

## WHY WE SHOULD PRACTICE TALKING TO OURSELVES

Our inner voices are constantly buzzing away in our brains, and psychologists have discovered that what the voices are saying can have an impact on our success or failure. Lev Vygotsky, an early twentieth-century psychologist, called the self-talk of very young children "private speech." Observe a toddler alone at play, and you'll likely hear an audible narration of the events taking place, which Vygotsky believed was the very young child's effort to make sense of the world. Eventually that private speech turns into an inner monologue, or self-talk, working hard to organize thoughts, regulate behavior, and develop self-awareness. It's important to talk about inner voices with kids. Sometimes kids don't even realize that everyone else has an inner voice too!

Wesley, a five-year-old boy, approached his teacher and confessed to hitting another student on the playground. He said that he felt bad for what he had done in anger and felt like he should come clean. "Ah," the teacher said, "that little voice in your head knew you did something wrong, huh?" He looked at her wide-eyed, incredulous, and said, "How do *you* know about the voice in my head?"

Self-talk is critical to managing mindsets. Perhaps the best way to help students manage their mindsets is to help them develop an awareness of the fixed-mindset voices and growth-mindset voices in their heads. Once they can figure out which mindset the voice is coming from, they can work to reframe it.

One way to develop awareness of the fixed and growth mindsets is to ask your students to think of a time they were really frustrated and gave up at something. First give an example from your own life.

*When I was in high school, I was playing in the finals match of a tennis tournament. My opponent in the final match was ranked the number one player in the state. She*



*was bigger than me and had a much better record. This is what my fixed mindset was saying in my head:*

*She's bigger than you and can hit much harder.*

*There is no way you're going to beat her.*

*You might as well quit now before you get humiliated.*

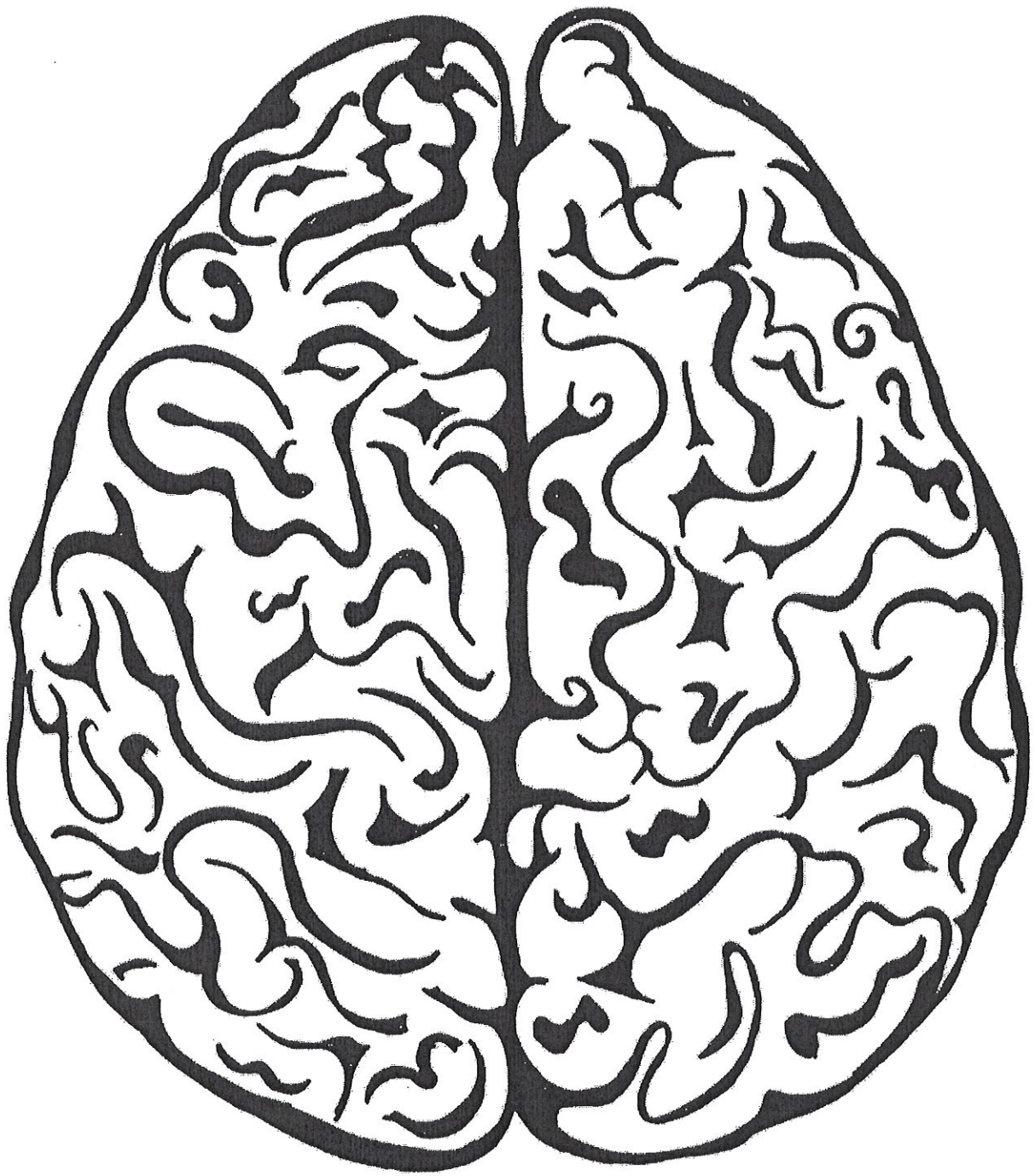
*It's going to feel really bad when you get beaten.*

