212 CREATIVED

presents...

SHARPEN YOUR *own* PENCIL.

Do *you* need to change?

I have been an educator for almost 40 years. Let me tell you, education has changed. I have seen and experienced (am still experiencing) the changes firsthand. A narrow curriculum, high-stakes testing, merit pay, the focus on data and testing results, not to mention changes in our society, such as ubiquitous cell phones and social media—any one of these changes would be a lot to deal with, but educators must deal with them all simultaneously.

Education is changing, but do you need to change? It shouldn't matter what is happening in the world, what the zeitgeist of the times is, or what state and federal regulations require—the answer is universal and timeless. Of course you need to change! You need to learn, grow, and refine your craft in a never-ended striving for improvement. Do this for your students, to stay current and honestly, to keep interest in your career. It can be difficult to stay motivated 20 or 30 years into any job. If you continue to challenge yourself to get more and more nuanced at your chosen profession, that can invigorate a career!

I would say that dedication to constant and never-ending improvement of oneself would be good practice at any time in history, but especially now. The world is so different now than when I was growing up. Just the impact of the internet is a game-changer. How should we react to such cataclysmic changes? Do we whine and gripe, or do we get excited and embrace change as a challenge to become do and be more and better? It is a choice. I suggest you embrace it!

Sounds great, but how? As we will discover, changing by ourselves is difficult, getting feedback from a colleague, friend or coach to help with changing is better and more effective in many ways.

How do we accomplish change when we are so isolated in education?

Isolation

There is a great deal of isolation in education. The classrooms are separated from each other by brick walls. Some teachers in a building may see each other only once a week (if that!) at staff meetings. Observations and evaluations by administrators can be beneficial, but usually occur few and far between. Perhaps the administrator does an observation once or twice per year. Even if there are pre-and-post observation conferences, how much useful feedback comes to the individual teacher that truly helps transform their teaching practice? As a teacher getting evaluated, I didn't get as much as I was hoping. As an administrator doing the evaluations, I was not as effective as I would like to have been.

I didn't know what I didn't know

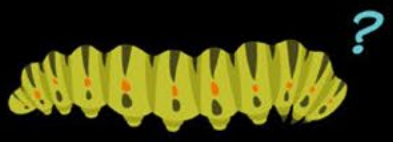
Part of the reason for this was I didn't know what I didn't know. When I was new to education, I didn't know the skills you are about to learn from 1 Minute Mastery each week. For example, it didn't occur to me that there was a preferred way to give directions to students. I didn't know of ways to get students' attention. I did what I think many teachers do—**I muddled through and did the best I could.**

Isolation Weakness

This isolation that teachers experience can be a strength or a weakness. Isolation is a weakness in one way because we do not often get a chance to see other teachers as they practice their craft. One of the biggest blessings as an administrator is that I have been able to observe master teachers work their magic in the classroom.

Isolation Strength

Isolation can be a strength because the teacher has enormous control over what happens in the classroom. This varies from school to school, but in general, teachers have a lot of control in their classroom: how the classroom is set up, and how they teach, etc.
When I was a new teacher, I really didn't want an administrator or another teacher coming in to see me teach. I didn't know if I was any good, and didn't want to find out from a colleague or the boss. I preferred to fail all by myself with the students as the only witnesses!
That all changed after I got a few years of teaching, and after I consciously developed what is called a growth mindset. I wanted to get better, and I craved feedback and suggestions. I suspected I could be better than I was, but didn't know how to get there. This section outlines some ideas for how to get honest feedback so you can sharpen your own pencil, using the ideas offered to you through the 1 Minute Mastery video!



How Do I Change?

Start Here

Cultivate a Growth Mindset

Get Help

Get Feedback

- Overdone Strengths
- This Time/ Next Time
- Praise Effort, Not Ability

Take Action

- Shrink the change
  - Termite Bites
- Keep it in front of you
- Four Step Model
  - Monitor Self-talk

Growth mindset

To change, you must be willing and open to change. How you view feedback, criticism and opportunities for growth are critical to the success of your improvement efforts.

To that end, the first and perhaps most important concept I would like to introduce you to is the theory of growth mindset and fixed mindset. Dr. Carol Dweck has spent her career writing and researching these two mindsets, and I recommend her ground-breaking book to everyone (Dweck, 2008).

