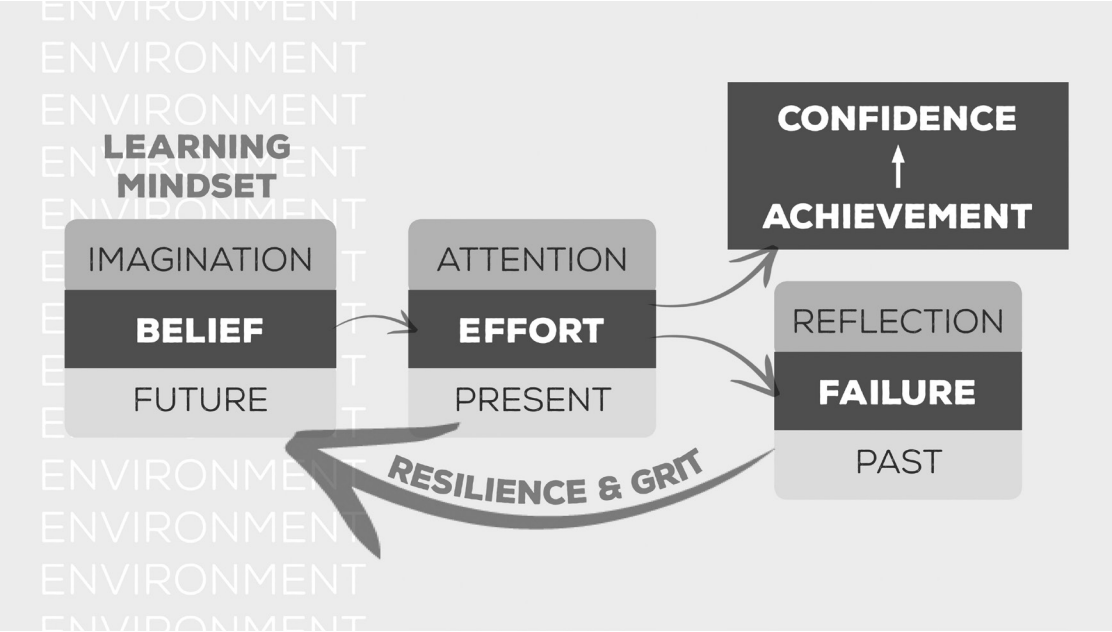
MINDSET, RESILIENCE, & GRIT: RELATIONSHIPS & DEFINITIONS



- **Mindset**: belief about learning *this* material
- **Resilience**: ability to use strategies that promote perseverance
- **Grit**: determination and choice to utilize strategies of resilience to restore a learning mindset
- These are frequently intervolved in researchers' definitions:
  - "…the ability of a child to deal more effectively with stress and pressure to cope with everyday challenges, to bounce back from disappointments, adversity, and trauma, to develop clear and realistic goals, to solve problems, to relate comfortably with others, and to treat oneself and others with respect" (Brooks, 1).
  - "…the ability to cope with adversity and push through challenges in the pursuit of opportunities" (Hanson, 2).
  - "…the strength and speed of our response to adversity—and we can build it. It isn't about having a backbone. It's about strengthening the muscles around our backbone" (Sandberg & Grant, 10).
  - "…the passionate pursuit of hard goals that awes and inspires others to become better people, flourish emotionally, take positive risks, and live their best lives" (Miller, 14-15).

Examine the definitions and the graphic representation of mindset, resilience, and grit. Working with a partner, talk through your understanding of the graphic, using ideas from the definitions to expand each represented idea.