Then ask your students how you could have responded to that fixed mindset voice with a growth-mindset voice. Make a T-chart with your fixed-mindset voice on one side and ask the students to devise some "comebacks" in a growth-mindset voice.

MY FIXED MINDSET	FIX MY FIXED MINDSET!
She's bigger than me.	I have played people bigger than me before, and won!
She hits harder than me.	I'll have to be extra quick to return her serves.
There's no way I'm going to beat her.	I'll work hard to try and win the game.
I might as well quit now before I get beaten.	Playing my hardest with dignity is more important than winning.
I'm going to feel bad when I lose.	Whether I win or lose, taking on this challenge will make me a better player.
She's ranked number one.	Rankings aren't set in stone; if I work hard, I could be number one.
This is too hard.	No matter what, I'll learn from this experience.
I'll never be that good.	Playing tough competitors helps me grow my ability.
Everyone will think I'm a loser.	People who care about me will support me no matter what.

Once your students understand how to differentiate between growth and fixed voices, ask them to work together to create T-charts of how their fixed mindset might try to sabotage them this summer, and how they can respond with a growth mindset.





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I can't do this yet

I'll never be as good as they are

This is as good as it is going to get

Mistakes are necessary for success

I'll try to learn from others who did well

I'll never be any smarter than I am now

When I'm frustrated I persevere          I want to quit

I am going to train my brain          I'm an idiot

I can't do this          This isn't good enough

This is too difficult          I don't want to look dumb

I don't want the challenge          I'll try harder next time If

I keep trying I'll get it          I am getting better

I can learn to do new things          What am I missing?

# MY GROWTH-MINDSET PLAN FOR FACING A PROBLEM

My problem is \_\_\_\_\_

I'll resolve my problem by this date: \_\_\_\_\_

The resources I need to solve my problem are \_\_\_\_\_

I'll solve my problem by \_\_\_\_\_

Barriers to solving my problem are \_\_\_\_\_

I'll overcome barriers by \_\_\_\_\_

If my plan doesn't work, I'll \_\_\_\_\_

My fixed mindset might say \_\_\_\_\_

My growth mindset will respond \_\_\_\_\_

Here are some ways I'll know I've solved my problem:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## GEAR UP HIGHLINE SCHOOLS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### SMART Goals

**Specific:** Goals should be simple and clear.

**Measurable:** There are usually several short-term or smaller measurements built into the goal—I will know how I achieved my goal.

