HOW TO EXPLAIN GROWTH MINDSET TO KIDS

NEUROPLASTICITY ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

by Big Life Journal

1 TALK ABOUT THEIR BRAIN

- Provide a basic explanation of the main parts of the brain.
- Explain neurons and pathways.
- Use analogies such as establishing new neural pathways between brain cells is like building a bridge to cross a ravine.
- Discuss the value of making mistakes.

2 SHARE AMAZING FACTS

- There are as many neurons in the brain as there are stars in the Milky Way: about 100 billion.
- The brain physically stops growing around age 18, but it keeps changing forever.
- The brain can produce enough electricity to power a light bulb!
- By design, our brains are all about growth and change– as is the whole human body.

3 BUILD A BRAIN MODEL

- Build a basic brain model using Play-Doh.
- Make a brain hat.
- Create neurons from modeling clay, beads, rope, or string.

4 CREATE A BRAIN POSTER

- Make the "I Can Grow My Brain" poster (available in Big Life Journal's Growth Mindset Printables Kit).

5 CELEBRATE MISTAKES

- Explain that mistakes make the brain grow.
- The brain does NOT grow just from getting the answers right. To keep strengthening neural pathways, we must continue challenging ourselves.
- Celebrate when someone makes a mistake. Give a high five and say, "High five! You're learning!" or, "Woohoo! Your brain is growing!"

6 BRAINSTORM WAYS NEUROPLASTICITY HAS ALREADY WORKED

- Help your children or students come up with a list of activities that were once difficult and became much easier with practice.
- Keep the list somewhere visible.
- When children feel that something is too hard, remind them of all the things that were once "too hard" and are now second nature.

7 READ FANTASTIC ELASTIC BRAIN

- Your children will learn about the brain by reading Your Fantastic Elastic Brain: Stretch It, Shape It by JoAnn Deak.
- This book explains that trying new things without giving up strengthens your brain.

8 CREATE INTERACTIVE VISUALS

- Provide many pieces of cut yarn to represent connections between neurons.
- Ask children what they can do to get better at something.
- Each child who gives a suggestion selects a piece of yarn and gives one end to each of the children holding the neurons.
- After many examples, children can see how thick the collection of yarn is getting.