

## **Unit 1-B**

# **Wishes, Hopes & Dreams: Preparing for Reentry**

# Unit 1-B

## Wishes, Hopes & Dreams: Preparing for Reentry

### *Suggestions for the Instructor*

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#### **Pg. 1B-8 -- Introducing Yourself**

Ask students to take a few minutes to reflect on the questions on the sheet, thinking honestly about themselves, focusing on their gifts, strengths, accomplishments, and experiences that make them unique. Have them write a summary in the box and prepare to introduce themselves to the class.

- What is your name?
- What is something you do well?
- What qualities make you unique?
- What is something you have accomplished that you are proud of?
- Have you had any jobs? What did you do on these jobs? If you have not yet had a job, what kind of job would you like to have in the future?

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#### **Pg. 1B-9-10 -- Hold Fast to Dreams**

Have students read the classic poem “Dreams” by Langston Hughes. Ask them read it more than once and see if they can memorize it! Have them answer the questions on the following page, then discuss their answers with the class

1. In your opinion, what do you think the poet is trying to tell his readers?
2. What do you think the poet believes about the value of dreams?
3. What does Hughes mean by the metaphor, “when dreams go / Life is a barren field / Frozen with snow”?
4. Hughes uses the metaphor “when dreams die / Life is a broken-winged bird / That cannot fly.” Why do you think he makes this comparison?
5. Do you agree with the poet’s ideas about dreams?
6. Have you seen examples of this in your life or in the life of anyone you know?

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#### **Pg. 1B – 11-13 -- Words of Wisdom: Wishes, Hopes and Dreams**

Ask volunteers to take turns reading the quotes aloud. Ask students to pick a quote that interests them, reflect on the questions, then share with the class:

- what they think the speaker means
- whether they agree and why or why not
- how the quote is or is not relevant to their lives
- specific examples from their lives or the lives of others which highlight its meaning

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**Pg. 1B-14 -- What Are Your Wishes, Hopes and Dreams?**

Ask students to answer these questions about their own hopes and dreams. Ask volunteers to share their wishes and dreams aloud.

1. When I was young, I wanted to be:
2. One thing I've always wanted to do, but will probably never be able to do, is:
3. One thing I would like to do, that I might be able to do is:
4. One thing I'd like to find out more about is:
5. One place I would really like to go in the future is:
6. If I could have any job in the world, I would be:
7. If I had a million dollars, I would:
8. My dream for my children (or future children):
9. My dream for myself is:

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**Pg. 1B-15-16 -- What's Your Mindset?**

In these activities, students learn that their attitudes and behaviors have a significant impact on how successful we are and how much we can accomplish. They learn about two types of mindset: FIXED MINDSET and GROWTH MINDSET.

**Vocabulary**

Ask them to review the vocabulary on the handout and discuss: What do these terms have to do with the way we think about our abilities and talents?

mindset	destiny	"Fixed" Mindset
consistent	"Growth" Mindset	circumstances
overcome	critical	obstacle
defined	attitude	pre-determined
static		

Then have them work in pairs and pick four (or more) of the words from the list. Have them use the words to create a dialogue between two characters who are talking about how they each learn.

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**Pg. 1B-17-20 -- Do You Have a "Fixed Mindset?" / Do You Have a "Growth Mindset?"**

Have students determine their attitudes about mindset. Have them complete two checklists *Do You Have a "Fixed Mindset?"* and *Do You Have a "Growth Mindset?"* Have them read the statements on each checklist, then check "T" if they believe a statement is true and "F" if they believe a statement is false. After they have counted the checkmarks, have them multiply the total by 4 to find out their percent.

\_\_\_\_\_ x 4 = \_\_\_\_\_ %

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**Pg. 1B-21 -- How to Develop a Growth Mindset: What to Think Instead**

In this activity, students learn that having a growth mindset might mean changing the messages we tell ourselves and interrupting the voices we hear in our heads. Remind them that when they hear themselves thinking thoughts that represent a fixed mindset, they should notice them, and then talk back to those voices to retrain the brain to think using a growth mindset. Have them to fill in the blank boxes on the chart with suggestions of what could be said instead.

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**Pg. 1B-22-23 -- Growth Mindset... Picture This!**

Ask students to study the images depicting a growth mindset. Tell them to think about how they might draw or write a message encouraging themselves and others to develop a growth mindset. On the following page, ask them to work individually or in teams to draw a cartoon or a poster to remind themselves and others of the importance of a growth mindset. Then ask them to share your motivational messages with the class.

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**Pg. 1B-24-27 -- I Want to Be a Firefighter**

As a class, read the essay, "I Want to be A Firefighter." As they read, have students underline and make note of all the ways in which the writer displays a growth mindset. Then review the questions on the following page and discuss the answers together.