MINDSET, RESILIENCE, & GRIT:
WHY THEY MATTER & WHY THEY ARE NOT NATURAL

- "…building authentic grit isn't just possible but…our duty…if we want to live in a world that upholds standards of excellence and shuns quitting" (Miller, 4).
- "Learning is about one's relationship with oneself and one's ability to exert the effort, self-control, and critical self-assessment necessary to achieve the best possible results—and about overcoming risk aversion, failure, distractions, and sheer laziness in pursuit of *real* achievement" (Nilson, XXVIII).
- Deep learning, critical thinking, and skill acquisition all require self-regulation (Nilson).
- When failure is experienced, the amygdala hijacks the brain's executive centers and activates the fight or flight response. Resilience is how quickly we recover from this hijacked state (Goleman).

What is one new reason that you will emphasize mindset, resilience, and grit in your classroom? Why does that reason stand out as important to you?

THE OLD STORY

Belief influences effort; effort influences achievement; achievement influences confidence.

	INTELLIGENCE IS FIXED	INTELLIGENCE CAN BE GAINED
BELIEF	a person cannot make him/herself smarter no matter how much effort he/she gives	a person can become more intelligent through targeted effort
GOAL	to look smart or talented so pride or entitlement can be gained via comparison	to learn; failing *is* learning
PERSPECTIVE	working hard=not being smart; smart doesn't need to work hard, and having to work hard reduces me	you learn via effort; try, because even failure helps you learn how to do it better the next time
RESPONSE TO SETBACK	give up rather than risk failure; smart doesn't make mistakes and failure is "fatal"	examine the error, confront weaknesses, & gain insight into how to improve
FOCUS	"Am I right or wrong? If I am wrong, who or what can I blame?"	"Where and how can I improve?"

Think & Interact

Sort it out. Succinctly contrast these beliefs by identifying one idea or image (e.g., metaphor) that captures the essence of each "side." (Do not use "nature vs. nurture.") For example, one teacher described the difference as "inheritance vs. wage," a beautifully insightful way of describing the difference. Record your ideas in the blanks below.

_____ vs. _____

Share and discuss your ideas with your colleagues.

MINDING MINDSET

"A word out of your mouth may seem of no account, but it can accomplish nearly anything – or destroy it!"

- ★ Create and maintain a classroom environment that emphasizes intelligence gained through effort
  - ► welcome error as a gateway to learning
  - ► challenge students sufficiently: "In a series of studies involving middle school and high school math classes, students who were forced to struggle on complex problems before receiving help from teachers outperformed students who received immediate assistance…Skills come from struggle" (Stulberg & Magness, 2017)
  - ► change strategies, not students: "The way you are trying to (throw the ball, form the letter a, solve the equation) isn't working. Let's figure out why. Then we'll change the way you are trying to (throw the ball, form the letter a, solve the equation) so that you can do it better."
  - ► Such an approach 1) focuses the student's attention on the strategy or action rather than on his/her own intelligence, 2) makes the teacher a partner in solving the problem, and 3) communicates that with a different approach and redirected effort, the teacher believes the student can be successful.
  - ► be cautious with competition
- ★ Be intentional in your comments. Praise the effort-result relationship rather than "natural ability"
  - ► "Look at what you've accomplished. I can tell you worked hard on this!" rather than, "You are good at math!" or "You are gifted at drawing!"
  - ► "Whoops, I guess that was too easy. I apologize for wasting your time. Let's do something you can really learn from" (Dweck, 179).
  - ► "I like the way you tried all kinds of strategies on that math problem until you finally got it. You thought of a lot of ways to try it and found one that worked!"
  - ► "You put so much thought into this essay that it made me think about *Romeo and Juliet* in a brand new way!"

- Give the student a sense of autonomy, especially when giving "bad" news—e.g., "Here is your test score. Would you like to review study habits with me? I'd be happy to do it." (Bhanji, 2014)
  - Approaching feedback this way—no "sugar coating" but with a specific way you may help—is more likely to activate the student's ventromedial prefrontal cortex, a part of the brain that helps regulate emotion and promote flexibility in response
- Explain the truth about intelligence to parents (and students)
  - Use guiding questions to redirect student thinking:
    - Right now, what are you thinking about yourself and and your ability to learn this material/skill?
    - How can you change your self-talk to influence your thinking about yourself and your ability to learn this material/skill?
    - How would your actions change if you believed you could learn this material/skill?
    - Goal: to equip each student with the ability to self-direct thinking and adjust behavior accordingly

Think & Interact

Imagine a student has handed you work to review. What statements (i.e., **What actual words**) may guide the student to the correct belief about intelligence?