In Dweck's theory, the world is divided into two groups, people who have a fixed mindset, and people who have a growth mindset. Of course, the world can be divided into two groups many ways: cat lovers and dog lovers, Star Wars or Star Trek, loves sushi/ would never try it. I heard once that there are people who believe the world can be divided into two groups-- and everyone else.

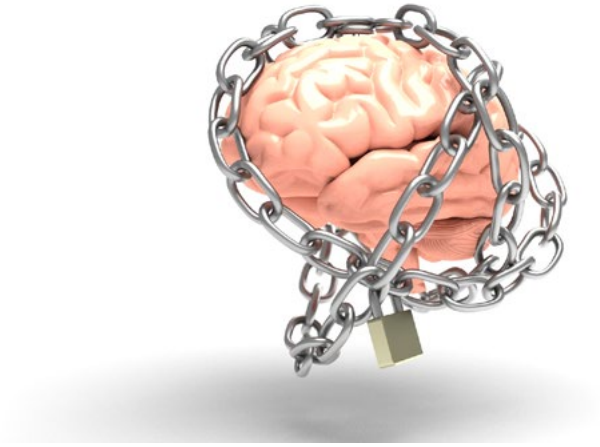
Dweck's theory is elegant in its simplicity. I believe she has tapped into a way of looking at yourself and others that can help us understand ourselves and our colleagues, spouses, and children.

To find out what kind of mindset you have, read the following four statements and keep track of the ones with which you agree.

- **Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.**
- **You can learn new things but you can't really change how intelligent you are.**
- **No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.**
- **You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.**

Fixed mindset

These questions come right out of Dweck's book Mindset (2008, pp. 12-13). People who answer "yes" to the first two questions have what she has defined as a "fixed" mindset. A person with a fixed mindset believes that the talents and abilities you are born with are the ones you will always have. You can get training and take classes but, in general, you don't change much.



People with fixed mindsets spend a lot of time defending their thinking, trying to get the one right answer, and can get defensive when challenged. They probably don't raise their hands in class very often, because they don't want to get a wrong answer. They don't want to give the wrong answer they believe they are born with all of the intelligence they will have and can't change much. That means that the answer wouldn't be wrong, they would be wrong and flawed as human beings.

When it comes to feedback, they don't like it. They might not see feedback as honest suggestions to make them better, rather, they may see feedback as a personal attack.

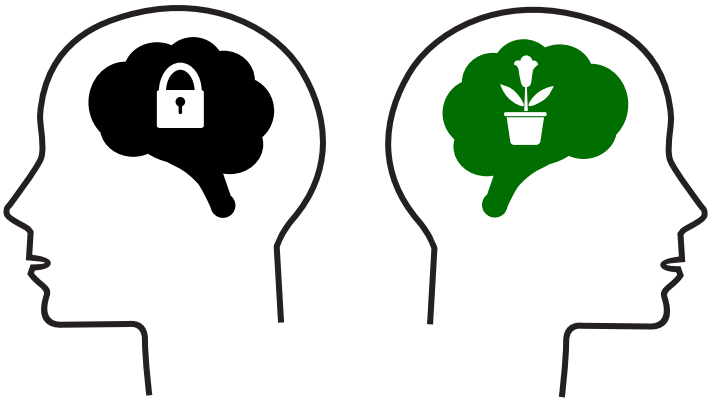
I have many examples of this in my own life. I used to have a 14-year-old Buick Regal with 250,000 miles on the odometer. Needless to say, after 14 years, things started to break down. First, the rear passenger-side window stopped working, then the rear driver's-side window. Finally one day, the driver's-side window stopped going down. It's a little embarrassing to admit, but my only thought was very fixed-mindset: "Darn, now this window isn't working either". That's it! That was my one and only thought. Now this event has happened, and I have to accept it. I can't fix it because "I'm not good at fixing cars" (like people are born being good mechanics without needing any schooling or apprenticeship!).

Growth mindset

If you answered “yes” to questions three and four, you have a growth mindset.

People with growth mindsets believe that, while you may have natural talents when you are born, these things are not set in stone and can be changed, learned and improved upon with conscious effort. They believe that the brain is like a muscle, and gets stronger with use. A growth mindset allows us to raise our hands in class to check our thinking, asking for feedback and course correction. Growth mindset people love feedback, and are constantly asking for honest evaluations of their performance. They view feedback as an exciting way to get better and to grow themselves and their abilities.