**ANSWERS:**

**1. Does the writer display a growth mindset and the willingness to work hard to achieve his goals? Give specific evidence to support your answer.**

- He said he's ready to change his lifestyle and to devote himself to helping others.
- People say he can't do it, so he's inspired to prove them wrong.
- He's motivated to get his GED.
- He thinks being certified as an EMT sounds challenging.
- He said people are more than their mistakes, and he believes with effort and hard work, people can change and learn and grow.
- He researched what's involved in attending the Fire Academy.
- He wants to be in a course that is a physically and academically demanding.
- He is willing to work out more, train physically, and discipline himself to study.
- He expressed interest in all the topics he is going to learn.
- Because interviews scare him, so he's going to practice ahead of time in order to be prepared. And he believes he can improve his confidence if he works at it.
- He's feeling good about taking on the challenge, even though it won't be easy.
- He thinks he can do it if he starts preparing now and asks for help along the way.
- He's excited about the future.

*(continued)*

**2. What does the writer think about other people’s opinions?**

He says that people say he can’t do it, and he wants to prove them wrong

**3. What does the writer say that displays a growth mindset related to his past criminal charges?**

He did the research on-line and asked people in the profession whether his criminal record would interfere with his ability to get a job as a firefighter. He learned that there are successful firefighters who have made mistakes and gotten in legal trouble, but they owned up to their mistakes and did their best to prove that the past is behind them.

**4. How does the writer plan to deal with the fact of his criminal history?**

- He plans to go to the interview and present himself as the best candidate for the job. If they do bring up his past, he won’t lie.
- He’s not going to lie on the application or during the interview.
- He’s going to take ownership of the mistake he made.
- He’s not going to blame anyone else.
- He’s prepared to give examples of how he learned from his mistakes and what he has done to not go down that road again.

**5. What did the writer think when he first found out about the cost of the course?**

When he found out that the course costs \$3,300, he felt like giving up because he didn’t have that kind of money, and he didn’t think he ever would.

**6. What did he do to change his original mindset?**

He made a budget and did the math. He found out that if he put aside \$42.00 from his paycheck every week, he’d be able to save enough in about eighteen months to pay for the tuition.

**7. How does this story relate to experiences you have had? How is the mindset of the writer similar or different from your own? Can you apply this writer’s ideas and insights to your own life?**

Answers will vary. Ask students to reflect honestly on how their mindset – their attitudes about growth and learning – compare with those of the writer in the story. Ask them to share their reflections with the class.

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**Pg. 1B-28-29 -- Mindfulness Can Help You Handle Stress**

In this reading activity, students learn that stress is normal and should be expected during times of transition, even if the changes are positive (like being released from incarceration). Big life style changes, not knowing what will happen next, and lack of control can all cause stress. Learning strategies for managing stress can help ease the difficulties of transition.

*(continued)*

Students learn mindfulness techniques that they can use both when they are calm and when they are in stressful situations. They learn to:

1. notice how they experience stress in their bodies.
2. practice mindfulness by intentionally bringing attention to what is happening in the mind and body in the present moment without judgment.
3. practice mindful breathing.
4. practice mindful listening in order to communicate better with others.
5. practice kindness toward themselves and others. As they practice mindfulness, they may begin to notice and better understand whatever fear, anxiety or anger they feel toward themselves and others, which may lead to greater empathy.

After reading the handout together as a class, engage students in a discussion about how whether they have used these techniques in the past, whether they would like to try them, and whether they think they might help them handle stress.

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### **Pg. 1B-30-34 -- How to Start Fresh: Principles to Assist with Successful Reentry**

Ask volunteers to take turns reading the principles outlined on the handout. As they read, stop and ask students to discuss how they think they could use these guiding principles and ideas to help them stay strong and centered as they prepare for reentry.

1. Respect yourself and others.
2. Develop mental toughness.
3. Remember that you are a person of value and worth!
4. Cultivate a positive self-image.
5. Develop new habits.
6. Cultivate grit.
7. Develop a sense of purpose and meaning.
8. Give of yourself.
9. Reflect.

On the last page, students are given an opportunity to reflect on which of the principles above they think will help them as they prepare for reentry. Ask them to write about how they will practice these principles before and after they are released, then have them share their reflections with the class.

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# **Unit 1-B**

# **Wishes, Hopes & Dreams: Preparing for Reentry**

## **Student Activities**



# Hold Fast to Dreams

Read the classic poem "Dreams" by Langston Hughes. Read it more than once and see if you can memorize it! Sometimes inspiring poems with positive messages can help us through challenging times. Then answer the questions on the following page.

## Dreams

Hold fast to dreams  
For if dreams die  
Life is a broken-winged bird  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow.

Langston Hughes



From *Collected Poems* by Langston Hughes  
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Langston Hughes 1902 - 1967

Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, and began writing poetry as a high school student. After graduating, he worked on cargo ships traveling to Africa and Europe.

Hughes became recognized as a poet who used the language of ordinary people to communicate important ideas. He became a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance, a heyday of African-American culture during the 1920's, and eventually became one of America's best-known poets. In addition to poetry, Hughes wrote novels, dramas, musicals, newspaper columns and children's books.

**Hold Fast to Dreams, cont.**

After you have read the poem "Dreams" by Langston Hughes, answer the following questions in writing. Then discuss your answers with the class.

1. In your opinion, what do you think the poet is trying to tell his readers? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What do you think the poet believes about the value of dreams? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. Do you agree with the poet's ideas about dreams? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. What does Hughes mean by the metaphor, "when dreams go / Life is a barren field / Frozen with snow"?

