

## Effective Parent's Toolkit

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### Change your Mindset

#### Core Material – Reading (Change Your Mindset)

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What is your mindset, and why does it need changing? That is what you are thinking, right? I don't blame you. What I am asking you to do is change how you think, change the way you look at things, your kids, your parenting style, why you do things, why your kids do things. That is a lot to ask! But it is important for you to know that the situation you find yourself in, the way your kids act, the way you react, the way you feel, the way your kids feel, your frustrations, their frustrations, the seemingly endless spiral of anger and hopelessness – it can all be changed!

Most often, parents raise children, drawing from the way their parents raised them, thereby teaching their children how to raise their own children. This happens because this is all they know. Your parents are the first authority figures in your life, and from the beginning they begin to form the way you think, your perception, your understanding of right and wrong – your MINDSET. If there was violence, anger, abuse, or other dysfunctional parenting in your family history, this all helps to color the glasses through which you view the world. Most often, when children grow up to have children of their own, they fall back to what they learned from their parents. If there is nothing to change that “mindset” the pattern continues. I am here to tell you, right now, that you do NOT have to pass that down. Also, what if you were raised as an only child, yet you find yourself with 3 children that fight all the time? You have no reference for this, so you don't have anything to fall back on. All of this can be very overwhelming.

You have already made the decision that there are better ways to raise children, and you have chosen to learn more – you have already broken the mold, and are on your way to understanding your own mindset and being able to make the changes you need to.

Your mindset determines what you believe about the world and about yourself and your abilities. Your mindset determines what you believe is possible, what others think of you, and the way you should think about others. Your mindset can be the source of how you treat others that are different from you, it can be the way you view the world, react positively or negatively to things, lose your temper or keep things bottled up inside. It can be the reason for your success or the reason for your failures.

So, to answer your question, “What is a mindset, and why do I need to change it?” I say, if your life isn't exactly what you want it to be, take a look at what isn't working. You will probably find that you have a belief system around that. If it isn't working for you, you need to change it.

Now it is important to understand that changing your mindset is not about changing your feelings. Even though by changing your mindset it will have an impact on how you feel about things, but the feelings are a secondary reaction to the shift in mindset. You can't change how you "feel" you can only change how you view something, and see how that changes your feelings.

### **Where do Mindsets Come From?**

Here is a great example of that. Let's say that you are really upset with your child for being late for school. You let him walk to school because it is quicker than taking the bus, it is easier for you in the morning, and is one less thing on your plate while you're trying to get out the door for work. This is the 5<sup>th</sup> time you have found out that your child has been marked tardy and is now facing some more serious school disciplinary actions. You have asked your child before, and he just said he'd do better, he must have just been walking too slow. This child has been in trouble before, at recess, at lunch or breaks, he is often late or barely makes it back to class. This is a pattern, and you are tired of it. You react, punishing him, on top of the detention the school has sentenced him to. This is so much like your older brother, who was often suspended for being late, because he was smoking, or just plain cutting class. Your parents never did anything, and now your brother is in and out of jail, can't hold a job and you prefer not to speak with him. This won't be the case with your son!

Based on your experiences growing up, you see similar behavior in your son and react from your unique perspective, you want a better future for your son, than what your brother has had.

However, if you were able to step back and question your mindset in this case, not see your son through the same glasses you saw your brother, you might be able to drop the emotion, and find a way to talk to your son and find out what all this behavior is about. You might discover it is as you suspected, and that your reactions were justified. But, if you DON'T allow that opportunity to question what you ASSUME, finding a way to talk with your son, and discovering what is behind the behavior, you might never know that he has been being bullied for the past 3 years, before school, the boys wait for him to get to school, at lunch, recess and breaks they torment him, as well as after school, if they can find him. He spends most of his time at school terrified, hiding, and often hides until the bell rings and the bullies have left for class, before he comes out and runs to his own classes. No one knew. How could they know, he was afraid to tell, and everyone assumed it was something else, because of his family history.

If I had asked you to change the way you felt about your son being tardy, you would have thought me crazy, yet by changing your mindset, you NOW FEEL differently. If you didn't stop, and question your mindset, how would you have known? How could you have helped your son? This is what I mean about Changing your Mindset – Change the way you view situations, beliefs, and using the other tools in the Effective Parenting Tool Kit, learning to communicate, relate, and help your child in ways you never thought you could.

So now, a definition of mindset:

*a mindset is a set of assumptions, methods or notations held by one or more people or groups of people **which is so established that it creates a powerful incentive** within these people or groups to continue to adopt or accept prior behaviors, choices, or tools.*

## **Changing Your Mindset**

The first step is understanding what a mindset is, and that it can be changed by simply shifting your perspective, communicating with others about it, or sometimes by just recognizing you have this mindset. I think we have that one down now.

