Main Character Growth Mindset Energy for Grades 6-12

January 12, 2026

32m 31s

Amy Rich Crane

Hello, everyone. My name is Amy Richcrane, and I am a dual board-certified pediatric occupational therapist. So some of you might have heard of occupational therapists in the past, maybe referred to as OT.

And we like to have a lot of fun when we're working with children and youth to help them feel like their best selves. And today I'm really excited to share this presentation with you on growth mindset and I like.

to use a little bit of relevant, you know, connection. This is titled Main Character Growth Mindset Energy. That might be a little cringe. It's okay if you think I'm cringe. I've I've already taken some deep breaths about that.

And want to connect in a way that makes sense to you, that feels relatable and can hopefully help empower you to feel in the driver's seat with your learning and knowing about.

How your brand grows and the importance of using a growth mindset and positive strategies to support you and others when you're struggling with things. So let's get started.

Who is this training for today? For all teens and pre-teens? Really, I've done a couple across the ages here, so your teachers have already learned some of these concepts and strategies in a way that might sit with them a little bit.

um better and also did one for the younger students. And then here we are with the teens. Life is hard and that's no joke. And we're often misread.

Your brain is growing, the expectations keep changing and increasing, and most of the people in your life treat you like you should already have it all figured out.

I want to remind you, hopefully someone's told you that just because you're struggling, it does not mean that you're lazy or stupid or broken, although we can feel that way sometimes.

It often just means that somebody does not understand your needs and the supports are not yet fitting. So a growth mindset is not this toxic positivity. It's a main character energy.

Knowledge is power, kind of energy. It's knowing that skills and confidence and

motivation are buildable, not fixed, no cap. OK, I am now using my fidget spinner to regulate because I know at this moment.
When I said no cap, people probably laughed again. That's OK. If you need or want to laugh at me, I'm not on the other side. I can't see right now, so.
I'm just going to zoom and take a deep breath and regulate. Here's a good old fidget from back in my day, so.
Some things you might hear just try harder. You know that burns people out, even adults. Does not matter your age. The just right supports meeting you where you're at. That's what help you move forward without crushing yourself. And sometimes we need to tell ourselves that we can be our hardest.
Critics and the and the most difficult on ourselves. We also learn that from those that are around us and the messages that we're getting. So we need to learn how to ask for what you need, and that builds power.
Not weakness. That's something we have to recondition our brains to know. Asking for the right supports and knowing when things are not fitting is what's going to protect your mental health, your mental well-being. Your mental health is just as important as your physical health.
And when you understand how you work, you're going to stop fighting yourself and start backing yourself. And that is the switch. It's when things change. All right, what are we talking about here? What is your brain science glow up?
Laugh away. Brain science and mindset can help you level up, that's for sure. A growth mindset means you know your brain can grow. It actually gets stronger and faster when you practice things, when you try again and you don't give up on a challenge.
And it starts with how you see and you talk about it all. Some days and some challenges hit different. Stress happens and it tries to shut down our brain. It will make it spiral and go offline and some of us.
Go all the way up here, and some of us shut down all the way down here. Our brains, when they go into stress response, can act very different for different people. But we do know that when we're in a stress response, our brain cannot learn.
And that's why it's so important that if you're feeling stressed and you're feeling like things are not aligning for you, you need to pause and you need to ask for support. You need to let somebody know that you're struggling. Because you you physically cannot learn. Your brain will not grow and it
not learn and retain information if you are in a constant state of stress. Knowing all

this and noticing the signs that it's happening and then flexing your advocacy skills while you're sticking with something, that is what builds resistance.
That's a brain glow up in progress. It reminds us that making mistakes, seeking help and problem solving help us deal with the mess ups, with the drama and the overwhelm that piles up in our day-to-day. And it's real.
All right, tell me more, because this is low-key underrated stuff. When you believe your brain can grow, you understand what's happening in your mind instead of blaming yourself or others. You keep trying. You get help. Even when things feel overwhelming, you don't quit on yourself.
You bounce back from mistakes instead of letting them define you, and you learn new skills and feel pride and hopeful. And that is powerful. Why it matters for well-being. When challenges stack up, your thoughts matter. Believing I can't do this can make stress feel.
even heavier, and it can lead to feeling stuck and hopeless and alone. Your brain goes into stress mode, that's what we were talking about, and then protection shows up, and you stop problem solving.
Instead, you believe I can. Instead, when you believe I can and I just need, I can get through, it keeps your brain flexible and it helps you ask for help and take breaks and try again. It reminds you that hard moments are temporary. They are not who you are.
Why this needs to matter. When people make assumptions and label you or talk about you instead of to you, it doesn't just feel bad. It makes you feel less seen, less safe, and less capable.
That kind of misunderstanding hits harder when you're already juggling school and identity and life. Who am I? What do I want to be? How am I measuring up? What's important to me? All of that.
There is so much going on in your life. We know that being a teen is hard, and for some, it's incredibly hard. One in five teens experience a mental health challenge every year. One in five is not rare.
That's real.
Every five of you that counts off, one of you in that group is likely to be experiencing some challenges.
Suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages ten to twenty-four. It's something we have to talk about, because when we don't talk about it, it makes it worse.