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5. Hughes uses the metaphor "when dreams die / Life is a broken-winged bird / That cannot fly." Why do you think he makes this comparison?

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6. Have you seen examples of this theme in your life or in the life of anyone you know?

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◆◆◆◆ WORDS OF WISDOM ◆◆◆◆  
Wishes, Hopes and Dreams

**The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.**  
*Eleanor Roosevelt*

Nothing can be done without hope and confidence.  
*Helen Keller*

**When we feel uncomfortable enough long enough, we tend to feel discouraged, and we return to thoughts, feelings and actions that are more familiar, more practiced, more predictable -- more comfortable. The irony is that the feelings we have been taught to label 'uncomfortable' are, in fact, among the very tools necessary to fulfill our dreams.**  
*John-Roger and Peter McWilliams*

I have accepted fear as a part of my life – specifically the fear of change...  
I have gone ahead despite the pounding  
in the heart that says: turn back.  
*Erica Jong*

**It takes great courage to break with one's past history  
and stand alone.**  
*Marion Woodman*

The greatest glory in living lies not in never failing,  
but in rising every time we fall.  
*Nelson Mandela*

**We can always redeem the man who aspires and strives.**  
*Johannes Goethe*



***Words of Wisdom: Wishes, Hopes and Dreams, cont.***

Make no little plans; they have little magic to stir men's blood...  
Make big plans, aim high in hope and work.

*David H. Burnham*

**Don't let anyone rob you of your imagination, your creativity or your curiosity.  
It's your place in the world; it's your life. Go on and do all you can with it,  
and make it the life you want to live.**

*Dr. Mae C. Jemison*

No person has the right to rain on your dreams.

*Marian Wright Edelman*

**No person is your friend who demands your silence,  
or denies your right to grow.**

*Alice Walker*

More powerful than the will to win is the courage to begin.

*Author unknown*

**The sea is so wide  
And my boat is so small.**

*The Breton Fisherman's Prayer*

I am not afraid of storms, for I am learning how to sail my ship.

*Louisa May Alcott*

**Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do  
than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines.**

**Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails.**

**Explore. Dream. Discover.**

*Mark Twain*





# ◆◆◆ My Wishes, Hopes and Dreams ◆◆◆

*What were your dreams when you were young? What are your wishes, hopes and dreams for the future? In order to bring about positive changes in your life, think about what's important to you. Answer the following questions, then share your thoughts with the class.*

1. When I was young, I wanted to be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

2. One thing I've always wanted to do, but will probably never be able to do, is

\_\_\_\_\_.

3. One thing I would like to do, that I might be able to do is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

4. One thing I'd like to find out more about is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

5. One place I would really like to go in the future is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

6. If I could have any job in the world, I would be \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

7. If I had a million dollars, I would \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

8. My dream for my children (or future children) is \_\_\_\_\_

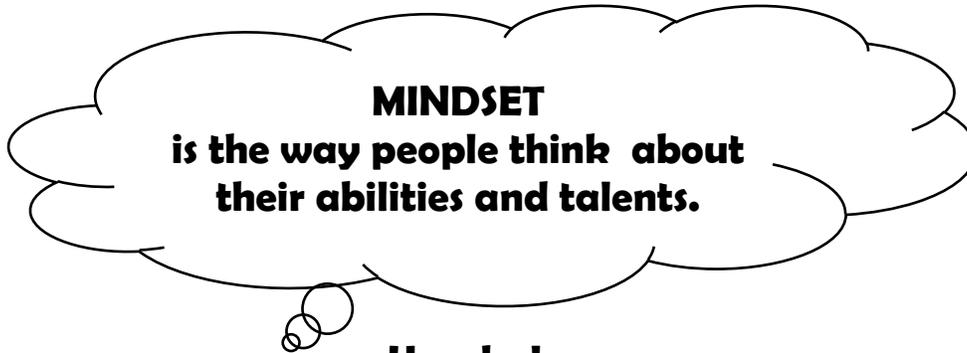
\_\_\_\_\_.

9. My dream for myself is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

# What's Your Mindset?

*Your attitudes and behaviors have a significant impact on how successful you are and how much you can accomplish.*



## Vocabulary

*There are two types of mindset: FIXED MINDSET and GROWTH MINDSET. Review the vocabulary below. What do these terms have to do with the way we think about our abilities and talents?*

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Sentence</b>
mindset	attitude, state of mind, way of thinking	<i>Lanny has a positive mindset; he believes he can accomplish a lot.</i>
“Fixed” Mindset	the belief that basic qualities, like intelligence or talent, are fixed (unchangeable)	<i>Because Joseph has a fixed mindset, he believes that talent alone leads to success, and therefore he doesn't try.</i>
“Growth” Mindset	the belief that the ability to learn can change and grow with time and experience	<i>Lula works hard at practicing long division, because she has a growth mindset and believes she can get smarter at math.</i>
overcome	to master, to gain power over, to get control of, to beat, to triumph, to conquer	<i>I watched my sister overcome many of the challenges of our childhood through hard work.</i>
obstacle	barrier, hurdle, stumbling block, drawback	<i>How do you plan to overcome the obstacles in your path?</i>
attitude	point of view, frame of mind, way of thinking, outlook	<i>Your attitude affects whether you have energy to do the work needed to accomplish something.</i>
consistent	constant, at a regular pace	<i>People consistently grow and change and develop.</i>

