



Tool 17

Mindset: Noticing and Choosing

Mindset refers to a particular perspective, a habit of viewing something through a preconceived set of attitudes and assumptions that are “set” in the “mind” of an individual and, thus, serve as a conscious or unconscious filter. We can think of mindset as a mental model that guides our attention, perception, expectations, and behaviour.

As a leader and educator, our mindset is particularly important, because our beliefs and assumptions either expand or contract the opportunities and potential that surround us. Our view of our own potential, possibilities, strengths, limitations, successes, and failures as well as those of others frame all that we see and do.

In this tool, two sets of questions are provided to help uncover the mindset that the mentee operates from as a leader and as a learner, and its impact on themselves and their situation. The list of key mindset polarities may be a helpful reference to inform the conversation and to help the mentee identify the specific mindset that they are operating from and, thus, the shift that they want to make.

We invite you to review the questions and list of mindsets to select inquiries that will help expand the mentee’s awareness of their mindset and subsequent choices, desired changes, and actions.

Mindset: Leader’s Lens

The mentor-coach’s willingness to articulate the presence and impact of their own mindset as a leader, either from the past or present, can deepen the mentee’s willingness to explore and share their insights.

Possible questions for the mentee to consider:

1. What are some mindsets that you consistently hold as leader? (See list of key mindset polarities on the last page of this tool.)

2. How do these mindsets show up?



3. What is their impact?

Possible areas to consider:

- perspective
- assumptions
- attitudes
- fears
- hopes
- expectations
- strengths
- limitations
- failure

4. Which mindsets help you be a positive influence?

- What supports them?

5. Which mindsets get in your way as a leader?

- Where do they show up? When do they show up?

6. Which mindsets are counter-productive for you?

- In what contexts do they show up? Be specific.

7. Which mindsets do you want to support in your colleagues, staff, or faculty?

- How do these mindsets show up in you as a leader?



Mindset: Learner's Lens

Possible questions for the mentee to consider:

1. *How would you characterize your mindset as a learner?*

2. *What is the impact of that mindset?*
Possible areas to consider:
 - *perspective*
 - *assumptions*
 - *attitudes*
 - *fears*
 - *hopes*
 - *expectations*
 - *strengths*
 - *limitations*
 - *failure*

3. *Which mindsets help you when you are learning something new?*

4. *Which mindsets foster openness and curiosity in you?*

5. *Which mindsets get in your way as a learner?*
 - *Where do they to show up? When do they to show up?*



6. *Which mindsets are counter-productive for you?*
 - *In what contexts do they show up? Be specific.*

7. *Which mindset would you like to consistently operate from in our work together?*
 - *What do you want me to be watching for?*

8. *Which mindset do you want for students as learners?*
 - *How does this mindset align with your mindset and those of staff, colleagues, or faculty?*

Key Mindset Polarities

The following key mindset polarities can help support the dialogue surrounding the presence and impact of the mentee's mindsets.

- optimism versus pessimism
- open versus closed
- strength versus weakness
- acceptance versus resistance
- “abundance” versus “scarcity” (Zander & Zander, *The Art of Possibility*, 2000)
- “yes” versus “no”
- success versus failure
- “growth” versus “fixed” (Dweck, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, 2006; for more information, see *When Mentoring Meets Coaching*, Chapter 9, p. 230)
- “learner” versus “judger” (Adams, *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*, 2009)
- expansion versus contraction
- toward versus away
- responsive versus reactive