

Answers to Exercise 5.4

Teaching Self-Efficacy

1. *What are the defining characteristics of the growth theory and the fixed theory?*

The growth theory is rooted in the idea that intelligence increases with effort—that we can always get smarter by working harder. The fixed theory is rooted in the idea that intelligence is a fixed trait—something we cannot really change no matter how hard we work. The differences between these theories are profound because a student who believes he can become more and more intelligent is far more likely to take on challenging tasks and to learn from, rather than be embarrassed by, failure. Students who hold a fixed theory, however, will likely shy away from challenges to avoid failure and will also likely shy away from putting in substantial effort. For them, if you are intelligent then success should come easily.

2. *What is the importance of keeping the efficacy conversation alive?*

Unfortunately, a fixed theory is one that tends to be deeply ingrained in students. Changing from a fixed theory mind-set to a growth theory mind-set is difficult and time consuming. Students with fixed theories need consistent reminders about the growth theory. They also need consistent encouragement if they are to believe success both inside and outside the classroom is possible.