***What's Your Mindset?, cont.***

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Sentence</b>
destiny	future, fate, fortune, what's supposed to happen to us	<i>Do you believe people have the power to affect their destiny?</i>
circumstances	situation, conditions, happenings, background, environment	<i>People can succeed even if they come from really difficult and challenging circumstances.</i>
critical	judgmental, offering evaluation, offering feedback, giving comments	<i>I don't mind when people give me critical feedback. It helps me figure out what I need to work on.</i>
defined	limited, determined, explained, described, established, fixed	<i>I am not defined by my past.</i>
pre-determined	decided in advance, decided by fate, determined by divine will, pre-destined	<i>People with a "fixed" mindset believe that our abilities are pre-determined and that we can't change fate.</i>
static	fixed, stable, steady, unchanging, constant, unvarying, unwavering	<i>People with a "fixed" mindset might believe that talents are static and unchangeable.</i>

*Pick four (or more) of the words from the lists above and use them in a dialogue between two characters who are talking about how they each learn.*

Person #1: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Person #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Person #1: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Person #2: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**What's Your Mindset?, cont.**

## **DO YOU HAVE A "FIXED MINDSET?"**

*Read the statements below. Check "T" if you believe a statement is true and "F" if you believe a statement is false. Be honest! The more you understand your attitudes about mindset the more power you have over your own learning.*

	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Mindset Statement</b>
<b>1</b>			You can learn new things, but you can't really change your intelligence.
<b>2</b>			You are a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to change that.
<b>3</b>			Talent for art, math, sports, music, or business comes naturally and can't be learned.
<b>4</b>			What matters is whether you're right or wrong, not how much you learn.
<b>5</b>			Test scores are final measures of your intelligence.
<b>6</b>			Admitting I don't know something is embarrassing.
<b>7</b>			I only do things I'm good at because I need to prove my intelligence.
<b>8</b>			I usually don't bother to try new things because I probably won't be able to learn how to do them.
<b>9</b>			I don't like the feeling of not knowing how to do something.
<b>10</b>			Admitting you can't do something shows weakness.
<b>11</b>			I often get angry when I get feedback about my performance.
<b>12</b>			Truly smart people do not need to try hard.
<b>13</b>			The messages we are told about our intelligence when we were young are basically true.
<b>14</b>			I have never changed. I'm the same person as I was when I was young.

**What's Your Mindset?, cont.**

	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Mindset Statement</b>
15			Sometimes I feel threatened by other people's success.
16			I don't like hanging out with people who are interested in learning new things; I'm afraid they'll find out I'm not smart.
17			If I can't do something right the first time, I don't bother to do it.
18			Smart people don't make mistakes.
19			I only answer instructors' questions if I'm 100% sure I'm right.
20			I don't ask questions because people will think I'm dumb.
21			The way you have been raised guarantees what kind of person you will become.
22			People who have bad habits will always have bad habits.
23			People who commit crimes are criminals by nature.
24			Your destiny is pre-determined; you can't change fate.
25			Asking for help is a sign of weakness.

Count how many checkmarks are in the "TRUE" column. Multiply the total by 4 to find out your percent.

\_\_\_\_\_ **x 4 =** \_\_\_\_\_ **%**

If you got 60% or above, you may have a "fixed mindset."

A fixed mindset can affect how much you believe you can learn and may limit all the things you can accomplish with your amazing brain.

But don't worry - there are many things you can do to change your mindset!

*What's Your Mindset?, cont.*

## **DO YOU HAVE A “GROWTH MINDSET?”**

*Read the statements below. Check “T” if you believe a statement is true and “F” if you believe a statement is false. Be honest! The more you understand your attitudes about mindset the more power you have over your own learning.*

	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Mindset Statement</b>
<b>1</b>			Individuals can overcome many obstacles.
<b>2</b>			People have power to affect their destiny.
<b>3</b>			What you believe about yourself can impact how you perform, so it's important to believe you can achieve your goals.
<b>4</b>			Just because someone (teacher, parent, friend) tells you that you aren't smart, that doesn't mean it's true.
<b>5</b>			You can change how intelligent you are.
<b>6</b>			I like to hang out with people who are interested in learning and growing.
<b>7</b>			People consistently grow and change and develop.
<b>8</b>			Challenges are exciting.
<b>9</b>			It is possible to change the kind of person you are, even if you learned otherwise.
<b>10</b>			People can accomplish great things even if they come from really difficult and challenging circumstances.
<b>11</b>			Practice is a key ingredient of success.
<b>12</b>			The harder you work at something, the better you will be at it.
<b>13</b>			Nobody's perfect. In good relationships, people help each other grow.
<b>14</b>			Test scores are not final. With practice, you can improve scores.

