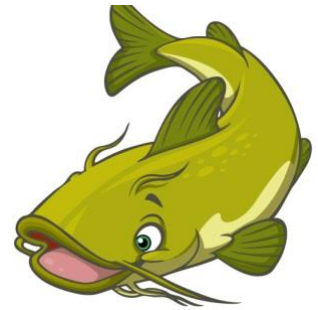




The Codfish & The Catfish



A Southern Regional Middle School
Parental Overview of the
Personal Growth Mindset Workshop

The Codfish and the Catfish

A number of years back, the codfish industry on the northwest coast was in serious trouble. The fresher the fish the better. How could they keep the fish fresh while transporting it to market on the east coast? They froze the cod. The cod lost its flavor. They shipped the cod live in salt water tanks. The cod became soft and mushy.

Finally, they found a solution. Catfish are the natural enemy of codfish. They placed catfish in the tanks with the codfish. The catfish would chase them around the tanks the whole time they were being transported. Guess what? The cod arrived in better condition than ever!

What do codfish and catfish have to do with my personal success, you ask? Each of us has a “catfish” or two in our life. A demanding soccer practice. An essay to write. Math! The betrayal of a friend. A mean classmate. A parent. A teacher. The team you didn’t make. Everybody’s “catfish” are different. What’s important is that you are equipped to handle the “catfish” in whatever guise they appear in your life and do so in a way that leaves you strong and vibrant.

This personal workshop is just that- personal. It is designed specifically for you to be equipped to not only evade the “catfish” in your life, but to thrive in the process. Why is it needed? **Because your success in life won’t be determined by how you handle the things you do well, but instead, by how you handle the “catfish” that show up.** You can invest as much or as little effort as you wish. Your choice. You are the sole beneficiary. Ready? Good, because you are worth it!

To benefit the most from the workshops, be picky about what areas you choose to address and what strategies you will integrate into your lifestyle. Work on one at a time. It would be just silly to think you can incorporate them all at once.

The above story has been used to introduce your child to the Growth Mindset Program being initiated at Southern Regional Middle School. Each child will receive a handbook with 10 areas of focus. Our hope is that each student will leave Southern Regional Middle School with the tools and grit to tackle the “catfish” of life and that you will join us in providing those tools!

People with growth mindsets are more successful than people with fixed mindsets! Twenty years of research by Carol Dweck at Stanford University backs that up. Read *Mindset The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck if you would like more in-depth information. We at Southern Regional Middle School intend to harness the growth mindset concept and put it to work for your children, but we need your help to do so effectively.

A mindset is a set of beliefs that a person holds about his or her ability, intelligence, talents, character and skills. What research has found is that it is this belief is more important than actual ability in determining one's success. Did you get that? It is the belief that is more important than actual ability in determining one's success. Wow-that's powerful!

The key factor, and the reason why we wish to harness this concept is that, contrary to commonly held beliefs, intelligence, talent, skills and character are not fixed, but can be cultivated and developed. Secondly, failure and criticism are seen to be challenges to be overcome and used as stepping stones rather than stumbling blocks. Good news for all!

Here's the bottom line of having a growth mindset:

- Learn more than others
- Develop more confidence over time
- Learn how to learn
- Willing to take reasonable risks
- Are more successful in the long run
- Are not defeated by challenges, but instead rise to meet them
- Internally motivated to work hard, for as long as it takes because they see that working hard and overcoming obstacles pays off
- Believe that it is hard work, perseverance and diligence that make one successful, not innate intelligence and talent
- See struggle, failure and criticism as an opportunity to learn

Three major findings of the research are what have compelled us to focus on mindset development in our students this year:

Finding #1- It is how one personally handles adversity, perceived failure, and criticism in life that ultimately determines success.

- Failure is part of life. Criticism is part of life.
Both need to be treated as stepping stones to success.

Finding #2- The brain has plasticity. That means intelligence, talent, character, etc. are not fixed, but can be developed.

- If a person works hard and long to accomplish a goal that seems easy for some, it has been proven that they can ultimately surpass that person. Perseverance, diligence, and grit will be the by-products.

