

Teacher's Guide to the Mental Edge

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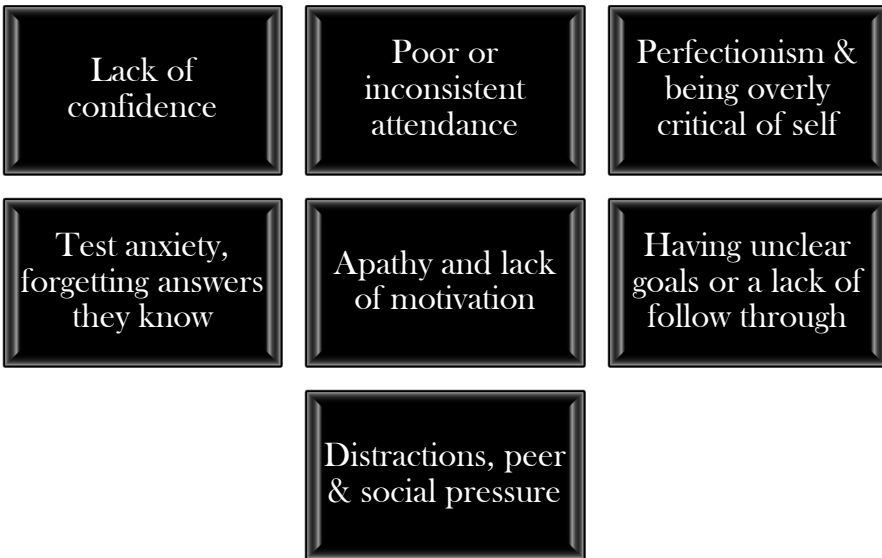
Introduction

“Test scores and measures of achievement tell you where a student is, but they don’t tell you where a student could end up”

-Carol Dweck

Most teachers know that a student’s mindset plays a larger role in their class performance than their knowledge. Think about your students and consider the barriers and obstacles you face regularly. Many teachers recognize big issues like attendance, inefficient use of class time, lack of motivation to study and turn in work, low confidence that prevents students from participating, crippling anxiety over testing, and a variety of other mindset-related issues. Yet our instruction tends to be heavily based on content acquisition.

Mindset Barriers to Student Success



It is important to create engaging lessons that deliver content that students need to cover standards, show proficiency, and grow in their education. However, these lessons lose their value and effectiveness when students’ mindsets are ignored. Improving a student’s mindset can lead to massive gains in any subject area. Along with an increase in GPA’s, students

who develop and strengthen their mindset are more likely to exhibit positive behaviors in class, less likely to display negative behaviors in class, and have better and more consistent performances on tests, projects, and presentations.

This book is meant to guide you with pedagogical methods and practical solutions for addressing mindset training in your classroom. It was adopted from a world class sports-specific mindset training curriculum that has proven effective at the highest levels of athletics and academics, including Ivy League universities and Olympic teams. Our goal is to bring our best lessons and strategies to your classroom in order to help students reach their maximum potential in school and life!

The authors of this book are trained, certified mindset coaches for the renowned *Z Winning Mindset* company. However, we are also current educators at the high school and college level, with graduate degrees in curriculum and instruction. The strategies and methods discussed in this book have been developed through research and practice alike. We believe in systematic mindset training because we use it in our own lives and in our classrooms to bring out the best in our students. The results have been evident in classroom performance, testing, and the attitudes and behaviors of our students. We are grateful for the opportunity to share our highly successful mindset program with you!

Kevin's Story:

Mindset is my passion because it has dictated and changed the opportunities I have had in life. As a young student, my mindset was often negative. I complained and created excuses to avoid responsibilities. My attendance was poor and motivation was even lower. A pessimistic outlook and lack of confidence led to me dropping out of my first college, and then failing out of my second college.

After being accepted to my third college on academic probation, I knew that big changes were necessary to ensure that it wasn't another wasted opportunity. This is when my mindset training began.

I decided to make a determined, practical effort each day in improving myself (not just studying to improve in a content area). Some examples of my "practice" included daily journaling to document successes and opportunities for success, setting lengths of time to look up and reflect on

motivational quotes, writing and re-writing my priorities and setting up calendars to match the priorities I listed, and displaying/reading my goals many times daily to reinforce the big things I was striving for.

It wasn't an overnight success, but little by little I started to change. As I focused less on results and more on the process of maximizing my potential, my classroom performance rose steadily. From the 1.7 GPA that I entered with, I graduated on the dean's list above a 3.5. That success was followed with a perfect 4.0 in a Master's degree and the eventual completion of a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction.

Mindset makes the difference in school and life! My story is proof of that. Nothing changed about my talents, skills, or abilities. By applying a strong, positive mindset and actively improving it daily, my entire life and opportunities changed.

Now it's your turn. The resources in this book have helped teachers around the world to maximize the potential of their students. Furthermore, these strategies can help you get the most out of your career, health, and happiness. An emphasis on mindset has created an endless bounty of benefits to my own life. It is my hope and intention that these resources will help you and your students to live out your biggest dreams and crush your most ambitious goals. Welcome to the #MentalEdge.

