

The Power of Mindsets: Nurturing Motivation, Hope, and Resilience in Children with Special Needs

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The power of mindsets

Mindsets: The assumptions and expectations we have for ourselves and others that guide our behavior

What is the mindset of adults who truly touch the hearts and minds of children with special needs?

Features of a positive mindset

To believe in the capacity of children with special needs to overcome adversity and become resilient: The importance of a “charismatic adult”

“I want to be a charismatic adult. What do I do?”

Features of a positive mindset

To believe that if something is not working or is ineffective in our personal and professional lives we must ask, “What is it that I can do differently to change the situation?” rather than wait for others to change first. This should not be interpreted as blaming ourselves but rather as a source of empowerment

Features of a positive mindset

To be empathic: We must see the world through the eyes of children with special needs

To gather invaluable information from the stories of youngsters (and adults) with special needs. What are some of the main themes that capture the mindset of many of these children and adults?

The negative mindset of many children and adolescents with special needs: The roots of a seeming lack of motivation

Helplessness: Lack of control or influence about events that happen in one's life

Hopelessness: Nothing will ever change

Others don't understand and can't help me

The negative mindset of many children and adolescents with special needs: The roots of a seeming lack of motivation

I make little difference in the world

General feeling that things are not fair

I feel unloved and unaccepted

Timothy Lackaye and Malka Margalit (2006).
Comparisons of achievement, effort, and
self-perceptions among students with
learning disabilities and their peers from
different achievement groups. *Journal of
Learning Disabilities, 39, 432-446.*

Students with LD conveyed decreased academic self-efficacy, less positive mood, and reduced hope. Furthermore, they reported more loneliness and higher levels of negative mood.

The results of this study demonstrate the importance of the social-emotional factors and the unique contribution of hopeful thinking in understanding the functioning of students with LD.

The educational implications of this study call for developing empowering programs for students, targeting their decreased self-beliefs and sensitizing teachers to the critical role of self-perceptions. These students need assistance in developing hopeful thinking through training to identify appropriate goals and alternative goals, effective strategies and alternative strategies, and help in learning skills for challenging their tendencies for negative mood and decreased expectations. Developing such a program may help in motivating students with LD.

Features of a positive mindset

To understand the main characteristics of the mindset of resilient children so that we can have guideposts for reinforcing this mindset in all of our interactions with youngsters with special needs: Let's look at several of the main features of this mindset, all of which are interrelated

The mindset of resilient children

To feel comfortable with and appreciate that others can be of support and help

To be able to define what one has control over and to focus one's time and energy on these areas of control

The mindset of resilient children

To believe that one can solve problems and make decisions, which promotes a sense of ownership

To define and reinforce one's strengths or "islands of competence" without denying or running from problematic areas

The mindset of resilient children

To believe that one can contribute to and make a positive difference in the world

To possess self-discipline and self-control

The mindset of resilient children

To believe that mistakes are experiences from which to learn

To possess a sense of humor that includes being able to laugh at but not ridicule oneself