With the broken window example from earlier, a growth mindset (which I talked myself into after a few days) sounded like this: “Hmmm, my window doesn’t go down now. I wonder why? I should take it to the garage to see how much it would cost to get fixed. You know what might be fun? Try to fix it myself! I’ve always wanted to learn a little about how windows work in cars. What’s the worst that can happen? Maybe I can get my old college roommate to help me on a Saturday. We could make a day of it!”



FIXED MINDSET VS GROWTH MINDSET

Changing a **fixed** mindset to a *growth* mindset

Once you get tuned into the growth versus fixed mindset, you will begin to see it everywhere. But how does one change a fixed mindset to a growth mindset? Here are some suggestions.

Awareness

Awareness is a vital first step. When I first was introduced to the concept of growth v. fixed mindset, I continued to read more and think upon the concepts, but almost immediately saw the power in the idea, and began to incorporate the concepts into my own practice. Just being aware of the idea is an important action to take.

Examples of each mindset

Creating, reading or sharing examples of fixed and growth mindsets can be beneficial. Dweck gives countless examples in her book, and I have offered some here.

Find examples in real life

Start looking for examples of fixed and growth mindsets in real life. It could be examples from your own life, or famous people in entertainment, sports or politics that make the news. History is replete with examples of both kinds of mindsets.

Self reflection

A growth mindset loves a challenge. People with a growth mindset know that effort is the key to achieving growth in any area. For this exercise, pick something you're not good at and brainstorm actions you could choose to make. Put some effort into it!

Effort

In my own life, there was a computer program at work that I was supposed to learn. I had every intention of learning it and becoming an expert. I went to a couple of workshops and half-heartedly picked at the keyboard a few times, but never achieved any notable proficiency with the program. After doing this exercise on myself, I realized with a start that the reason I was not good at the program is because I had put hardly any effort into learning the program!

I brainstormed ways I could put forth effort, and within a week, I had the local guru of this program sit down with me for several hours of one-on-one instruction, watched several how-to videos and spent time on my own poking around and learning through trial and error. Amazingly, I got much better pretty quickly because finally I had put forth EFFORT! My lack of facility with the program had nothing whatsoever to do with my lack of innate skill or ability or talent with computer programs. It had everything to do with me not putting forth any appreciable effort.

So how do you change a fixed mindset to a growth mindset?

Four-part change method

Dweck suggests a four step change method as a way to change from fixed to growth mindset.

Step One

Listen to your inner dialogue—learn to realize the fixed mindset voice. *What does it sound like? Does it sound whinny and complaining? Does it sound defensive? Are you making excuses or justifying? Do you just feel like quitting and giving up? This is probably the voice of the fixed mindset coming through.*

Hmmmm, interesting...

A note about self talk. Monitor what goes on inside your head closely. When you see something that didn't go so well, don't think "I'm so stupid..." or some other toxic response. Train yourself to say the only legal response, which is "Hmmm, interesting..."

For example, let's say you are watching a recording of yourself teaching, and when you try a skill from that weeks 1 Minute Mastery lesson, and it totally flops. You forget a step and you are watching the students in the recording mill about in confusion. In this case, your self-talk should sound some like this: "Hmmmm, interesting. If all the steps aren't followed, this doesn't work as well. Hmmmm, interesting. Next time, I'll try to get all of the steps in."

“Hmmm.. interesting” is the only legal response. Anything else is not allowed! No more “I’m so stupid”, or “I can’t believe I blew it again” kind of talk will be tolerated! Be kind to yourself. Keep moving toward excellence, don’t worry about perfection.

Another note about recording yourself. Please be kind to yourself. It is a different experience seeing yourself teach. Things look different. Don’t judge yourself harshly, in fact, try not to judge yourself at all. Just look at the video with a clinical detachment and notice what you notice, without judgment or negative responses.

Step Two

Realize you have a choice, and can change that voice.