Finding #3- A person will never rise higher than his/her thoughts. Those thoughts are expressed in words which are manifested in attitude.

- Thoughts must be challenged and not simply accepted. Words should be edifying or kept quiet.

We call our program The Codfish and the Catfish, a Personal Growth Mindset Workshop. The introduction and story from the handbook are attached so that you will have a better idea of our focus. As parents, we are asking for you to adopt the “language of growth mindset” at home. Help us direct your child’s thinking and words to be edifying ones. Here are a few suggestions which have proven to be beneficial:

1. Hold your child accountable for **P.R.I.D.E.**- Personal Responsibility in Daily Effort. Help us help them develop self-control and the qualities necessary to become productive, independent, contributing members of society.
2. Check out your child’s Codfish and the Catfish Handbook. Every concept in the handbook is applicable at home, at school, in sports, at work and in life in general.
3. Plan to have a daily “Learning Discussion.” Use these types of questions;
 - a. What did you learn today?
 - b. What mistake did you make that taught you something?
 - c. What did you try hard at today?
 - d. What strategies could you have used to make yourself more successful?
 - e. Use encouraging words in your discussion:
 - i. Tell me about it, show me more.
 - ii. Let’s see what you did. How do you feel about it?
 - iii. How did you ever figure that out?
 - iv. Looks like you extended a great deal of effort/time.
 - v. How many ways did you try it before it turned out the way you wanted?
 - vi. Are you pleased with what you did?
 - vii. What would you have done differently?
4. Remind your child that everyone has a different learning curve and it might take them more time and effort to succeed, but that they are worth the effort.
5. Promote the **PROCESS** of learning only
 - a. Don’t continually praise your student’s intelligence or looks, innate athletic ability or artistic talent. This harms their motivation and the minute they hit a snafu, their confidence in themselves goes out the window. If success means they are smart, then they perceive failure to mean they’re dumb.
 - b. Praise effort, persistence, creative strategies, embracing challenges, setting goals, planning, problem-solving, etc.
 - c. Remind them that learning changes their brain- it actually grows!
6. Warning, this concept is the hardest for parents to follow. Failure teaches important life lessons. It is how kids learn resiliency. As parents, we want to keep our kids from failing, from feeling upset or sad. **DON’T** protect them from everything. If you do, and we do, they will be adults with no perseverance, no belief in their abilities, no work ethic and no success strategies.

7. Encourage and **model** self- talk:

When you hear:

I'm not good at this

I give up

This is too hard

I can't make this any better

I just don't get math

I made a mistake

It's good enough.

This is going to take some time and effort

I need to use some different strategies.

She is so smart. I will never be that smart.

Encourage a mindset change to:

I'm awesome at this

Plan A didn't work

What am I missing?

Is this really my best effort?

I am going to train my brain in math

Mistakes tell me what didn't work

I can always improve if I keep on trying.

Good thing there are 25 more letters

I am on the right track.

I need to figure out what she does to learn better.

8. This is the granddaddy of them all- **Harness the power of YET!**

I can't do that

I am not as good as she is

YET!

YET!

References and Resources:

The New Psychology of Success: <http://www.mindsetonline.com>

<http://www.Brainology.us>

How Not to Talk to Your Kids: The inverse power of praise, New Your Magazine cover article, Feb. 17, 2007: <http://nymag.com/news/feature/27840>

The Secret to Raising Smart Kids, Scientific American, Dec. 2007:

<http://www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=the-secdret-to-raising-smart-kids>

Mindset TEDxManhattan Beach: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN34FNbOKXc>

The Greater Good with Dr. Christine Carter:

http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/raising_happiness/post/the_right_way_to_praise_kids

Growth Mindset Email Newsletter by Mindset Wriks: (click subscribe)

<http://community.mindsetworks.com/newsletter>

Oxford learning.com/category/motivation

Debbie Silver, ED.D, "Fall Down 7 Times, Get Up 8: Teaching Kids to Succeed" mindworks.com

Dr. Jo Boaler interview (Standfor) Math and Mindsets

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTsOnakIQJY>

Videos to view with you children:

Famous failures: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dT4Fu-XDygw>

Growth vs. Fixed Mindset: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=08JycfeoVzg>