**What's Your Mindset?, cont.**

	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Mindset Statement</b>
15			I like to answer questions even if I'm not 100% sure I'm right, because I'm interested in finding out what else I need to learn.
16			With discipline and hard work, it's possible to break bad habits and develop new ones.
17			It's okay to admit that you don't know something; that's how you learn.
18			Learning is a lifelong process.
19			I enjoy doing schoolwork because I like to learn new things.
20			Mistakes are necessary for learning.
21			I am not defined by my past.
22			Human beings are basically smart, but sometimes they make bad decisions and have to try again.
23			People who commit crimes can learn from their choices and live crime-free lives.
24			It is a sign of strength to ask for help.
25			I have the power to impact my future.

Count how many checkmarks are in the "TRUE" column. Multiply the total by 4 to find out your percent.

                     **x 4 =**                      %

If you got 60% or above, you may have a "growth mindset."

A growth mindset can affect how much you believe you can learn and helps you accomplish many things with your amazing brain.

**What's Your Mindset?, cont.**

## **How to Develop a Growth Mindset: What to Think Instead**

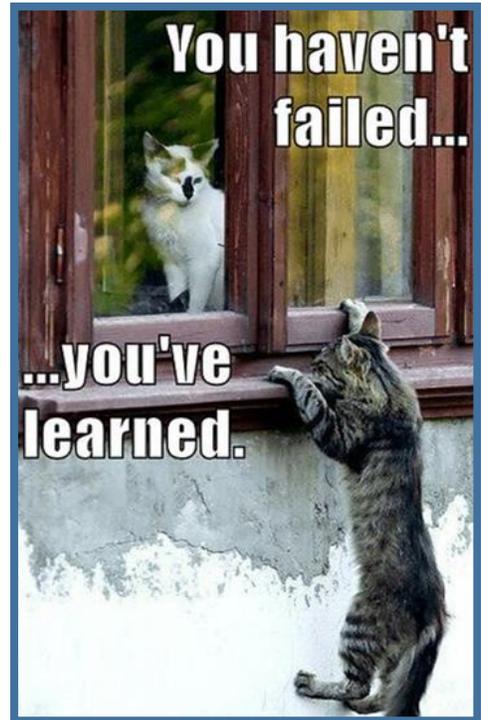
*Having a growth mindset might mean changing the messages we tell ourselves and interrupting the voices we hear in our heads. When you hear yourself thinking thoughts that represent a fixed mindset, notice them, and then talk back to those voices to retrain your brain to think using a growth mindset. Fill in the blank boxes with suggestions of what you could say instead.*

<b>When you think: (fixed mindset)</b>	<b>Think instead: (growth mindset)</b>
I can't do this.	<i>I'm still learning how to do this.</i>
I'm not smart.	<i>With effort, I can learn.</i>
I'll never understand this.	<i>I don't understand this YET.</i>
This is taking forever.	<i>This might take a while, but learning takes time.</i>
I'm not good at reading.	<i>With practice and effort, I will become a better reader.</i>
I'm not good at math.	<i>With practice and effort, I will get better at math.</i>
I'll never change (habits, attitudes, test scores, beliefs, etc....)	
Asking questions is a sign of weakness. If I was smart, I wouldn't have to ask questions.	
If I was smart, I wouldn't make so many mistakes.	

***What's Your Mindset?, cont.***

## **Growth Mindset... Picture This!**

*Look at the images below. Think about how you can draw or write a message encouraging yourself and others to develop a growth mindset.*