- the student's work is correct and required minimal effort

- the student's work is incorrect despite obvious effort

- the student's work is correct as a result of good effort

RESILIENCE & GRIT: A THREE-PART ABILITY

The underpinnings of resilience and grit:

- **Imagination**

  specifically, the ability to generate mental images of situations that do not currently exist

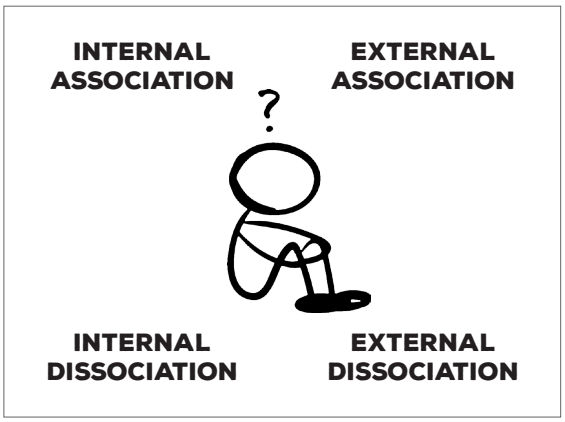
- **Reflection**

  the ability to monitor one's own thinking and engage strategies that make positive adjustments

- **Attention**

  the directing of one's "cognitive flashlight" to focus one's mental field of vision

THE BRAIN FACES A CHALLENGE AND A CHOICE



TRAINING IMAGINATION (THE FUTURE COMPONENT)

Being able to imagine a future generates hope, which sparks and sustains effort.

- "Put Yourself in the Picture"
  - provides an opportunity to practice motivational or instructive self-talk
  - establishes reference points of resilience
  - encourages a positive and effective response to challenge
- Guide student thinking
  - emphasize a motivational image
  - emphasize a strategic "mental movie"

TRAINING REFLECTION (THE PAST COMPONENT)

Self-awareness is not the mind's default state, but such awareness precedes positive adjustment.

- Strategy
  - get the student talking, specifically to think aloud: What are you thinking about yourself as you try to complete this task?
  - keep the student talking, using instructive self-talk, talking through the details of how to complete the task, NOT self-esteem boosting messages
  - thoughts » feelings » performance
  - get the student to examine and discuss what went wrong; avoid telling the student what went wrong and how to fix it (at least initially)
  - Error primes the mind for insight, and analyzing the error invites it.

TRAINING ATTENTION (THE PRESENT COMPONENT)

When our minds wander, brain circuits that produce "chatter" immediately become active. Attention strays when it's overwhelmed.

- Strategy
  - focus on just the next step
  - advertise progress

BRINGING FUTURE (IMAGINATION), PAST (REFLECTION), & PRESENT (ATTENTION) TOGETHER: AN EXAMPLE

HELPING STUDENTS FIND RESILIENCE

- Foster resilience by directing student thinking…
  - to the future to propel directed effort—"Here is what you can do!" or "Here is what you'll be able to do!"
  - to the past to promote learning by examining error—"Let's figure out how to change the strategy so that you are successful."
  - to the present to focus attention on next steps—"Just focus on the first step and complete it."

Think & Interact

Discuss the following with your colleagues:

Imagine a student has handed you work to review. What statements (i.e., **What actual words**) may help the student find grit and resilience?

- the student's work seems scattered, as if he/she does not know how to get a good start
- the student's work is mediocre and suggests a lack of focus and/or effort
- the student's work (or behavior) suggests he/she is overwhelmed with the work required to produce a good result
- the student's work is exemplary

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