Step Three

Stop the fixed mindset voice, and replace it with growth-mindset voice. *I literally say out loud sometimes “Stop it!” when I hear that fixed mindset mind-monologue starting up (Hopefully know one is around to hear it so I don’t sound too crazy!). I find that I have to be constantly vigilant, because my brain’s main job is to help me survive. All my brain is doing is creating the monologue, the self-talk, that wants to protect me from change, protect me from the possibility of trying something new and looking stupid. Thanks brain, but I got this from here.*

Step Three

Take growth-mindset action. *I start with admitting that I have not put the kind of effort in that I need to for lasting change. I try to get myself excited by the possibility of growth and renewal. I brainstorm all of the possible actions I could take, then choose one and start immediately.*

So now you have cultivated a growth mindset, and are actually looking forward to feedback that can make you even better. You record yourself teaching or even better, you have a colleague come and observe you (we’ll talk about the benefits of having a colleague help out in this process in the next section.

Now that you have some direction how to change to a growth mindset, the next step on our way to mastering all of the 1 Minute Mastery skills is to decide which ones we need to work on first. That happens by either self-reflection (ok, but not the optimal solution) or having a peer come in and observe. Having a peer or trained coach come in to observe you is the method I prefer, for reasons that will become clear in the next chapter.

You're not that honest.

I've never met you, but I know you are probably not totally honest. This is not a slight against you at all. It's just human nature. Imagine this scenario. You are sitting in a room. A person you have never met before comes into the room, reads a weather report ("Looks like it's going to be another rainy day tomorrow with highs in the low 50's, so bundle up and get those umbrella's out!"), then leaves the room.

Then a researcher comes in and asks you to do something preposterous. Something absurd. He asks you to rate the weatherman's IQ. A seemingly impossible task since you have never met him except to hear him read the weather but, you make your best guess.

Unbeknownst to you, after reading the weather report, the man went into a separate room and was asked by researchers to rate his own intelligence. Guess who was more accurate? You, the total stranger, or the man himself? Hands down, it was you, the stranger. In fact, according to the researchers (Borkenau, 1993), you would be 66% more accurate than the man guessing his own IQ.

In fact, we tend to think we are better than we really are at just about everything. We believe that we are at lower-risk for heart attack and getting cancer than our peers. Most of us even believe that we are more likely than our peers to be honest in our self-assessment of ourselves. Yikes!

The Unskilled and Unaware Phenomenon

One of the most interesting pieces of research comes from David Dunning (2004). He found something he calls the "unskilled and unaware" phenomenon. What he found was that the people who were the worst at self-evaluating their own performance of a skill were the very people who were very bad at that skill. For example, people who the worst joke tellers actually think they are pretty funny. We could extrapolate this to say that the very teachers who need to change the most, believe they need to change the least!

Don't be N.I.C.E.

Get someone to help you. Find someone who will give you the gift of honest feedback. Ask students, colleagues or friends to watch you teach live, or view a recording of a lesson, and let you know honestly what they think. This is especially useful if they have had training or exposure to The Great Eight ® skills, and can phrase their feedback using that vocabulary.

Plead with your friends to not tell you how great you are. Tell them that if they really cared about your growth as a professional, they would give you the gift of honest feedback. Tell them not to be N.I.C.E. N.I.C.E. can be an acronym for Nothing Inside Cares Enough. Then

give them this book and let them get familiar with it before they observe you.

You can help even more by having them focus on one of the 1 Minute Mastery skill categories to start.

Observing and giving feedback can be difficult for a friend or colleague, especially if they work with you on a daily basis, they have never given feedback before, or they are nice people who view feedback as criticism that they personally don't like, so therefore don't want to give.

Don't be shy, give honest, direct feedback

Give this message to your friend or colleague: If they want to help you, tell them not to be shy. Implore them to give you direct feedback on skills that you can improve. There is classic research (Latane, 1968) that shows clearly how this is helpful. Latane and his colleague Darley, put students in a room to do a mundane task, then suddenly started filling up the room with smoke through an air vent. When students were by themselves, 75% of them got up to get out of the room. If there were several people placed in the room at the same time, when the smoke started coming through, only 38% of participants got up and left the room.

We are social beings. If there is something out of the ordinary, we look to others around us for clues as to what our behavior should be. Imagine a struggling teacher in a lackluster or under-performing school. Even if they want to get better, the overwhelming message from social cues around them may be "Stop trying so hard, it doesn't matter what you do, the kids won't get any better." Giving direct feedback to them can cut through these social ties that bind and move them into action.