Chapter 1: Mindset Training

“If you have a strong mind and plant in it a firm resolve, you can change your destiny.”

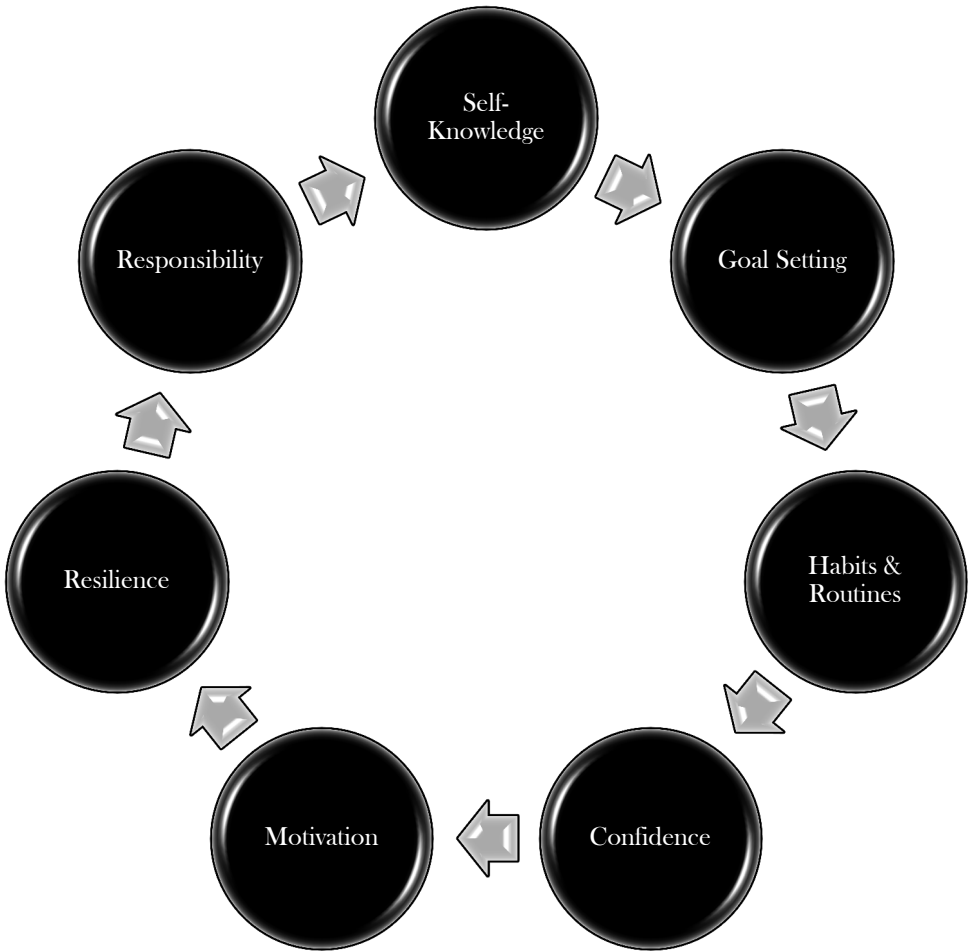
-Paramahansa Yogananda

Some of our students walk through the door on day one with unshakeable confidence and an incredible work ethic, while others drudge into the classroom with apathy and a complete lack of resolve. As educators, we often take for granted the experiences that shape our students into exhibiting those mentalities. What is the difference between a strong mindset and a weak mindset? The simple answer is: **PRACTICE!**

The average student does not practice improving their mindset. Yet any skill that we want to improve takes practice. Mindset isn't any different from learning a hobby, acquiring a skill, or participating in a sport. Basketball players shoot the same shot a thousand times to perfect it. Dancers practice the same routine over and over again to prepare for a performance. Similarly, people with strong mindsets practice training their mindset and they consistently make choices that increase their mental strength.

If you want to encourage a stronger mindset in your students, it will not be accomplished through one lesson or motivational speech. Those things can be helpful, but mindset strengthening takes dedicated, specific practice just like learning a new math concept or applying a scientific method would. In terms of pedagogy, this means that you must address elements of students' mindsets and teach them how to practice and improve on it. To provide practice, we start by breaking down elements of a student's mindset into units. Having a big picture view will allow us to systematically approach mindset strengthening with our students.

Mindset Units of Focus



Self-Knowledge

The first step to building a foundation for a student’s mindset is to make them aware... not just of who they are currently, but of who they want to be. Self-knowledge is often limited to the concept of “knowing yourself” but

in actuality it is about understanding who you are in relation to your ideals. A student who practices self-knowledge understands their strengths and weaknesses, realizes their priorities, and has a purpose behind every action.

Goal Setting

Goal setting may sound self-explanatory, but it is more than simply writing goals down. Goal setting also includes action planning, accountability, and practical steps towards reaching goals and setting new, higher goals. A student who practices goal setting engages in a constant stream of identifying, setting, achieving, and resetting goals. They have ways to stay on the path toward achieving their goals and refocusing when they start to stray from their goals.