One in three teens report being bullied in the last year.
These difficult things are real, and they are happening to you, your classmates, people in your circle, in your life. We know that those being bullied by peers and adults, and even our own inner critic,
Hurts more than just our feelings.
Teens who are bullied are more likely to have anxiety, depression, and experience suicidal thoughts and behaviors. This is real. And how we understand and talk to and show up for ourselves and others
Madders.
I want anyone that's having a hard time to remember you have adults in your life that are there for you, that are safe adults. Every person should be able to count 5 adults. In their life.
All right, my water is out and my voice is going.
So I'm going to take a breath.
It's what the moment calls for.
Every child, every youth, every adult even should have five other safe people in their life that they can go to when things are hard. And remember, 988 is also a resource if you're struggling with mental health challenges, suicidal thoughts, or bullying.
And you can also text that number for support.
How do we take care of our brains? How you think about your brain and your needs and the way you talk to yourself actually changes how you feel and how you cope and regulate and grow. Your brain isn't broken, it's learning and adapting and building resilience every day.
And we have some healthy self-talk that we can level up with. Like, I can figure this out, even if it's hard. I need a break. I'm going to take one. That's okay. And if you need one,
You take one.
And then we got some low-key traps, some not so healthy self-talk. If it doesn't come easy, I'm stupid. Never going to get this. Messing up and not knowing means I'm not good enough. Why should I even try? I can't ask for help. They'll all judge me and look at them.
Hype alert. When you treat your brain like a crew that you're building and not a problem that you're fixing, and you feed it respect and compassion and that I can grow energy, you watch it flex and level up every day.
This is not to say that when things aren't right in our life, it's our fault, but we can

change ways and patterns that we think, and we have to stop those negative self-talk patterns.
patterns that have grown in our brain, and we can even tell other people, you know, how they're talking to us, how they're treating us, does not fly. It's not cool. It doesn't help us.
And um, advocate for your needs.
These are reminders that can help empower us, but should not trap us into believing that we're to blame either. Just things to pay attention to.
So how will we know if we're getting good support from others in our life? Teens often call out or show them through behaviors that they don't feel understood or supported. But there's another way.
We can call them in. A new strategy I've learned from a book I've been reading lately can help you help others see your needs instead of just reacting, right? Sometimes that call out energy is all we've got.
But it might not be making the situation worse, and it might make it hard for others to hear. Again, if that's all you've got, if that's all you can do, we have to start somewhere. Nobody's perfect. We're aiming for progress.
But if you can lean in towards calling someone in to understand where you're coming from, potentially taking some perspective with them, it's going to get you a lot further. So signs that they're supporting you, that we've got healthy.
level of energy. So you'll know if you're getting good support if they listen first before reacting. If the adults or others in your life are asking questions instead of assuming. They check in to see how their health is landing with you. They respect your needs and your voice and your ability to ask for support.
Ort and they help you figure out the next steps instead of justice giving you the answers or telling you no.
Signs it's not working. This is some red flag energy. They ignore or dismiss what you say. They jump to conclusions about your behavior or your feelings. They only give instructions without input or choice.
They judge or shame you for mistakes or feelings, or they say they're helping, but they don't get to know your needs and they don't follow through.
When that's going on, you can say something.
I want you to feel empowered, and though it might feel scary, to turn on that brave inside and find a way to let them know how it's sitting, what you need, call them in to be on your team.