This is one of the great benefits of the 1 Minute Mastery skills. They are laid out for you and your observer. They don't have to reinvent the wheel or beat around the bush. They just have to say the skill name and maybe a brief description. Very direct. Very helpful.

What to do when being observed

To get the most out of an observation, whether you are recording yourself or someone is observing you, the rule is Don't fail by being perfect. If things are looking pretty good to you, then push yourself. If you aren't making mistakes every so often, you aren't learning. To paraphrase management guru Tom Peters "Try a lot, fail quickly, adjust rapidly". What can be learned from a perfect, safe, inside the comfort zone, vanilla lesson? Nothing. It is in the mistakes that we find out where we need to refine our craft, it is in the things that don't go the way we planned where creativity happens. So, push yourself! If you don't use music in your classroom at all, that's where to start. If you don't do state changes, there is another beginning. Inside the comfort zone is predictability, safety, and routine. It also can get a little boring in there. Outside the comfort zone is where the juice is—the growth, the excitement, the stories! When I am 90 years old, I will be telling the stories of my life. The stories are never "Let me tell you about a day when I didn't take any risks and everything turned out just like I planned". No,

the stories are about the exciting times, the times when we stretched, we reached further than we thought we could, when things started to go badly, and we saved the day.

Four Gifts to help with giving feedback

Now the observation is complete, the recording has been made. Now it is time to give feedback. Telling someone what they did well is the easy part. Giving constructive feedback on what they could improve upon can be a sticky wicket.

How does one give constructive feedback without hurting feelings or arousing defensiveness in the recipient of the feedback? There are four gifts I have to give to you that may help you give feedback not only to a colleague, but in many areas of your life, from your own personal relationship with a significant other to talking to a parent about an unruly child.

The first gift is understanding how fixed and growth mindsets react to feedback.

The second gift is being able to phrase feedback through the framework of The Theory of Overdone Strengths.

Thirdly, we will discover how to praise effort, not ability.

Finally, you will learn how to use the "This Time/Next Time" feedback sheet.

The First Gift: How mindsets react to feedback

When someone with a fixed mindset gets feedback, they usually don't take it well. Fixed mindset self-talk might include phrases like: "The administrator doesn't even know me like I know me. I am great." Maybe you start to justify. "Yeah, if he only came in during my second hour class instead of that horrible fifth hour class", or "It was the day of the Homecoming game, everyone was crazy, what do they expect, miracles? Then maybe self-doubt creeps in. "Maybe they really don't like me". The self-talk switches from "I got a bad evaluation" to "I am a bad teacher". Depression sets in. After a while, you may use justification to make yourself feel better, and you work hard to convince yourself that your first impression was correct—the administrator really doesn't know you, the evaluation was unfair, and you go merrily on your way.

Fixed mindset people also can be in denial. This is a tough one because if their skills are flawed, they may think that, at a fundamental level, they are flawed.

Fixed mindset people may tend to think that the world needs to change to accommodate their particular needs and wants. A teacher may complain about the quality of students and the poor involvement of the parents. They should get the cream of the crop because, they may believe that they are one of the best (if not the best) teachers in the school.

Growth Mindset and Feedback

If you have a growth mindset, feedback is welcomed, and even sought after. Suggestions to improve are welcomed gratefully, even with excitement, because the feedback has presented an opportunity for personal and professional growth. I believe that unless a growth mindset is cultivated in the person to whom feedback is being given, giving feedback is not exactly a waste of time, but darn close to it.

The Second Gift: The Theory of Overdone Strengths

The second gift I would like to give to you is the Theory of Overdone Strengths. If the idea of getting criticism is not palatable to you, one idea to help with giving and getting feedback is the idea of overdone strengths.

This theory states that, when it comes to human behavior, there are no weaknesses, just overdone strengths. For example, if I am trusting, that is a wonderful strength. But if I am too trusting, if the strength area of being trusting is overdone, then I am gullible. If I am confident, that is a wonderful strength. If I am too confident, I could be perceived as arrogant, which is an overdone strength.