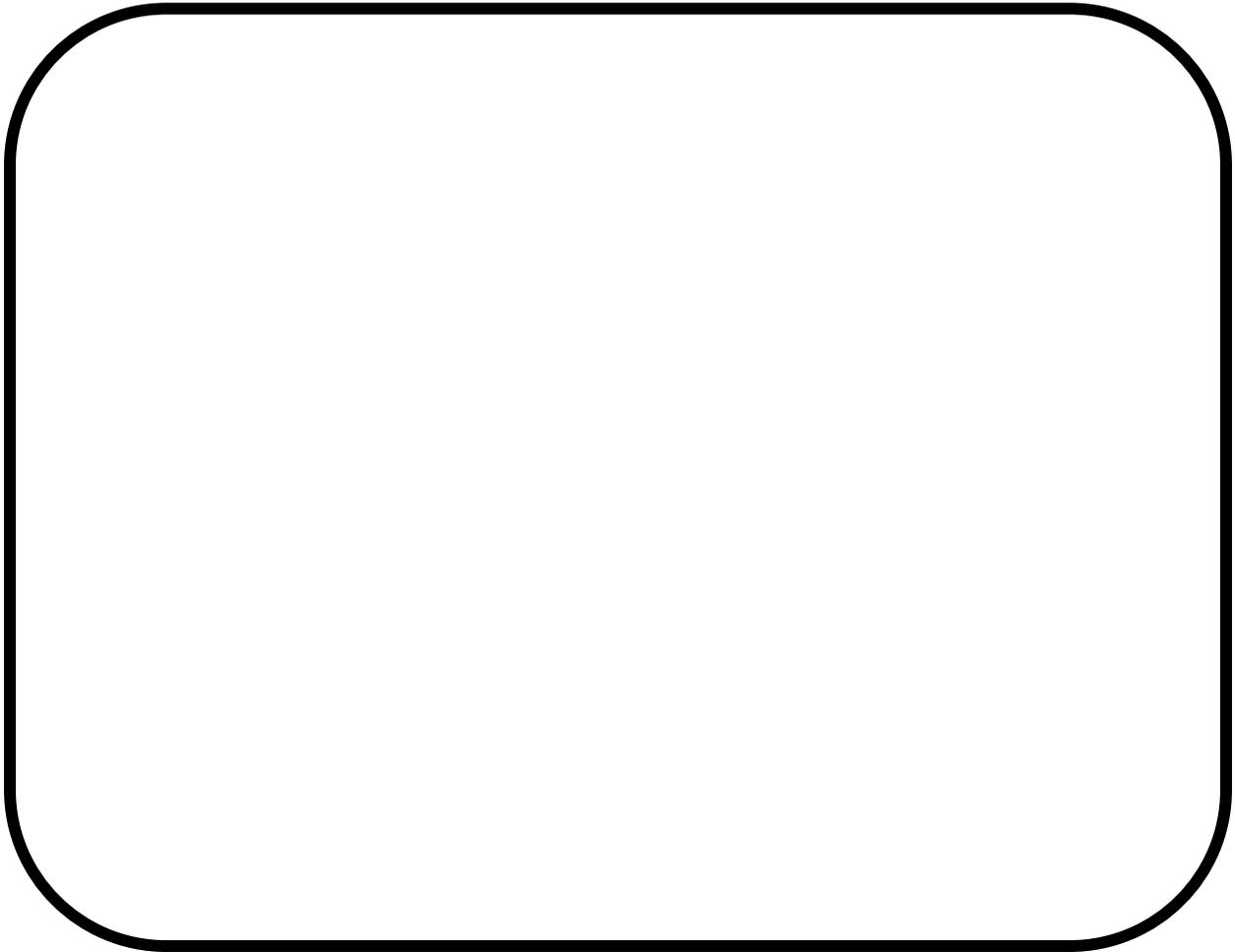


Images from <https://ccsearch.creativecommons.org/search?q=growth%20mindset&provider&li&lt&searchBy>

***What's Your Mindset?, cont.***

## **Growth Mindset... Picture This!**

*Draw a cartoon or a poster to remind yourself and others of the importance of a growth mindset.  
Work individually or in teams, then share your motivational message with the class.*



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***What's Your Mindset?, cont.***

# I WANT TO BE A FIREFIGHTER

*Read the essay below. Underline all the ways in which the writer displays a growth mindset.*

I want to be a firefighter simply because I want to save people's lives! I'm ready to change my lifestyle and to devote myself to helping others. Also, I'm inspired because people say I can't do it, and I want to prove them wrong! Planning to be a firefighter motivates me to get my GED. I also want to get certified as an Emergency Medical Technician because it sounds challenging.

Before I did anything else, I needed to find out if I can get hired as a firefighter with my criminal record. I made mistakes and served time, but I am ready to put the past behind me and start over. I believe people are more than their mistakes, and I believe with effort and hard work, people can change and learn and grow.

I did the research on-line and asked people in the profession whether my criminal record would interfere with my ability to get a job as a firefighter. I learned that the more time since my legal infraction, the better. I also learned that there are successful firefighters who have made mistakes and gotten in legal trouble, but they owned up to their mistakes and did their best to prove that the past is behind them.



I researched what's involved in attending the Fire Academy. For one thing, you have to have a GED or high school diploma. The program takes 450 hours, which is about a year of classes. The program is a physically and academically demanding course that includes extensive classroom and practical field components. In order to accomplish my goal, I'll need to work out more and train physically, and I'll have to discipline myself to study daily.

In the course you learn fire prevention, fire streams, fire alarms, water supply, building construction, etc. I'm pretty interested in all these topics, so I'm looking forward to all the new stuff I'm going to learn!

The course costs approximately \$3,300! At first when I found that out I felt like giving up because I don't have that kind of money, and I don't think I ever will. But then I made a budget and did the math. I found out that if I put aside \$42.00 from my paycheck every week, I'll be able to save enough in about eighteen months to pay for the tuition.

Image from Creative Commons [www.creativecommons.org/photos/c03b204f-0458-4c74-b4db-1ec10647f490](http://www.creativecommons.org/photos/c03b204f-0458-4c74-b4db-1ec10647f490)

***What's Your Mindset?, cont.***

To apply to be a firefighter, you need to submit an application and include all the required documents. I'm not sure how to complete the application or what documents I need, so I'm going to call the Academy to find out. Also, you have to have a 30-minute interview. Interviews scare me, so I'm going to practice ahead of time in order to be prepared. I know I can improve my confidence if I work at it.

The Fire Academy and the Fire Department will do background checks, and if there is anything in your past, they will know about it. So when I go to an interview, I need to present myself as the best candidate for the job. If they do bring up my past, I won't lie. If I'm caught lying on the application or during the interview, I know it's over. So I'm going to take control. I'm going to take ownership of the mistake I made. I'm not going to blame anyone else. And I'm prepared to give examples of how I have learned from my mistakes and what I have done to make sure I'll never go down that road again.