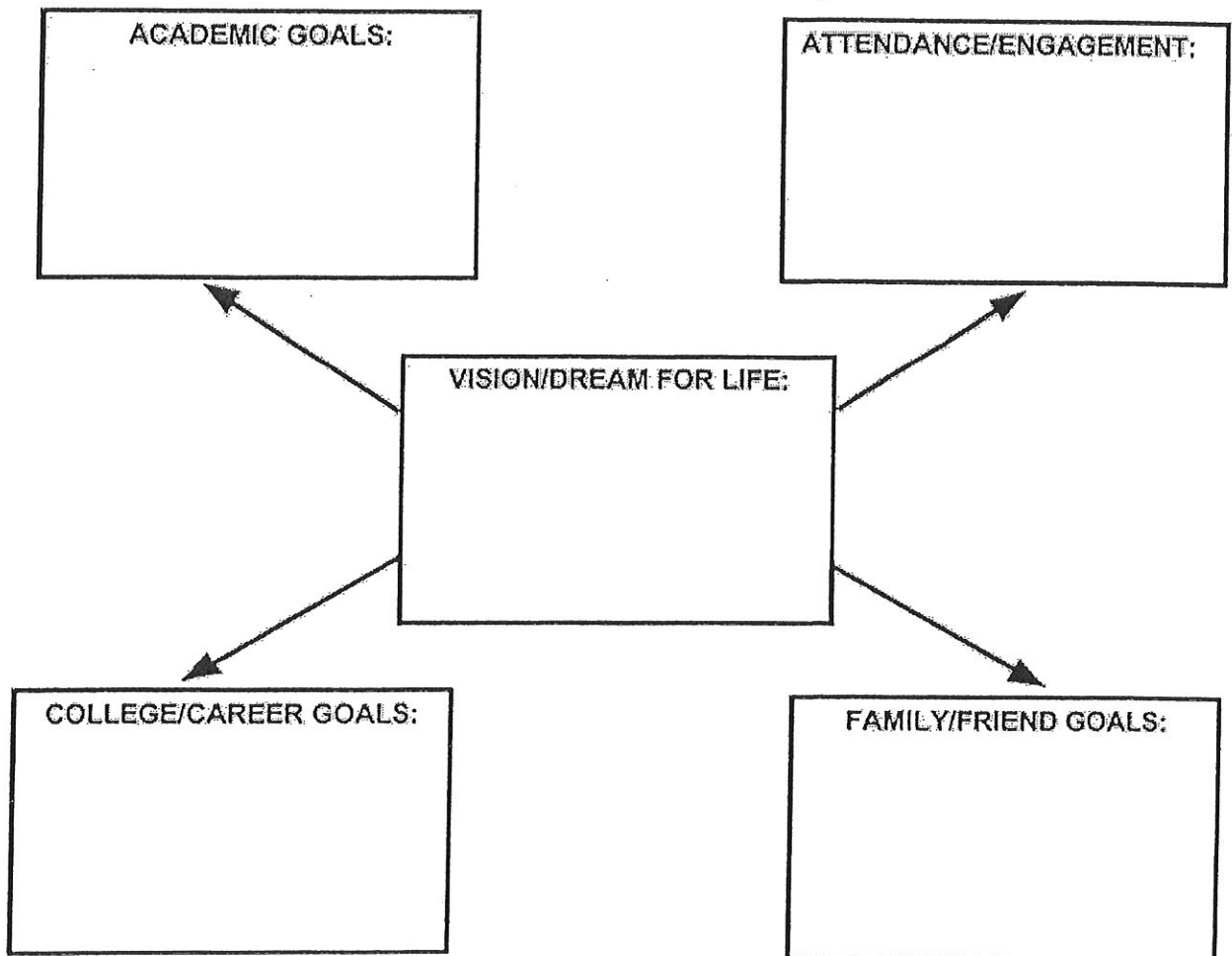
**Achievable:** You must possess the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to achieve the goal but you should also feel challenged by your goal.

**Result focused:** Goals should measure outcomes, not activities—what changed?

**Time bound:** Your goal should be completed in a particular amount of time that you determine.

#### Using the definition of SMART Goals

What is my vision/dreams for my life:



Short Term Goal	Long Term Goal
What is my first step:	What is my first step:
What might get in my way:	What might get in my way:
Who can I ask for help:	Who can I ask for help:



Identify your racial group:

What are the stereotypes associated with your group?

What are the strengths you want people to know about your group?