Growth and Fixed Mindset Responses to Feedback

Growth Mindset Responses	Fixed Mindset Responses
Alright, I'll give it a try	You don't know what the hell you're talking about.
How do you think I could get better?	You sure have your favorite teachers, don't you? And I'm not one of them.
That's a great idea, I'll try it. Do you have any other ideas?	He doesn't even know me.
What areas do you think I need to focus more on?	The kids are always good, unless he comes in.
I'll be darned, I never thought of doing it that way. Thanks!	This is B.S.
I'm not sure about that, but what the heck, sounds like fun!	He saw me on a bad day.
Well, I don't think I'll try it quite that way, but maybe I can try it this way...	You only saw that one lesson. If you saw my whole lesson, you wouldn't be so critical.

The Third Gift: Giving Praise

Giving feedback in terms of overdone strengths rather than weaknesses can help reduce resistance to change. To reinforce the growth mindset, what you praise and how you praise is very important. Whether you are giving yourself praise through positive self-talk, or if you are praising a colleague, the important thing is to praise the process you used, or the effort you put into a great lesson.

In one study, children were given puzzles to solve. Over the course of the session, the puzzles got progressively more difficult. Some students were praised for their ability or talent, with phrases like "Wow, you did really well at that puzzle, you must be good at them." Can you hear the fixed mindset implied by this simple, innocuous phrase? "You are good at puzzles" implies that you either are good at puzzles, or aren't good at puzzles. Like you just came out of the womb just knowing what to do to solve any kind of puzzle. Ridiculous!

The second group of children were praised for their effort with phrases like "Wow, you did really well solving that puzzle. You must have worked really hard at that." This encourages a growth mindset. The implied message here is "You may not have been born with the ability to be great at doing puzzles, but with enough effort, you can learn anything better!"

The real kicker came at the end of the study. Students were told the study was over, and were asked if they would like to do a few more puzzles for fun. The students that were praised for their ability either did a few very easy puzzles, or did not do any extra puzzles. The reason for this is the fixed mindset. The child was thinking along the lines of "I am supposed to be good at these puzzles. If I try one and fail, then it's not a failed puzzle—I am a failure."

Students whose efforts were praised not only wanted to do more puzzles, but when asked which ones, asked for the tougher puzzles because it would make their brain grow!

It may seem obvious, but which mindset would you rather encourage when giving or getting feedback? Which employee would you rather have? Which colleague? Which type of career would you like? For me, growth mindset is the only way to go.

The Fourth Gift: This Time/Next Time Feedback

This Time

The fourth gift is the This Time/Next Time feedback sheet. This form, which is available as a free download on 212creatived.com website, consists of a check list of all of the 1 Minute Mastery skills for the year with two columns next to them. One column is marked "This Time", one is marked "Next Time". During an observation when the observer notices one of the skills being effectively used, they mark that skill in the "This Time" column. That means that this time during the lesson, that particular skill was noticed being used. The "This Time" column is meant to recognize those skills which at the automatic level for the teacher, and are executed effortlessly and masterfully. These are skills to celebrate and acknowledge the effort that must have gone into making them an automatic part of your practice.

Go to the Car Wash!

I would suggest marking as many skills in the "This Time" column as you can possibly, honestly check. There is a psychological advantage of this we can learn from by looking at the research on car washes.

Have you ever had one of those punch cards that you keep track of the number of car washes you have had, and after the tenth car wash, the next one is free? Many times, the car wash proprietors will use a bit of motivational psychology on you, and tell you that you have to get 10 punches to get the 11th car wash free, and—they punch the first four washes for you (Nunes, 2006)!

Well, why wouldn't I go back now? I am almost halfway to a free carwash! While keeping track of the card and remembering to go to the same carwash ten times may seem to be a daunting task, if I only have six car washes to go, that doesn't sound too bad! I think I can do that.

That's the idea behind recognizing as many legitimate skills in the "This Time" column as possible—you are "punching their card" and flattening the road to success for them.

Next Time

The "Next Time" column is another way to overcome the brain's automatic negative thoughts, and not arouse the defense systems and rally our brains to create excuses and not allow legitimate feedback into our practice.

A check in the "Next Time" column means that the lesson that was observed was fine, and to make it even better next time, you may want to try to incorporate some specific skills. Don't think of this as what you screwed up on, what didn't go well, or what totally bombed. The lesson worked, the lesson ended, no one was permanently damaged in the process. Just frame it in your mind as "Hmm, interesting. The next time I do this lesson, I would probably change…." That's all, don't beat yourself up. You are getting some feedback to make your lesson even better the next time you teach it—that's all.

