Mindsets

DON'T FORGET

Love yourself just the way you are

What is a mindset?

Your mindset is a collection of thought patterns and beliefs that shape your view of reality. It develops from our experiences, observations, thoughts, feelings and concepts we learn from our family, friends, school, the media and other sources of influence around us. There is a strong connection between your mindset and your mental health. It helps determine how your experiences will affect you. The same events can happen to different people, and everyone will react differently, depending on their mindset. For example, all students experience stress, whether from home, school or in their relationships but only some students develop anxiety, depression, or other mental health problems from the same stress.

Students whose mindsets are rigid – believing there's nothing they can do to change their lives and become smarter, less shy, or more skilled at something – often are less resilient and therefore more likely to suffer mental health problems like anxiety and depression. Whereas those who believe they have some control and can change their lives for the better, are less likely to have the same mental health challenges and cope better with difficulty.

Fortunately, mindsets are not set in stone. They can be changed. You can challenge and replace your underlying assumptions about life. When you do, you are more likely to improve your mental health condition.

Research has found that when young people develop a positive mindset, they experience improved social stress recovery, increased perceived control, and reduced depression and anxiety. In a single 30-minute session on growth personality mindset, teenagers with depression and anxiety showed higher levels of internal control and a better ability to cope with stress. Other studies have found that mindset interventions improve academic, social, and psychological functioning in healthy adolescents. This means that when young people develop a positive mindset, one that believes that they are not a victim to their circumstances, their mental health is stronger and better.

Ways to improve mindset

There are practical things you can do to change your mindset. These include:

1. **Change what you say to yourself.** The conversations you have with yourself inside your head are a direct reflection of your mindset. If you're constantly telling yourself you're not good enough, that is what you will believe. Instead of negative self-talk encourage yourself with positive talk. "I am good enough to be in this school." "I can do well at maths."

2. Don't put yourself down. We sometimes mistake putting ourselves down for humility. Saying negative things about yourself to other people is not humility. It is the expression of a negative mindset about yourself and you reinforce what you believe and cause other people to believe the same thing when you say that. Rather, be gracious and kind to yourself, the same way you would be gracious to someone else if they make a mistake. Also develop a habit of talking about the things that are going well in your life.

3. **Learn from others.** Read books about how the mind and brain work and put what you learn into practice. Read about great people and how they achieved success and adopt their thinking. Learn new habits that help you change your mindset. Practice gratitude, enjoy your surroundings and the moment you're in, appreciate and celebrate your successes.

4. **Surround yourself with the right people.** Find people who have the kind of mindset you want and admire and surround yourself with such people. Hang out with friends who are positive and see the good in life rather than people who are always complaining and playing the victim. Learn how they think and what they do to ensure their lives match their mindset.