Habits & Routines

The routines we keep hold great weight in determining our success or lack of success in any task. Consistency allows us to give a strong performance in every task we commit to, while a lack of consistency creates inconsistency in our performance. Students who do not have structured habits and routines are likely to have spikes and drops in energy and effort, while students who set their habits and routines are likely to give strong effort and a similar display of energy daily.

Confidence

Confidence can make or break a student in and out of the classroom. A confident student will participate, engage in difficult classwork, help other students, and believe in their ability to improve. It is important for students to practice confidence in their body language, attitude, and actions to bring out their best performance daily.

Motivation

A lack of motivation is one of the largest barriers to student success. It is nearly impossible for an unmotivated student to show meaningful growth and improvement. Motivation does not come and go like the wind, however.

Students can practice self-motivation and learn how to find and develop intrinsic motivation for any worthwhile task.

Resilience

Bouncing back from adversity is a crucial skill for students. Every student will deal with obstacles, both in and out of their control. While we can't always prevent negative situations from happening in a student's life, we can provide strategies and practice for them to develop higher levels of resilience. The quicker they can recover from setbacks, the higher their level of success will be in school and life.

Responsibility

Many students have great mental attributes but struggle due to their lack of responsibility in continuously improving. Students who practice responsibility understand how to stay focused on their improvement and regularly check their progress. They make adjustments to create strengths out of their weaknesses and they identify problem areas before it impacts their performance.

Practice Makes Perfect

Think of your instructional methods and the various ways you provide practice for skills that you want your students to learn. You might apply any number of strategies including direct instruction, scaffolded lessons, project-based learning, individual practice, and many other pedagogical methods. As students engage with the material, you monitor their progress and provide enrichment and extra practice as needed, taking into consideration the strengths, weaknesses, and interests of your students.

Mindset training is no different. The seven units addressed above can be instructed through your favored pedagogical methods and reinforced throughout the school year. Where many teachers fall short is in their lack of intentional mindset training. Instead, they rely on random motivational speeches or pep talks, especially in big moments (like before a standardized test) without offering consistent practice and repetition. Effective mindset training should be done throughout the school year and be a systematic part of your curriculum. Similar to any other learned skill, making mindset a focal point of your class, modeling positive mindset traits, and pointing out phrases,

actions, and ideas that students have which demonstrate strong mindsets will allow students to get regular practice and comfort with the concepts that you want them to master.

The Academic Mindset Principles

1) I am thankful for the opportunity to learn.

2) I am confident and consistent.

3) I have no fear of failing or making mistakes.

4) I never give up!

Considering the idea of practice, it is important to create strong, daily habits that provide opportunities for your students to sharpen their mindset skills. Our guiding principles are a great start in reinforcing the positive mindset that drives this program. Teachers who are involved in our program have students recite these 4 principles at the start and end of every class. It gives them a chance to reflect on the kind of student they want to be, and a reminder of how they need to think to reach that goal. The idea is to not have students just mindlessly chant these principles, but instead to reflect on them and believe in the power these phrases have in reshaping their lives.

The philosophies behind these phrases are simple and effective. Make sure students understand the reason for saying each phrase.

1) I am thankful for the opportunity to learn

This is a statement of gratitude. Science has shown that gratitude is one of the quickest and most effective ways of increasing one's own happiness. Students should start each class with the reminder of the great opportunities they have in school and the joy they get out of learning. Reframing and reflecting on that with students will encourage a positive mindset from the beginning of the day and make them more likely to have a strong performance in class.

2) I am confident and consistent

The two C's can go a long way! Stating that you are confident on a daily basis has shown to increase actual perceptions of confidence. More confident

students are more willing to participate, question, and engage in class material. Moreover, consistency is the mark of a strong academic. Each time they say this phrase, they will remember that their performance in class should always look similar, no matter if they are having a good or a bad day. Taking pride in consistency can put them on a completely different level.

3) I have no fear of failing or making mistakes

The fear of failure is one of the biggest dream-killers that students will ever face. We see it all the time. A student is unsure of an answer so they don't turn the assignment in. A test is difficult from the beginning so they stop reading the questions carefully. Failure does not hold as many students back from their potential as the fear of failure does. Students must become more comfortable with confronting and bouncing back from failure and the daily reminder will help them to do just that.

4) I never give up

Persistence is the difference between champ and chump. Your classwork will get challenging. The tests and projects students face will push their limits. The days of practicing and studying will get long, boring, and drawn out. Students need to have a sense of embracing the grind. A refusal to give up means that they will give a consistent, strong effort on every day. They will fight for every point they can get on a test, push themselves to complete as many problems as possible on a class assignment, and bring their best energy level at the start, middle, and end of each school day.

Affirmations

As students begin to understand the foundations behind these principles, many will want to recite them daily. It becomes another routine, another part of the class that may make them feel incomplete if not done. Affirmations are meant to reinforce positive perspectives in people. When you and your students commit to the habit of reciting these phrases, you also commit to excellence and constant growth. For the full effect to be received, stress the importance of body language. A confident stance, head held high, and a boisterous tone should be used in saying these phrases. Whispering them quietly with their head down will not produce the effect that these principles are trying to inspire. Encourage posture and projection of voice, and watch your students take off to new heights!