

A Leader's Guide to



Yay! You Failed!



free spirit
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Illustrated by Steve Mark

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A Note to Teachers and Caregivers

A growth mindset can have a huge impact on the attitude and aptitude of a child, both in and out of school. What is a growth mindset? Growth is developing and advancing. Mindset is a set of beliefs about something. So, a growth mindset is believing in one's ability to develop and advance in skills and knowledge.

When a kid has a growth mindset, they believe they can learn all kinds of things with enough time and practice. When a kid has a fixed mindset, on the other hand, they believe they cannot learn and grow certain skills. For example, they might say, "I'm not a math person." They don't believe they can develop the skills needed to do well in math.

The title of this book may seem silly or surprising. Why would anyone say, "Yay!" about failing? Here's what I tell my students about the word *FAIL*: you can think of it as an acronym for *First Attempt In Learning*. Share this tip with kids to help them remember that learning usually means trying something many times before mastering it. When a kid makes a mistake, they learn something about what *doesn't* work. Then they can try again with a new strategy.

The more a kid tries something, the more connections their brain makes. As these connections grow, they reinforce the skills being practiced. You will learn more about this in chapter 2 when you read about the Success Cycle.

The message behind the book title is this: *If you failed at something, that means you tried!* And trying is worth celebrating every time. Continuing to practice helps you improve. If you

never try, you can't learn or get better at new skills. Making mistakes is key to learning and growing. I like to call mistakes "growth spurts."

Yay! You Failed! is about embracing failure as an ordinary and important part of learning, not as something to be embarrassed or upset about. People who keep trying and practicing make many valuable mistakes, learn from what works and what doesn't work, and develop mastery over time. Through these experiences, they learn to trust the process of trying, failing, learning, and growing. They develop a growth mindset.



As a teacher or caregiver, you can help kids develop a growth mindset by modeling growth mindset thinking. When something you try doesn't work out, show a positive attitude and determination to learn from your mistake, then try again in a new way. Let kids see you reading or watching videos or asking for help to learn more about the skill you are trying to learn or improve. Talk about classes or lessons you are taking. Talk about your efforts and your failures as well as your successes.

Another tip for encouraging growth mindset is to praise kids when they try something new, when they learn from a mistake, and when they persevere. Be sure to praise their efforts, rather than their talents or achievements. Statements like *You are working really hard on that!* or *You are almost there!* or *I love how you are sticking with it!* are more powerful than *You're very talented!* or *You are so smart.*

You can also encourage growth mindset by pointing out people in your community and beyond who have achieved success—and share the struggles they had along the way. For example, you might talk about a particular Olympic athlete. You could ask kids, “How much did this athlete practice before making it to the Olympics? What did they sacrifice (give up)? What mistakes did they make? Did they have any injuries?” Encourage kids to find the answers to these questions. When kids realize that successful people they admire had to put in lots of time, training, practice, mistakes, and learning, they realize that with a growth mindset, the sky is the limit.



CHAPTER 1

What You Can Do When You Believe in You

Discussion Questions

Ask children:

- What do you think it means to have a growth mindset?
- What is a fixed mindset?
- How do you feel when you try something new?
- Why might someone be afraid to try something new?

Activities

1. Growth Mindset Messages

Invite students to reread some of the positive statements, or affirmations, on page 5. Discuss how these can be empowering as they try new things. Encourage students to write these affirmations and some of their own on separate note cards to hang up all around the classroom. If students' desks, lockers, or tables have space, each kid can post a favorite affirmation there. Encourage children to post affirmations at home too.

2. Try, Try Again

Challenge students to draw a specific animal, such as a horse or a kangaroo, without help. The next day, invite students to draw the animal again with the guidance of a drawing tutorial video for that animal. Repeat this drawing exercise each day for several days. Discuss what learning took place. Ask the children, "Is your final drawing better than your first one? What mistakes did you correct after some learning and practice? Can you draw the animal without the video now? Could you teach someone else how to draw it? What more do you think you could learn about drawing this animal?"



CHAPTER 2

Practice Makes Progress

Discussion Questions

Ask children:

- Why is it better to say, “Practice makes progress” instead of “Practice makes perfect”?
- How does practicing something make you better at it?
- What can you do now that you could not do when you were a toddler?
- What is the Success Cycle and why do you get better each time you repeat it?

Activities

1. Success Cycle Writing

Project page 19 on your classroom screen or ask students to turn to page 19 in the book. Invite them to think of a time they went through the Success Cycle to learn something new. Ask them to write a sequential narrative about what happened. They can turn to a partner to talk about each step before writing about it, or they can share afterward.

2. Scavenger Hunt

Encourage students to take photos, draw pictures, or bring objects from home that represent skills they have learned. For example, children might snap a picture of the first book they learned to read, a pair of roller skates, a recipe they learned to cook, or a scarf they crocheted.

Invite students to share these pictures at school and discuss each step of trying, failing, figuring out new strategies, learning, and improving. What feelings did kids have when they finally mastered the new skill?



CHAPTER 3

Three Ways to Keep Going When the Going Gets Tough

Discussion Questions

Ask children:

- When was a time you were resilient?
- Which of the three tips in this chapter helps you the most?
- How is taking a break different from quitting?
- What is some helpful feedback, or advice, you have gotten?



Activities

1. Brain Breaks

Discuss the goal of taking a break. Ask students to brainstorm and share helpful ways to take a break from frustration. Is it breathing exercises? Stretching? Having a snack? Taking a walk? Dancing to music? Record all the brain break ideas kids could do as a class or individually. Can they think of items your class could keep in a special spot for relaxing?