The next step is to change the voice of authority in your head that tells you this mindset is true or right. Usually, the voice of authority in your head that put this believe, perspective or mindset in your head was a parent, a teacher, or an experience that made an impression on you. You took this information in and now use it in your own life. For many things, this is good, like your parents told you Don't Play With Fire, You Will Get Burned, and so you don't play with fire – your mindset is FIRE CAN BE DANGEROUS, caution should be used when dealing with fire. Good. Most of our mindsets and beliefs are good ones.

But some no longer serve us, or are polluted by abuse, distorted by anger, or some are just destructive or limiting. What if, as a child, you had wanted to be a Ballerina, yet you were a bit clumsy. Your parent or a teacher might have said, “You are too clumsy, you will never be a ballerina, you are more suited to be a clown!” Later in your life, if you examine your mindset about success, you might discover that you have low expectations for yourself, and don't feel you could achieve your dreams. Of course you might also be a superstar, having determined that you'll “show them!” It all depends on how that information is taken in and how you process it, as to how you will carry it forward.

So, if the authority voice in your head is telling you something, and (1) you recognize this as a limiting mindset, you will need to change the voice of authority.

How do you do that? Well, there are many ways, for example, find another authority that thinks differently, find proof or do research to prove the authority voice was wrong, or an easier way, go to the REAL authority on your life – YOU. You are the authority and expert on your life. Afterall, you are the one who is realizing that the original authority voice was wrong, and needs to be replaced. Who better to set the record straight?

Let's look at an example. Your father was a connoisseur of all things beautiful. He would often comment on the beauty of this person or that, beautiful legs, entrancing eyes, the body of an angel, etc. Your father remarried when you were young, to a very beautiful woman. He adored her. He often said that beauty was one of the most important things you could have. A fact that contributed to his divorcing your mother. He often commented that you looked like your mother, “Pity” he would say. You always considered yourself unattractive, not worthy of adoration, praise or compliments. As an adult, you now step back and examine your mindset on beauty and how you feel about your own beauty. You hear your father's voice. You stop and think about the reality, people have often commented on your eyes, your hair, your sense of

style, you never believed them. Could it be that you really are pretty? What if you believed these people? What if you changed your mindset, and told yourself you ARE pretty? How would this change your life? If you looked in the mirror everyday and gave yourself a compliment, “Beautiful eyes!” “Great Legs,” “You are beautiful!” how would that make you feel?

I will be honest and admit that this would not be easy, in the words of Julia Roberts, in *Pretty Woman*, “It’s easier to believe the bad stuff,” isn’t it? But I want to bring to your attention, at this point, in the situation we described above, it is a choice now. Now that you have uncovered the truth, it is up to you to believe it or not. But that isn’t all, in order to make this your new reality, not only do you have to believe it, but you have to act on it.

Belief without action is like watching a movie, nice but it isn’t part of your reality. But belief WITH action helps to bring it to life, bring your new belief into reality, and into your daily life.

### Getting from Here to There

So in the case of parenting, it is important to recognize that you may have an inappropriate or dated mindset, but if you do not take action, do not move to change or examine that mindset, you will have made no progress.

To clearly see the difference between the mindset most of us currently have about parenting, and the mindset we will be working toward, study the graph below:

Current Mindset	New Perspective
I have to control my child's behavior	My role is to guide and teach my child appropriate behavior
My child learns through consequences and/or punishment not to repeat bad behavior	My child learns through the examples set in the home and through the boundaries and structures that are set and enforced respectfully and with empathy.
I am the dominant figure, my child is "under" me.	While I am the leader and deserve respect and to be heard, my child has equal human rights to respect and to be heard

Here are some things to think about when you compare these mindsets:

- Using Effective Parenting tools you won’t have to fight for control, you will have the respect and the authority you deserve, without threatening, punishing and power struggles.
- By setting examples, boundaries and structures in your home, and being consistent, you will find your kids will respect you more.

- When you participate (willingly or unwillingly) in power struggles with your kids, you teach them that there is potential that they could win that struggle, and therefore they will continue to instigate them.
- Do you, instead of holding boundaries, expectations, and structures, try to be friends with your kids and not make waves?

## Summary and Review Questions

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Where do mindsets come from?

Are all our current mindsets bad?

What is something you can do to begin to see your limiting mindsets?

List 2 perspectives you think might be limiting you in some areas of your life:

## Action Steps – Putting it All into Action

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Since belief with no action will get you nowhere, what action will you take to change two perspectives you identified above? List 3 – 5 things you can do right way to start down that path.

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