Chapter 1. The Mindsets

1. Is there a talent or ability you would like to have but don’t? How do you know you don’t have it—what’s the evidence?
2. Can you name one thing you could do to develop that ability? Two?
3. Can you think of a time you faced an important opportunity or challenge with a fixed mindset? What were your thoughts and worries—about your abilities? about other people’s judgments? about the possibility of failure? Describe them vividly.
4. Now, can you take that same opportunity or challenge and switch into a growth mindset? Think of it as a chance to learn new things. What are the plans and strategies you’re thinking about now?
5. Is there someone in your life (a boss, mate, friend, child) with a fixed mindset—someone who won’t take risks, who can’t admit mistakes, who falls apart or gets defensive after setbacks? Do you understand that person better now?

Chapter 2. Inside the Mindsets

1. Benjamin Barber, an eminent sociologists, doesn’t divide the people in the world into the successes and failures. He divides them by mindset—into the learners and nonlearners. How do you divide people?
2. When do you feel smart? When you’re doing something flawlessly or when you’re learning something new? How can you make striving, stretching, and struggling into something that makes you feel smart?
3. Do you ever feel superior to other people? Stop it! It’s the wrong mindset and it’s one failure away from feeling inferior. Using the growth mindset, discuss ways of feeling confident and worthy without feeling superior.
4. Did you ever label yourself a failure or loser after something negative happened—failing a test, losing a job, being rejected? Describe a time this happened. How could you have been more like Jim Marshall, who made his humiliating experience into a life-changing opportunity?
5. Are you a person who tends to avoid responsibility for your problems or failures by making excuses or blaming others? Think of specific examples and discuss how you could use a growth mindset to take responsibility and start to correct the problems you face.
6. Have you ever been like Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg—afraid to give something important your full effort? Think of times you’ve done this. Are there other self-defeating ways you try to protect yourself from (meaningful) failure?

Chapter 3. The Truth About Ability and Accomplishment

1. Did you always assume that success came right from innate talent or ability? Discuss people you know who are brilliant or talented but never went anywhere. And people who are not so brilliant or talented, but are highly successful. How did they do it?
2. Was there a difficult transition in your life where you fell into a fixed mindset and lost confidence in your abilities? Describe it.
3. Look at the before and after drawings on page 69. What do they tell you about talent?
4. Were you labeled a gifted child? Did it help you or hurt you?
5. Have you ever trusted someone’s negative evaluation of your ability or talent? Think about it now. How could they judge your potential?

Chapter 4. Sports: The Mindset of a Champion

1. Who is your favorite athlete? Do you just assume he or she is a “natural”? Find out about this athlete’s background, practice habits, and training regime. Do you still think he or she is a natural?
2. Do you have the mindset of a champion? Do you do your best when things are going for you or against you? How can you use a growth mindset to raise your game when it counts most?
3. Does your joy in sports come from playing your hardest or from winning? Do you take losses really hard? Why? What do losses mean about you, your sports ability, or your image of yourself?
4. Is there a sport you’ve always wanted to try but haven’t because you consider yourself a poor athlete? What is that sport and how could you start to learn it?

Chapter 5. Business and Leadership

1. Recently, a friend of mine said, “I never take a job where I have more than 50% of the required skills and knowledge.” Would this be beyond your comfort level? Why? What would you do if you found yourself in this position?
2. Do you think leaders are born not made, as in “a born leader”? Why?
3. Now break up business leadership into its separate parts: knowledge of the company, management skills, negotiation skills, planning for the future, and all the others you can think of. Do you think each of these is learnable or not?
4. Do you have a worker or co-worker who has a fixed mindset? How does it show itself? What are some steps you could take to teach him or her a growth mindset?
5. Is there something in your business or career you’ve been wanting to try for? What’s stopping you? Can you analyze it from a growth mindset and plan a first step?
6. Suppose you were passed over for a promotion? How would you react in a fixed mindset? Would you be down on yourself? Would you blame others? Would you feel angry and vindictive? Now how would you react in a growth mindset? What would you do to gain the feedback, skills, and knowledge you need to be promoted next time?
7. What would you do if you found out your (fixed-mindset) boss thought you had a bad attitude, a losing personality, no talent for the job?

Chapter 6. Relationships: Mindsets in Love (or Not)

1. Do you get stuck in a rejection—do you feel branded by it, do you ruminate about it and harbor feelings of revenge? Now think of an especially painful rejection. What could you take from it that is useful and constructive for your current or future relationships?
2. Have you closed yourself off to certain relationships because you expect perfection—total alignment in every way? This is a dream, and a bad one at that. Think about the people you know who would be wonderful additions to your life in spite of their imperfections?
3. Imagine a scene between partners, one with a growth mindset and one with a fixed mindset. The growth mindset partner has a complaint. What does s/he say? What does the mate hear? How can this be resolved?
Can you take criticism from others? Or do you make all kinds of excuses for why it’s not your fault? What do you think criticism means about you? How could you handle it better in the future?
4. Do you expect your partner to read your mind? Are there times you’ve gotten annoyed with your partner because s/he doesn’t understand what you need or want? How could you explain more fully so that you’re both on the same page?
What assumptions have you made about your partner—about roles, responsibilities, expectations–but never discussed them with him or her? Could this be causing friction between you?
5. Do you know couples who seemed perfectly matched but then, to your surprise, broke up? Can you analyze it from a mindset perspective: Did they have trouble communicating about problems, growing from disagreements, or interpreting each other accurately?

Chapter 7. Parents, Teachers, and Coaches: Where Do Mindsets Come From?

1. Do you praise your children’s intelligence to make them feel smart? Think of the last time you did this. Now how could you have given growth-oriented praise instead?
2. Do you excuse your children’s failures so you won’t harm their self-esteem? Think of times you’ve done this, and then think about how you could use the occasion to teach them a growth mindset (and help them succeed!).
3. People who send fixed-mindset messages to their children –even positive ones—often have children who feel judged and who may become anxious about achievement or even start avoiding effort and challenges. Have you seen signs of this in your children?
4. Have you used discipline to “teach your child a lesson”? What was the message you were hoping to convey? What was the message you did convey? How would you handle it now?
5. Think about the ideals, standards, and expectations you set for your child. Now think hard: Are these the kinds of ideals that make your child feel judged and afraid of disappointing you? Or are these ideals that make your child feel inspired to learn?
6. What did you parents do that fostered a fixed or growth mindset in you?
7. Are you a teacher or a coach? What are some ways you could put the growth-mindset strategies into practice right away? What’s your very first step?

Chapter 8. Changing Mindsets: A Workshop

1. Think about the last time you had a major setback, failure or rejection in your life. Did you hear the fixed mindset voice in your head? What did it say? Now, how would you answer it with a growth mindset voice? What would that dialogue sound like?
2. Think of something about yourself you’ve been wanting to change. What is it? Has a fixed mindset prevented you from doing this? Think about it from a growth mindset and spell out a concrete plan for change.
3. Think about a new diet. What new strategies would you use to help yourself observe the diet? What would you think, feel, and do the first time your fell off the diet? What could you learn from your “failure” and how would you get back on track?
4. Is there an area in your life where winning is everything? What does winning mean to you? What does losing mean about you? Watch yourself in those situations and see how your mind is working. Now, what could you do to introduce a growth mindset into your thinking? Give some examples.
5. Do you use feeling bad as a reason for doing nothing? When you feel disappointing, thwarted, cheated, or depressed, do you use this as a reason to stop trying? What steps could you take to help growth mindset thinking overcome your fixed-mindset? Discuss a specific plan.