The more we focus on understanding ourselves and connecting other over just focusing on correction, calling people out, getting it wrong, do better, try harder. The more we do that, understand, seen, supported, that's going to level all of us up, and some of the adults in your life are going to have it. It's going to come more naturally to them, and some of them are.
And some are going to have it with others and not for you. Maybe you **** heads with someone and we don't know why that is. You know, we'd have to dig deep and figure it out and have some communication around it, but we don't always have all that time. So sometimes just knowing how.
something sitting with you and figuring out how to communicate it in a way that calls somebody to your needs or get somebody else involved that can be the middle person to to help negotiate that flexibly can make a huge difference.
I've seen a lot of kids advocate for themselves at home and in the school system through these ways, and it has been night and day. It has transformed their lives.
So we're going to connect the dots before we practice this. So take a SEC. Notice how your brain talks to you on the regular. Reflect on how adults show up for you or how they don't. How does that land for you?
Are the vibes right? Where aren't they right?
We're going to practice calling in, working a process of spotting mismatch needs and supports, then advocating for those next level matches so you can take lead on how you learn, grow, and feel with the just right support and mindset.
So we're going to use this strategy called mismatch, and I've gone over this with the younger crowd, and hopefully your teachers are learning it through um these these webinars.
They are not in their webinars, but in in the youth and child focused ones. So this process we're about to go through is called mismatch. Every letter of mismatch stands for an opportunity to practice growth mindset in action.
And flexibility. This practical, proactive, positive strategies. Lots of P words, but I'm telling you they're helpful. Trust just a little and see see what it can do, but.
All of these letters stand for one part of it. We're going to roll through what each part stands for, and then we're going to practice them. So M notice the moment, pause and name it when somebody says something to you that doesn't sit right.
We are going to, we're going to pause, we're going to tune in and trust how it landed with us. Something about that did not land right.
Don't brush it off.

Identify the impact. Ask yourself, what did I actually hear? How did it make me feel? This is about your experience, not whether they were right, not if you were wrong. How did this impact you?
Whatever was said S search for the signal. Wonder what did they really want from me or for me? This keeps things turning from turning into instant defensiveness and it doesn't allow us to ignore how it felt.
We're tuning in. What are they trying to signal to me?
My why, your why? We can do this by asking what do each of us want? Is it the same thing? Sometimes it is, but we're just communicating it differently. Do we both care about the same outcome? You might both want the same thing for you. It might be success or effort or.
Growth or respect, but you're just saying it differently. We're going to look at that.
The A ask for support or help. Say what would help instead. What helps me is hearing XY or Z or another teacher does this for me and I can hear that just fine. It teaches people how to support you instead of just reacting.
T Think about the needs. What do I still need right now? Is there something they need? This shifts the moment from blame to problem solving. What do we both need here? How can we solve this problem? Where's the win-win?
See, choose that next step. Decide what's my responsibility? What's theirs? What can we do together? Teamwork will help solve problems. We need to make sure that both people in a situation where there's been a mismatch, you know, have the opportunity to have both
of their sides kind of seen and and see what needs to be done about that. And then H, help fix the message. So a lot of times here what we're talking about is the way we say something, either to ourselves, the thoughts we're thinking and talking to ourself with, or an actual message that was delivered.
Something was said to us. Let's change that message to a more empowering one. I'm still learning. I can try again. Mistakes help me grow. It's a science, not magic. And practice it because it will stick. It will grow your brain. You can grow.
your brain. You were not born with the full capacity knowing everything that you have. Your brain grows. The more we practice something, it's just like a muscle that develops over time.
You've got this.
So let's give it a try. You mess up during a presentation and an adult says you didn't prepare enough. This wouldn't happen if you focused and you put in the work.

Mark.
Oh, mismatch. OK, notice the moment that hit hard. I feel embarrassed, tense. My jaw is clenched. My fists are clenched. My stomach has dropped.
And I feel attacked and like curling up in a ball.
You notice your body and your feelings, and you don't ignore them. These are clues.
Then identify the impact. OK, what did I hear? How did this land with me? I heard I'm irresponsible and I'm not good at this.
That is not going to help us feel successful. Let's search for the signal. What were they likely trying to communicate or signal to me?
It might be hard to get this part. It might be hard to say that they want me to succeed and do the best I can.
It might be trying to help, even if it didn't land that way, it didn't sound kind or land right to us.
To signal, do they truly want the best from us? We got to ask that question. My why? Your why? Well, if they're a caregiver in your life, they should want to see you exceed, succeed and improve.
And you should too. We both care about me succeeding and improving, so you might want the same thing, but it's being communicated differently. So how can you ask for support? Well, when you give me feedback, I learn from it more when you focus on understanding my process and the steps.
or actions I can do next time. That applies for all of us. Instead of just pointing out what went wrong or why you think it happened, that jumping to assumptions piece, because that made me want to shut down and not try harder.
You can tell people how to support you. That's okay. We can find respectful ways to do it, and we're going to be learning. It's not going to come out 110 off the bat, but the more you practice, the easier it will become.
You'll you'll become more skilled at it, and it is a lifelong skill that can help you feel empowered and know that we're all in this life on a growing journey. All right, let's think about those needs, the T.
Teen needs, they need clarity, they need encouragement and coaching. What does the adult need to know that I tried my best? How do we figure out what's missing for everyone? That's we. We think about it. We think about what they might need, what I might need, and that's that's the landing.
or you figure it out. That's what helps us choose the next step. I'll ask for clear expectations next time. They can give me action-focused feedback. It won't send my