Discuss procedures for their use

2. Learn and Teach!

Explain that one valuable way to improve is to learn from someone with more practice and experience. Challenge each student to think of a skill they have and to teach it to the class. Stick to skills that can be learned relatively quickly, such as making an origami frog or doing a card trick. Ask kids, “How can you help one another by coaching and giving feedback? Where else can you find help?”



CHAPTER 4

Ready . . . Set . . . Goal!

Discussion Questions

Ask children:

- Have you set goals for yourself before? What were they?
- What goal are you working toward right now?
- Why do you think it helps to write down your goals?
- Do you think it is better to set little goals or big goals? Why?



Activities

1. Set a Goal

Ask kids to think of something they want to learn how to do and write it down. Next, invite them to explore and write down how to do or practice that skill. Students can pick an end date when they hope to have mastered that skill. Now they are ready to begin working on it! Encourage kids to take one small action step toward learning their new skill.

2. Goal Vision

Invite kids to imagine what it will look like to accomplish their goal. Ask them, “Can you see yourself doing that new skill? How will it feel to do that skill? How will people around you react when they see you do that skill? Could you teach that new skill to someone? Who is it?” Next, ask the kids to draw themselves doing the skill they want to learn and write about how it will feel to accomplish their goal.



CHAPTER 5

A Look on the Bright Side

Discussion Questions

Ask children:

- What do you think it means to look on the bright side?
- Do you think you have a positive attitude toward trying new things? What's an example?
- What are some things you can do to help yourself think positively?
- How does a positive attitude help you meet your goals?

Activities

1. Express Gratitude

It can help us stay positive when we recognize and are grateful for what we have and what we can do.

Encourage kids to start a gratitude journal to reflect on the progress they are making toward their goals. Ask,

“Who are people who help you? What tools are you happy you can use to learn or practice new skills?” Invite students

to write one thing they are grateful for in their journal each day. Encourage them to write thank-you notes as a class for school helpers, such as lunch room staff and bus drivers.

2. Celebrate Success

It feels good to celebrate when we accomplish a goal. Ask students to share favorite ways they celebrate making progress toward or accomplishing a goal. Is it planning a fun activity with a friend or calling a relative to tell them the news? Just checking accomplishments off a

list or adding a sticker to a chart can be satisfying too. Encourage kids

to think of ways they can recognize their hard work and progress.



CHAPTER 6

Your Mindset Matters

Discussion Questions

Ask children:

- *If you believe, you can achieve.* Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- What advice would you give to someone who's making lots of mistakes and doesn't seem to be making much progress?
- How is a growth mindset helpful outside school?

Activities

1. Acrostic

Challenge students to choose a term or phrase from the book and use it to create an acrostic. Some possibilities are growth mindset, set goals, stay positive, mindset matters, celebrate success, take breaks, and success cycle. Display the acrostics in the classroom or hallway.

2. Sing a Song

Put students in small groups. Give each group a sheet of chart paper and identify a familiar children's song the group can use for a tune. Invite each group to choose one growth mindset topic from the acrostic activity and write song lyrics that go with their assigned tune. Groups can perform their songs for the class or ask the whole class to sing them.



About the Author and Illustrator

Shannon Anderson has taught in Indiana for 25 years, from first grade through college level. She was named one of ten teachers who “amazed and inspired us” by the *Today Show*. Shannon loves to write books for kids and visit schools to share the power of writing and of having a growth mindset.



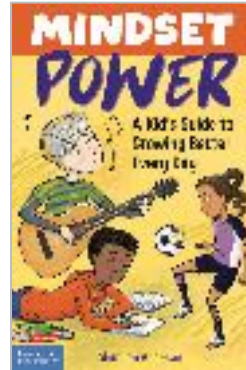
Steve Mark is a freelance illustrator and a part-time puppeteer. He lives in Minnesota and is the father of three and the husband of one. Steve has illustrated many books for children, including *Ease the Tease!* from the Little Laugh & Learn™ series and all the books in the Laugh & Learn® series for older kids.



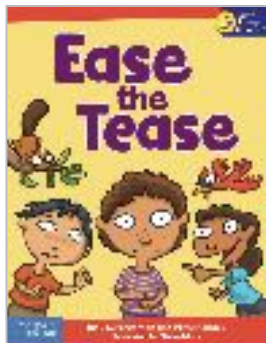
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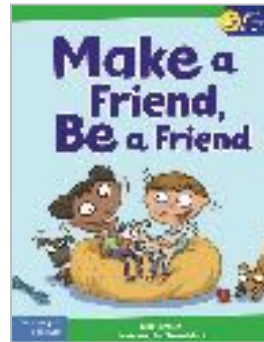
Y Is for Yet
A Growth Mindset
Alphabet
by Shannon Anderson,
illustrated by Jacob Souwa
For ages 4–8. 40 pp.;
HC; full-color; 8¼" x 9".



Mindset Power
A Kid's Guide to Growing Better
Every Day
by Shannon Anderson,
illustrated by Violet Lemay
For ages 9–13. 128 pp.;
PB; 2-color; 6" x 9".



Ease the Tease
by Judy S. Freedman
and Mimi P. Black,
illustrated by Steve Mark
For ages 6–9. 84 pp.;
PB; full-color; 6¼" x 8".



**Make a Friend,
Be a Friend**
by Eric Braun,
illustrated by Steve Mark
For ages 6–9. 88 pp.;
PB; full-color; 6¼" x 8".



**How to Take the ACHE
Out of Mistakes**
by Kimberly Feltes Taylor
and Eric Braun,
illustrated by Steve Mark
For ages 8–13. 128 pp.;
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All You Can Imagine
written and illustrated
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