PRACTICAL TIP: I would use the same This Time/Next Time form for multiple observations; just use a different color pen for each observation so you can keep track of your feedback.

All of this may feel like going overboard to avoid telling someone that they didn't do something well, and they need to buck up, suck up, and change. Someone with a growth mindset wouldn't have any problem with any feedback. It's those darn fixed mindset people (like I used to be, and still am sometimes!) who need to be tip-toed around. That is why I suggested earlier that if at all possible, if a growth mindset could be cultivated within yourself, or within the person you are trying to help, it is easier and more productive all around.

Take Action

Checklist of the process so far:

☑ You have worked on developing a growth mindset.

☑ You have been observed by a colleague.

☑ You have received honest feedback in the form of ***The Theory of Overdone Strengths.***

☑ You received the feedback with growth-mindset self-talk.

☑ Your effort has been praised, not your native ability.

☑ You know what you did well looking at the This Time column.

☑ You know some skills you need to work on from the Next Time column.

Now you need to pick one or two of those checked skills in the Next Time column on which to begin working. To make lasting change and incorporate new skills as quickly as possible, we need to learn to take Termite Bites, keep our will power up, and keep the change in front of you!

Termite Bites

Research at the University of Colorado (Moellenberg, 2003) showed that nationally, termites do more damage to homes than fires every year. Little bite by little bite, a little bit more every hour, those little guys do more damage than a huge, impressive, devastating, short-lasting fire.

The message to me is clear. If you want to make real change, don't go for the big flash for a day or a week or a month. Settle in for the long haul. Take little nibbles every lesson, every hour, every day of teaching. Hundreds, thousands of little bites, and before too much time has passed, you will have made huge changes.

How many skills do you tackle at a time?

How many bites should you take at a time? How many skills should you try to incorporate into your practice at once? Five? Ten? Should you choose all of the skills in a particular category of the 1 Minute Mastery series? The answer may surprise you.

To help answer the question, let me describe some research. Doctors were given a fictional scenario in which a patient had chronic hip pain from arthritis. They had tried every medication, to no avail. The only option left was radical hip-replacement surgery, which involved taking the arthritic bone out of its socket, using a saw to remove the diseased end, and replacing it with an artificial joint.

But the scenario gets more complicated. At the last minute, the doctor is informed that a new medication that hasn't been tried by this patient has just become available. The question is: What percentage of doctors decided to try the new medication before the radical surgery? Answer: 47%.

Now it gets interesting. When doctors were presented with the exact same scenario, except this time there were two new medications that were made available, take a guess how many doctors chose to try either one or both of the new medications before surgery. Common sense dictates that the number of doctors who would try the new medications would double, right? Nope. The number of doctors who were willing to try one or both of the new medications dwindled to a mere 28% (Heath & Heath, 2007 p. 49-50).

Decision Paralysis

This is what psychologists call decision paralysis. When too many choices are given to us, we irrationally retreat back to the default plan. Doesn't make much sense, but that is how humans are wired.

So, returning to the original question, how many skills should you try to perfect and incorporate consciously into your practice at any one time? Well, maybe not just one, but I would make it more than two or three at the most. If there are too many choices, too many balls to keep up in the air, we will default back to the original plan—***which is to do what we have always done, and avoid change.***

Shrinking the Change

Heath and Heath (2007) also call this “Shrinking the Change”. This happens to me if I have a big job to do, like clean the basement in my house. It is so overwhelming sometimes, I don’t even get started. But if I tell myself (knowing full well I am tricking myself—it still seems to work), I will only work for five minutes, and I will only go through and pick up any magazines lying around. Once that is done, invariably I am motivated to do one more small, incremental step, and so on and so on until the job is complete.

Even for things we love, like ice cream, we have to make it easy, and not hard or overwhelming to take action. In one study, a cafeteria decided to try an experiment. They kept all of the ice cream in a small freezer with a see-through glass lid. Some days they kept the lid shut, sometimes they kept the lid open. Maybe you can guess the rest. On the days the freezer lid was shut, a mere 14% of diners did the extra labor of opening up the lid to get ice cream. If the lid was open, fully 30% of the diners on those days chose to reach in a choose ice cream for dessert.

