

**Fault Lines: To what extent can interventions which aim to change mindsets of tutors increase learner outcomes in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) resits?**

## Introduction

In Summer 2019 national resit results for GCSE maths and English fell further (from 23.7% in 2018 to 22.3% in 2019) despite the national resit strategy for all 16-19 learners being in its third year. As a GCSE maths teacher I became interested in how to change the mindsets of students while fighting a cultural apathy that it is ok to be bad at maths. I felt that lecturer mindsets were an area for further investigation, as if their mindsets are fixed, how can we expect learner attitudes to change? I started to consider how we as lecturers, sometimes perpetuate the problem. Using the November 2019 resit results as an initial trial, the language used with learners was based on Emotion Coaching techniques (Gottman 1997), validating and empathising with learners rather than glossing over the event which led to positive learner behaviour.

## Methodology



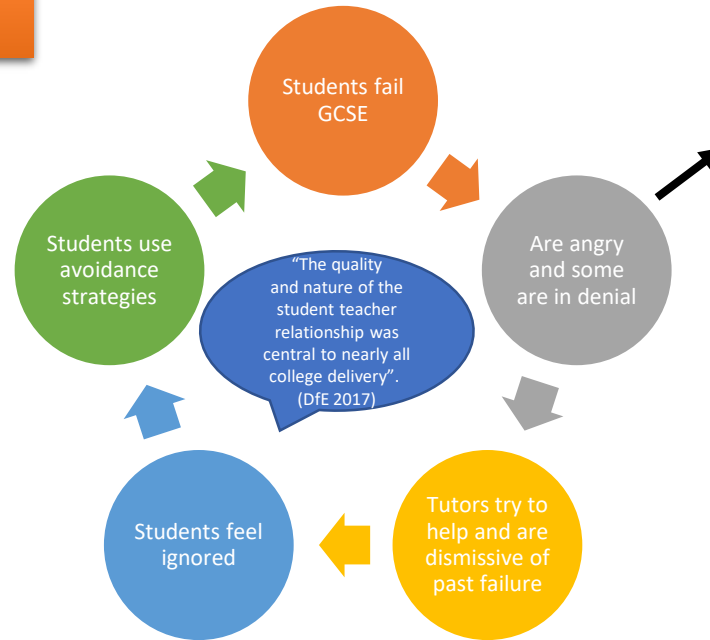
## Key Literature

- Boaler, J. (2016). *Mathematical Mindsets*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Carey, E. et al (2017). *The Modified Abbreviated Math Anxiety Scale: A Valid and Reliable Instrument for Use with Children*. *Front Psychol.* 8:11. Doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00011
- Devine, P. et al (2012). *Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention*. *J Exp Soc Psychol.* 48(6); 1267-1268. Doi:10.1016/jesp.2012.06.003
- Dweck, C. (2017). *Mindset: Updated Edition*. London: Little Brown Book Group.
- Kubler-Ross, E; Kessler, David (2014). *On grief and grieving: finding the meaning of grief through the five stages of loss*. New York: Scribner

### Notes on Dweck

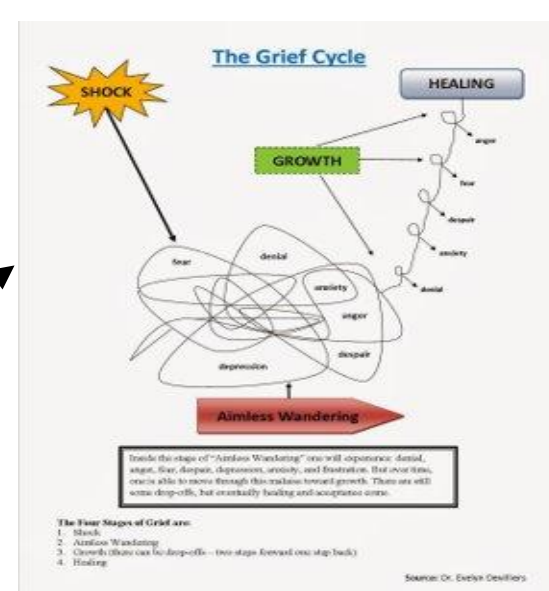
There have been many criticisms of Dweck including a recent evaluation by the Education Endowment Foundation (2019). However, as Dweck states herself, she used to think that growth mindset was a simple concept and the implementation in the classroom is far more complex than originally thought.

## Key Findings



## Analysis

By starting to look at how to make mistakes a positive experience in the classroom, we found that the language that tutors use is key. What became apparent was that, as tutors, we try and gloss over previous failings in order to make students feel better, and this can then have the opposite effect of making students feel that no-one understands what they are going through and can build up walls between the tutor and student. Also, facing a constant barrage of negativity it is difficult for us as tutors to sometimes find a positive spin, and this then has a negative effect on the language that we use. Following the November resit, as tutors we trialled the technique of Emotion Coaching (Gottman 1997). Rather than dismissing how angry and upset they would be, as tutors we faced their emotions head on, labelling them and stating that it was ok to have these feelings. Students settled in the classroom more quickly after their November resit result and attitudes in the lesson were far less combative and continued to be more settled in the following lessons. Whereas in previous cohorts, a poor result had often resulted in students walking out and refusing to participate. Tutors also felt more in control and for many the lack of reaction which occurred was a new reaction.



## Conclusion

Tutors realised that the language they use has a direct effect on student behaviour and that sometimes the outcome is negative, when the intention was positive.. Tutors saw that with subtle changes the impact could be large. But in order for these changes to become a habit they will need reinforcing and repetition, and therefore they require help and support through CPD. However, there are some limiting factors, such as tutor responses to continual negative behaviour which affects the language and phrases that they use. In order to change the behaviour of students, the students themselves need to understand why they are feeling the way they do and that this is a journey which can have a positive outcome.

## Recommendations

Tutors have as part of their pedagogy, have the following CPD:-

- Personal resilience Training
- Emotion Coaching Training
- Regular time in staff meetings to discuss conversations with students to allow glossaries to be developed to find better ways of saying things

Induction for resit students

- Includes a period for them to explain how they feel about their current progress
- Includes a session on the grief cycle explaining to students where they might be and shows tutors have an understanding