I'm feeling good about taking on this big challenge. It won't be easy to make money to pay the tuition, to get physically in shape, or to develop good study habits for the academic work. But I think I can do it! Especially if I start preparing now and ask for help along the way. I'm excited about the future.

**I Want to Be a Firefighter, Questions**

1. Does the writer display a growth mindset and the willingness to work hard to achieve his goals? Give specific evidence to support your answer.

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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

***What's Your Mindset?, cont.***

2. What does the writer think about other people's opinions?

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3. What does the writer say that displays a growth mindset related to his past criminal charges?

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4. How does the writer plan to deal with the fact of his criminal history?

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***What's Your Mindset?, cont.***

5. What did the writer think when he first found out about the cost of the course?

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6. What did he do to change his original mindset?

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7. How does this story relate to experiences you have had? How is the mindset of the writer similar or different from your own? Can you apply this writer's ideas and insights to your own life?

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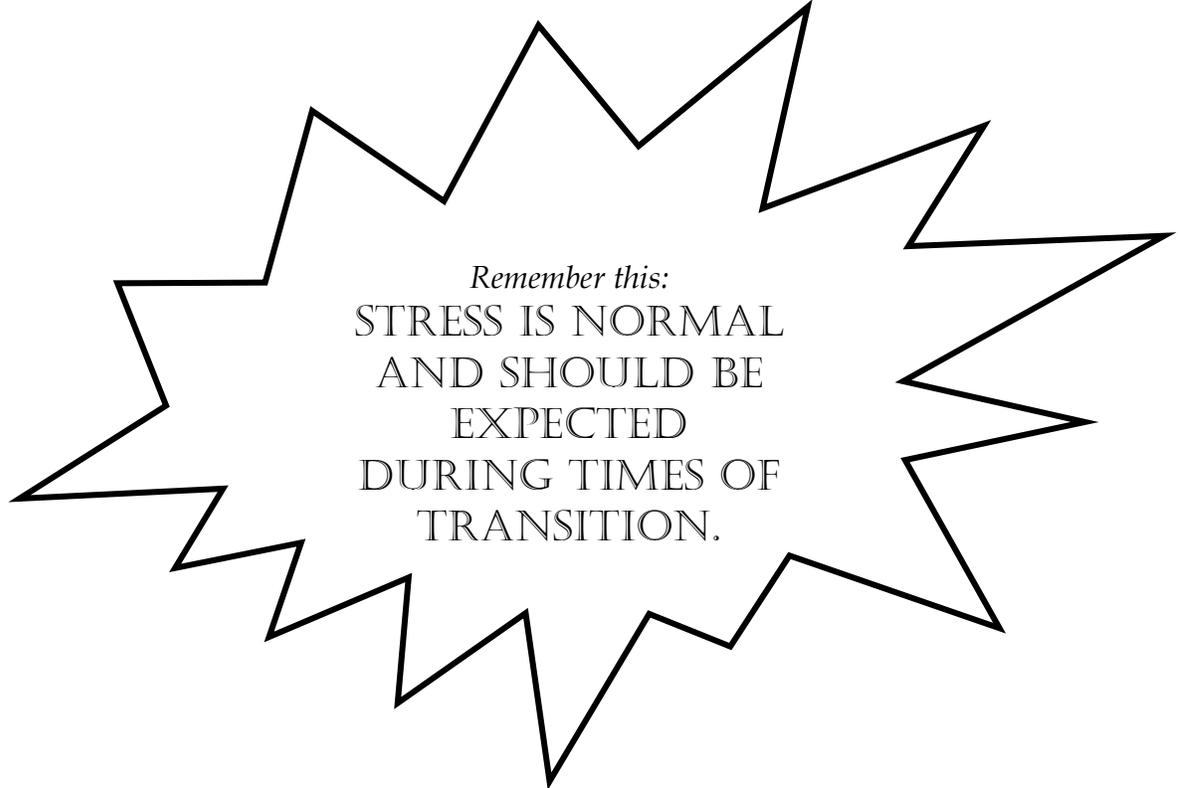
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# Mindfulness Can Help You Handle Stress



*Remember this:*  
STRESS IS NORMAL  
AND SHOULD BE  
EXPECTED  
DURING TIMES OF  
TRANSITION.

*Stress is normal and should be expected during times of transition  
EVEN IF THE CHANGES ARE POSITIVE.*

*Big life style changes, not knowing what will happen next, and lack of control can all cause stress. Learning strategies for managing stress can help ease the difficulties of transition.*

## **1. NOTICE HOW YOU EXPERIENCE STRESS**

First, notice where and how you experience stress in your body.

- Is it in your neck, your shoulders, your lower back?
- Does it come in the form of headaches?
- Do you get stomach aches? Ulcers? Cold sores? Frequent head colds?
- Difficulty sleeping? Insomnia? Eye strain?
- Do you sometimes have difficulty focusing? Foggy brain?
- Tension in your jaw? Clenching your teeth?

Stress can affect the brain, the cardiovascular system, our joints and muscles, our immune system, and the digestive system. Stress can affect our cognition as well as our ability to focus and take in new information. It can inhibit short-term memory and active learning.

