoughts. It assumes a growth mindset.

Answering this question also invites action. After you have a realization, it often leads to something you can do about it.

Want to share your ideas more? Who can you email today?

Want to navigate change more comfortably? What short-term goals can you set for yourself?

When I have chemistry calls with potential clients, they're often curious about my approach as a coach. I share my approach – that I bring a neuroscience foundation, that I weave in somatic coaching to include the body, and that I help clients connect big picture goals to tactical actions and communications.

I share that I believe in a strengths-based approach and a growth mindset. Because coaching is all about learning. Learning ideas, learning new ways of thinking and communicating, and learning new insights about yourself.

One of my responsibilities as a coach is to point out when people slip back into fixed mindset, and help them return into growth mindset by asking questions. I often do this with a question like, what are your big realizations?

In fact, I love this question so much as an invitation to a growth mindset, that I routinely use it as one of my pre-coaching session preparation questions that I share with clients.

Let's bring this communication and thinking tool to you.

If you want an easy way to re-engage your growth mindset, so that you can see yourself as a resilient learning and feedback incorporator, use this question liberally.

Ask yourself at the end of each week, what are my big realizations? It will remind you that you're constantly evolving and transforming, and it will reveal ways to keep taking action and trying new things.

If you live or work with other people, and want to help them practice their growth mindset, ask them the question:

What are your big realizations? You can even be specific, like what are your big realizations today? Or with this project? Or, as you take on this challenge?

We realize things all the time, whether we're aware of new insights and brain connections or not. Asking and answering this question highlights our new brain pathways and brings new thoughts to the foreground. It reminds us that life is a journey of learning and growth.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you found today's powerful question helpful and want more for your leadership toolkit, please reach out. Email me at [deb@debelbaum.com](mailto:deb@debelbaum.com) or go to my website [debelbaum.com](http://debelbaum.com) to schedule a complimentary consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!