

Cultivating a Growth Mindset in Nursing Education

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As healthcare continues to evolve at a rapid pace, nursing education must prepare to support future nurses for the challenges that they will face as new practitioners. One component of this is the cultivation of a growth mindset. Psychologist Carol Dweck introduced the concept of a growth mindset, which is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication, hard work, and perseverance (Dweck, 2006). This article explores the significance of fostering a growth mindset in nursing education, its impact on student performance, and strategies for educators.

The growth mindset applicability in nursing education is multifaceted, as nursing students are often confronted with clinical situations that are challenging, with demanding coursework, and the emotional toll of patient care. According to Yeager and Dweck (2012), students who possess a growth mindset are more resilient, capable of handling difficulties, and inclined to pursue educational chances. Students without a growth mindset are in a fixed mindset, in which they believe their abilities are static, which, in turn, can lead to avoidance of challenges, decreased motivation, and ultimately lower achievement (Dweck, 2006).

Cultivating a growth mindset in nursing education can enhance a student's critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills, which are essential for competent patient care. Students who embrace a growth mindset are more likely to engage in self-reflection, seek feedback, and learn from mistakes, all of which are vital components of professional development in nursing (Benner, 2001).

Benefits of a Growth Mindset in Nursing Education:

- **Resiliency:** Nursing students frequently experience high levels of stress and anxiety. Cultivating a growth mindset in students will support them in seeing challenges as opportunities for growth rather than unconquerable obstacles. Research has suggested that those students who have a growth mindset will be more resilient in the face of adversity (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007).
- **Academic Performance Improvement:** Research has shown that students with a growth mindset have a greater tendency to achieve higher academic outcomes. Dweck (2006) found that students who believed their intelligence could be developed were more likely to excel in their academic performance and persevere through difficult tasks.
- **Improved Collaboration and Teamwork:** Nursing, at its core, is fundamentally collaborative in practice, which requires effective communication and teamwork. A student with a growth mindset will be encouraged and be open to feedback and appreciate different perspectives, fostering a positive learning environment (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).
- **Lifelong Learning:** Nurses are inherently lifetime learners to stay current with best practices and advancement in treatment options. A student with a growth mindset cultivates a love of learning and, in turn, encourages other students to pursue ongoing professional development (Benner, 2001).

Strategies for Cultivating a Growth Mindset in Nursing

Education:

- **Modeling Growth Mindset Behaviors:** Nursing instructors play a crucial role in shaping their students' mindsets. This can be done by instructors sharing their experiences, including challenges and failures with emphasis on the importance of effort and persistence (Dweck, 2010).
- **Self-Reflection:** Encouraging and incorporating self-reflective practices into the curriculum will help students cultivate their self-awareness, self-regulation, and a deeper understanding of their learning strategies. Benner (2001) identified several ways to support and encourage students to recognize their growth over time through journaling, peer feedback, and guided reflection exercises.
- **Constructive Feedback:** Providing feedback should place more emphasis on the learning opportunities rather than on the student's natural skills and abilities. Instructors can intentionally emphasize strategies for improvement and the value of effort, which will help students understand that their skills can be developed (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).
- **Creating a Sustaining a Safe Learning Environment:** Cultivating a classroom culture that embraces taking risks and students learning from their mistakes is essential. Through encouraging open discussions about challenges and failures, instructors can help normalize the learning strategies and reduce the fear of judgment (Yeager & Dweck, 2012).
- **Growth Mindset Language:** Instructors can integrate language that promotes a growth mindset, such as praising effort over ability. For exam-

ple, by using phrases like "You worked hard on that," or "What strategies did you use to overcome that challenge?" the instructor can reinforce the concept that growth is achievable through effort (Dweck, 2010).

Some factors for consideration and potential challenges with the integration of a growth mindset in nursing education are apparent. Some students may come from backgrounds that focus on a fixed mindset, which in turn will lead to greater resistance to new ideas. Additionally, as nursing education is so high-stakes, inherently it can exacerbate anxiety and hinder the development of a student's ability to cultivate a growth mindset. Instructors must be proactive and work with these challenges to create a supportive environment that encourages growth.

It is essential now, more than ever, to cultivate a growth mindset in nursing education to better prepare future nurses to be more equipped to navigate the complexities of healthcare. Through fostering resilience, academic performance, and promoting lifelong learning, a growth mindset can significantly improve students' educational experiences. Through instructors modeling growth mindset behaviors, encouraging self-reflection, providing constructive feedback, creating a safe learning environment, and using growth mindset language, students will be empowered to thrive in their professional journeys. These efforts will emphasize the belief that skills and abilities can be developed and will not only benefit individual students but will also contribute to the advancement of the nursing profession as a whole ■.

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