## 2. PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is the process of intentionally bringing our attention to what is happening in your mind and body in the present moment without judgment. Mindfulness is the practice of becoming aware of how our body is feeling and what emotions we are experiencing. Mindfulness can decrease stress because it can help slow down the busy voices, fears, hurts, anger, and worries rumbling around in your head!

Mindfulness starts with simply making time to notice – without self-criticism -- what you're thinking and feeling in the moment in order to develop a deeper awareness of how you think and feel.

Mindfulness can help you get to know yourself better. Mindfulness can help you accept yourself exactly as you are. You can practice mindfulness when you are eating, walking, exercising, spending time in nature, spending time with loved ones, learning something new, drawing or playing a game.



**Mindfulness  
Can Help**

## 3. PRACTICE MINDFUL BREATHING

Mindful breathing involves focusing your attention on your breath, as you inhale and exhale. Sit or lie in a comfortable and close your eyes. Practice mindful breathing both when you're feeling calm *and* when you're feeling stressed. Simply observe each breath without trying to adjust it. You may find that your mind wanders and that you feel distracted by thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. It's normal. Just notice that it's happening and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

When you're trying to calm yourself in a stressful moment, it helps to take a deep inhale through your nostrils, hold your breath, then take a long exhale through your mouth.

## 4. PRACTICE MINDFUL LISTENING

When you are communicating with another person, slow down and listen to what the other person is saying and what feelings they are trying to express. Notice how you feel about what they are saying. Take time to think about how you will respond before you speak.

## 5. PRACTICE KINDNESS

As you practice mindfulness, you may begin to notice and better understand whatever fear, anxiety or anger you feel toward yourself or others. This awareness may lead to greater empathy toward yourself.

Understanding yourself and your feelings, and treating that new insight with kindness, will then free you to feel greater empathy toward others, which will make you better able to listen and communicate and better able to respond calmly to stressful situations.

## How to Start Fresh: Principles to Assist with Successful Reentry

*As you read the following principles, think about how you can use these ideas to help you stay strong and centered as you prepare for reentry.*

### *Respect yourself and others.*

Remember: Nobody is perfect! Everybody makes mistakes. But each one of us is unique and talented – respect your gifts and remember that others deserve respect as well. Make amends with people you have hurt or disrespected. Make amends with yourself if you have not treated yourself with respect.

### Develop mental toughness.

Become self-aware and practice exercising self-control. Mental toughness comes from knowing yourself and being able to take charge of your own mental, physical, spiritual and emotional states.

Mental toughness isn't about putting up defenses or being aggressive; it's about *being in control* of how you deal with situations as they come up. The first step to developing mental toughness is to take the time to reflect. Find a time that is distraction free. Either while meditating or writing in a journal, think:

- How do I react to negative situations? How can I choose to react differently?
- Who do I want to be? What image do I present to the world? What image do I want to project?
- Do my actions and thoughts line up with my goals and dreams? If not, what do I need to do differently?
- How much effort am I putting into growing?



**Remember that you are a person of value and worth!**

*Cultivate a positive self-image.*

Start to develop a positive self-image by reflecting on the good things you have done and the things you like about yourself. Work on believing in yourself and believing you can accomplish meaningful things. You are in charge of your own self-image, so try not to focus on what you think other people think of you. Act like the person you want to be and you will move closer to your goal of being that person.

**Develop new habits.**

Wherever you are, you can practice doing things differently to help you move closer to your goals. Outline the habits you can change that will bring you closer to your goals - habits of eating, drinking, exercising, sleeping, working, studying, and thinking. Remember that building new habits takes time and practice, discipline and patience.

Praise yourself for effort and for positive changes, however small. Remember that good habits are the stepping stones to achieving big goals.

## ***Cultivate grit.***

Grit is courage and toughness, determination, backbone, and dedication. Grit is the ability to be tough when times get rough.

You have the power to change your life, but change takes work. Body builders work out daily. They get stronger gradually, by practicing and lifting heavier weights.

The brain is like a muscle. Learning and changing habits take work, just like body training does!

## **Develop a sense of purpose and meaning.**

Remember that you are a person of value and worth and your life has purpose and meaning. You have a right to be here, and a right to lead a good, healthy and happy life.

Take five minutes a day to sit quietly and contemplate the purpose and meaning of your life. What do you have to offer? What is your purpose?

What makes your life meaningful? What can you do, and who can help you, achieve your purpose and pursue your goals?

## **Give of yourself.**

People who give to others by helping out in their families and in their communities show improvements in both physical and mental health. Helping others makes us feel good about ourselves, boosts our self-esteem, and reminds us that we have a lot to offer and that we are connected to others.

## **Develop an attitude of gratitude.**

Developing an attitude of gratitude means taking stock of all the things in your life that are positive and good – whether it's your health, your smart brain, people who care for you, things you love, or simply the opportunity to learn and grow.

Developing an attitude of gratitude means focusing on the things that are positive rather than those that are destructive or negative.

Don't look at how far you have left to go,  
instead be grateful  
for how far you've come.