brain into high stress.
and I'll ask for help applying it in advance so we both know that this is going to be my best work. Collaboration helps solve problems. We've got to figure out how to find that middle ground and communicate around what didn't go well, what
Is going well? Where might my brain or needs be a little different?
Is my stress going to be up automatically because I struggled last time? Like these are the things we can think through and then support ourselves and others in getting to our our next level self. All right. H help fix the message. I didn't nail it this time. And the mistakes will help me grow. I know what to work on for the next one. I'm going to work on it and I will get better with practice and with clear feedback. That is so leveled up right there.
Empowering words help our brains learn better. Sometimes we just need to flip some of the language, some of the thought processes, and we can go from a mismatch to a match where we're all doing well.
And we can all adults, children, youth see our role in that.
So key takeaways for mismatch and what we talked about today. Life is hard and challenging moments happen every day. This training reminds us the science of how we can grow our brains.
This is legit brainy science on the brains. You can grow them. It showed us how the words we use with ourselves and others shape how we feel and learn and grow.
All of these connect when we're trying to learn, when we're trying to grow and be our best, and we have to remember thoughts, feelings, actions, connection with others, collaboration. It all adds up.
You learn it. You learn to notice labels and how they land, to spot mismatches and start changing the words and perspectives and supports. You get that self-advocacy, the skill of trusting your gut.
Using your voice and refusing to stay stuck in those hard moments, it's what will lead you to become your most capable self.
It isn't you that is not good enough. It is the match.
right? We've got some empowering examples from all over the different um areas here. We've got our our well known painter, Mr. Vincent Van Gogh. What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?
Growth mindset in action. Michael Jordan. He's back from my time, but hopefully you still know of him. I can accept failure. Everyone fails at something, but I cannot accept not trying.

T Swift I am not a Swifty, but I will certainly quote her when it applies. You don't have to be perfect to be good enough. Michelle Obama, your story doesn't end where your comfort zone begins.
We've got to remember, this can be uncomfortable and difficult.
But this is where you grow. This is your next level. LeBron, he's still relevant, right? You have to be able to accept failure to get better.
Dwayne Johnson Asking for help isn't weakness, it's a superpower, right? Whether it's everyday moments or it's famous people, we know that we can all grow and none of us is perfect.
Two things can be true at once. We can have more than one feeling at once. We can be nervous to try something new and put ourselves out there, and we can also feel brave in the moment and turn up that advocacy. You can be struggling.
And you can still be growing. You can feel frustrated and you can feel motivated. Someone can have good intentions and they can still miss your needs. That impact can be off. Holding 2 truths and knowing the science behind it helps you stay curious instead of stuck.
And it makes room for better communication, flexibility and change for us all. Growth isn't about feeling fearless, it's about moving forward while feeling nervous and saying yes to what supports you best.
Knowing your brain can grow and your tricky stuff, challenging circumstances can change. So remember, mismatch and growth mindset allows everyone to show up as their imperfect selves.
With different brains, different bodies, different experiences, different needs, different starting points, all the work is for all of us, and the work is for all of us to notice our different needs and find supportive ways to be our best.
Deep down, we all want to belong, feel connected and welcome, and be successful as we figure out who we are.
So remember this, and please share your thoughts about what you learned today with one safe adult in your life.
Many thanks to all of you for being here today, listening to this, learning about your brain, listening to me try to cringe with your Gen. language, and um hopefully we can move past that point and and take
Some things away from this and many thanks to the Youth Well Foundation for sponsoring this learning opportunity that will be available to all the school districts free of charge. And remember, you are not alone if you or someone you know

experiences feelings of hopelessness.
or thoughts of suicide, help is available. You can call or text 988. You can also visit their website for more ways to talk and find out more there. This matters. You matter. And we can find a way forward.

◉ **Amy Rich Crane** stopped transcription