## **20 (Self-)Critical Things I Will Do to Be a More Equitable Educator**

By Paul C. Gorski ([gorski@edchange.org](mailto:gorski@edchange.org))  
for **EdChange**  
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1. I will learn to pronounce every student's full given name correctly. No student should feel the need to shorten or change her or his name to make it easier for me or their classmates to pronounce. I will practice and learn every name, regardless of how difficult it feels or how time-consuming it becomes. That is the first step in being inclusive.
2. I will sacrifice the safety of my comfort zone by building a process for continually assessing, understanding, and challenging my biases and prejudices and how they impact my expectations for, and relationships with, all students, parents, and colleagues.
3. I will center student voices, interests, and experiences in and out of my classroom. Even while I talk passionately about being inclusive and student-centered in the classroom, I rarely include or center students in conversations about school reform. I must face this contradiction and rededicate to sharing power with my students.
4. I will engage in a self-reflective process to explore how my identity development impacts the way I see and experience different people.
5. I will invite critique from colleagues and accept it openly. I usually do well accepting feedback ... until someone decides to offer me feedback. Though it's easy to become defensive in the face of critique, I will thank the person for their time and courage (it's not easy to critique a colleague). The worst possible scenario is for people to stop providing me feedback, whether positive and negative.
6. I will never stop being a student. If I do not grow, learn, and change at the same rate the world around me is changing, then I necessarily lose touch with the lives and contexts of my students. I must continue to educate myself—to learn from the experiences of my students and their parents, to study current events and their relationship to what I am teaching, and to be challenged by a diversity of perspectives.
7. I will understand the relationship between INTENT and IMPACT. Often, and particularly when I'm in a situation in which I experience some level of privilege, I have the luxury of referring and responding only to what I intended, no matter what impact I've had on somebody. I must take responsibility for and learn from my impact because most individual-level oppression is unintentional. But unintentional oppression hurts just as much as intentional oppression.
8. I will reject the myth of color-blindness. As painful as it may be to admit, I know that I react differently when I'm in a room full of people who share many dimensions of my identity than when I'm in a room full of people who are very different from me. I must be open and honest about that, because those shifts inevitably inform the experiences of people in my classes or workshops. In addition, color-blindness denies people validation of their whole person.
9. I will recognize my own social identity group memberships and how they may affect my students' experiences and learning processes. People do not always experience me the way in which I intend, even if I am an active advocate for all my students. A student's initial reaction to me may be based on a lifetime of experiences, so I must try not to take such reactions personally.

10. I will build coalitions with teachers who are different from me (in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religion, first language, disability, and other identities). These can be valuable relationships of trust and honest critique. At the same time, I must not rely on other people to identify my weaknesses. In particular, in the areas of my identity that I experience privilege, I must not rely on people from historically underprivileged groups to teach me how to improve myself (which is, in and of itself, a practice of privilege).
11. I will improve my skills as a facilitator, so when issues of diversity and equity do arise in the classroom, I can take advantage of the resulting educational opportunities. Too often, I allow these moments to slip away, either because I am uncomfortable with the topic or because I feel unprepared to effectively facilitate my students through it. (I often try to make myself feel better by suggesting that the students "aren't ready" to talk about racism or sexism, or whatever the topic might be, when it's more honest to say that I do not feel ready.) I will hone these skills so that I do not cheat my students out of important conversations and learning opportunities.
12. I will invite critique from my students, and when I do, I will dedicate to listening actively and modeling a willingness to be changed by their presence to the same extent they are necessarily changed by mine.
13. I will think critically about how my preferred learning styles impact my teaching style. I am usually thoughtful about diversifying my teaching style to address the needs of students with a variety of learning styles. Still, I tend to fall back on my most comfortable teaching style most often. I will fight this temptation and work harder to engage all of my students.
14. I will affirm and model an appreciation for *all* forms of intelligence and the wide variety of ways students illustrate understanding and mastery of skills and knowledge.
15. I will reflect on my own experiences as a student and how they inform my teaching. Research indicates that my teaching is most closely informed by my experiences as a student (even more so than my pre-service training). The practice of drawing on these experiences, positive and negative, provides important insights regarding my teaching practice.
16. I will encourage my students to think critically and ask critical questions about all information they receive including that which they receive from me.
17. I will challenge myself to take personal responsibility before looking for fault elsewhere. For example, if I have one student who is falling behind or being disruptive, I will consider what I am doing or not doing that may be contributing to their disengagement before problematizing their behavior or effort.
18. I will acknowledge my role as a social activist. My work changes lives, conferring upon me both tremendous power and tremendous responsibility. Even though I may not identify myself as a social activist, I know that the depth of my impact on society is profound, if only by the sheer number of lives I touch. I must acknowledge and draw on that power and responsibility as a frame for guiding my efforts toward equity and social justice in my work.
19. I will fight for equity for *all* underrepresented or disenfranchised students. Equity is not a game of choice—if I am to advocate education equity, I do not have the luxury of choosing who does or does not have access to it. For example, I cannot effectively fight for racial equity while I fail to confront gender inequity. And I can never be a real advocate for gender equity if I choose to duck the responsibility for ensuring equity for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students. When I find myself justifying my inattention to any group of disenfranchised students due to the worldview or value system into which I was socialized, I know that it is time to reevaluate that worldview or value system.
20. I will **celebrate** myself as an educator and total person. I can, and should, also celebrate every moment I spend in self-critique, however difficult and painful, because it will make me a better educator. And that is something to celebrate!