The message—make it easy on yourself. Keep it simple. Work on one or two things at a time, three at the most. The rule is “Be in such a hurry to be great, you’ll wait”. The 1 Minute Mastery lessons come only 1 time a week for a reason. It will be possible for you to just focus on that one skill for that entire week, but guess what? If you get to the next week’s skill, but don’t feel like you have mastered last week’s skill, keep working on it!

Will Power

To add skills to our practice requires will power. Will power to stick with it and to practice over time until the skill is at the automatic level.

There is a problem. Will power is a finite resource. It can be depleted. It doesn’t have anything to do with your passion or strength of mind. It is a biological imperative.

Consider one recent experiment with college students. A group was taken into a room and were told they could eat all the radishes they wanted. But they couldn’t touch or eat the freshly baked cookies that were on the table in front of them. After a period of time, they were asked to do a puzzle that had no solution (although the students didn’t know that). They were timed how long they tried, and the number of attempts they made to solve the puzzle was recorded.

Another group was brought in, and told they could eat all of the cookies they wanted, but don’t touch those radishes in the dish on the table! Same scenario followed: Students were asked to try to solve a puzzle that was impossible to solve. Their times and attempts were also recorded.

Take a guess: Which group tried the most times to solve the puzzle, and which group tried the longest to solve the puzzle? In both cases, it was the cookie eaters.

Researchers believe that because will power is a finite resource, the willpower it took to not take any cookies while eating the radishes used up the will power reserves, not leaving a lot for continuous attempts on the impossible puzzle.

Students who only had to resist eating their fill of not-so-tempting radishes didn't have to expend much willpower, so had plenty of it left over to assert on attempting to solve the puzzle over and over again.

When we are trying to learn new skills, it takes willpower to stick with it until it becomes a natural part of our teaching practice. After deciding which skill to begin working on, it is important to keep our supply of willpower strong.

How to keep our supply of will power strong

Three Action steps:

Find success early and often – Since will power is limited, building confidence in small amounts over a larger period of time. Find success early and often. Start off doing one new skill, perhaps the 1 Minute Mastery skill of the week. You might look ahead and plan to use that skill within the first five minutes of class. That's it for that day! Eventually, you try it until lunch, then the entire day.

Keep your glucose levels up – The next action step to keeping your will power up may surprise you. Keep your glucose levels up. The act of exerting self-control uses glucose, which is the body's fuel. This causes your glucose levels to drop, making self-control more difficult the next time, because we are lower in the energy needed to assert our will.

To raise glucose levels, there are only three options:

- Drink or eat, preferably healthy, nutritious food.
- Engage in movement activities which will release glucose stored as glycogen in the liver. Most of the state changes suggested in this book and in Classroom Activators, second edition (2008), Corwin Press, would be good for this.
- Experience strong emotions, which can trigger the release of glucose.
- No glucose means diminished will power.

Keep your To Do list short – Keep your to do list short. Start to implement a skill that you feel you can master very quickly. Don't delay. Don't put some skill on your list that you don't think you will need in class for a week. Put on something you can change today!

Make the *change* last

To effect lasting change, you must keep the skill you are working on in front of you as often as much and as visibly as possible. Here are two ways:

Pre-load the decision

Pre-load the decision when you are going to use the skill. Have situational and environmental triggers. Write down exactly when you are going to try the new skill i.e. “4th hour on Wednesday, getting their attention at the beginning of class I will try…”

Make your tasks dummy-proof.

Make your tasks dummy-proof. Do a checklist. On it, list everything you have to do today to implement the 1 Minute Mastery skills. For example, you might write “Before the students come in I have to:

- ☑ Bring harmony to the room
- ☑ Think through my opening routine
- ☑ Practice my four-part direction that I will do when moving students from their opening discussion to small groups.

Good luck to you as you continue to refine your craft each and every week, using the practical, effective skills, strategies and techniques you will learn in the 1 Minute Mastery series!

Growth & Change

Learning How & Making it Stick

*Use this guide alongside the practical, effective skills, strategies and techniques you will learn in the **1 Minute Mastery** series*

Do you need to change?

Of course you need to change! You need to learn, grow, and refine your craft in a never-ended striving for improvement.