



Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Newsletter



A New Beginning is a Chance to Start Over

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I love beginnings.

Beginnings of what, you wonder? Of anything, really. The first day of school. The first day of a holiday. The first time trying something new.



When you first start out, there are all these different stimuli that hit you right away. You look around in wonder, soaking in everything. It's as if the sun is just rising.

When you begin, all the doors are open. Infinite possibilities lie ahead. Your future is a blank slate, yet to be written. Nervousness mixes in with excitement. You feel unfamiliarity, uncertainty, maybe even fear. These emotions combine to create a rush, a thrill from being someplace new.

We usually assume that experts are superior to novices, since they know better. And that's usually true. But in some unexpected ways, a beginner can have hidden advantages over an expert.

The Perspective of a Beginner

As a beginner, you don't have preconceived notions about what is and what isn't, what's possible and what's impossible. You don't know the limits, you don't know the rules.

Everyone who's been somewhere awhile knows how things are "supposed" to be. They know what they can and cannot do. Their beliefs are set in stone, hardened by what they've experienced.

A beginner, on the other hand, has no idea! This is why being a beginner can be a hidden advantage. You see and approach problems differently, so you come up with solutions that others may not have considered. You shake up the norms and force people to rethink current strategies.

According to [research](#), taking on new challenges also leads to actual changes in the brain. By trying new things, your brain forms new neural connections. In the process, your thinking skills improve and you fend off cognitive decline.

The problem is beginnings naturally happen less frequently as life progresses. When you've gone so far and experienced so much, it's hard to start fresh again. When you reach a certain point, how do you create a beginning for yourself?



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Beginnings Diminish With Time

When we're younger, beginnings happen at an almost rapid-fire pace. We enter a new school, attend summer programs, meet new people, and learn various subjects. There are new and exciting possibilities that happen on their own. But once you graduate and start working, the landscape changes. Instead of reaching a checkpoint every so often, you enter a wide expanse that never seems to end. You find yourself facing a long, continuing horizon that stretches out forever.

As we get older, we find ourselves gradually settling into the same jobs, the same relationships, and the same surroundings. The dust settles and a pattern emerges.

Unless we proactively do something, the status quo remains. That's both the beauty and the curse of being in charge of our own lives: we can do as much or as little as we choose. It's up to you to create beginnings.

Create Your Own Beginnings

Even if you're an expert in your field, you can still be a beginner and provide new ideas in another field.

For instance, the platform InnoCentive recognizes the value of having an outsider come in and provide fresh insight to a company. The site connects innovative companies looking to solve problems with experts from all walks of life. A company posts a challenge, offering cash awards up to \$1 million, and anyone can submit a proposed solution.

The site has found that many problems are solved by individuals outside of the field. A statistician successfully applied a statistical model to forestry. A physicist helped an engineering firm through his knowledge of optics and radio-frequencies. While the problem solver may not directly work or study in the field, that individual can apply knowledge and experience from their own field.

You can always begin again by dipping your toes somewhere new. You can try your hand at a different skill, such as learning to cook an unfamiliar recipe. You can visit a new place, whether it's as far as a country you've never visited or as close as a restaurant in your neighborhood.

Pay attention to how you feel beforehand. Your brain might try to talk you out of doing something you haven't done before. It'll tell you that it's better to revert to status quo. While you look forward to stepping into unfamiliar territory, a part of you worries that it will all go wrong.

And how about the way you feel when you're actually in the midst of something new? All of your senses are on high alert as you enter a different environment. You may feel hesitation as you navigate through a situation.

And yet, you might realize that it isn't so bad after all.



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How to Begin Again With a Change in Mindset

Adopting a beginner’s mindset can be just as useful when you’re in a familiar environment. You may think you know everything there is to know about a topic, but then something unexpected pops up.

No matter how much you already know, you still have a lot more to learn. This is where the [“Empty your cup”](#) mindset becomes useful. Like a cup, your mind needs to be emptied before it is ready for more.

Your mind needs to get rid of its old preconceptions to make room for learning, growth, and ideas. How can you learn when you believe you already know? How can you grow when you think you’ve reached the end? Instead, begin by being open to what other people, places, and things can teach you. There is no one way to do something, nor one road to a destination. When you listen to someone and try to understand a different perspective, you will be surprised at what you find.

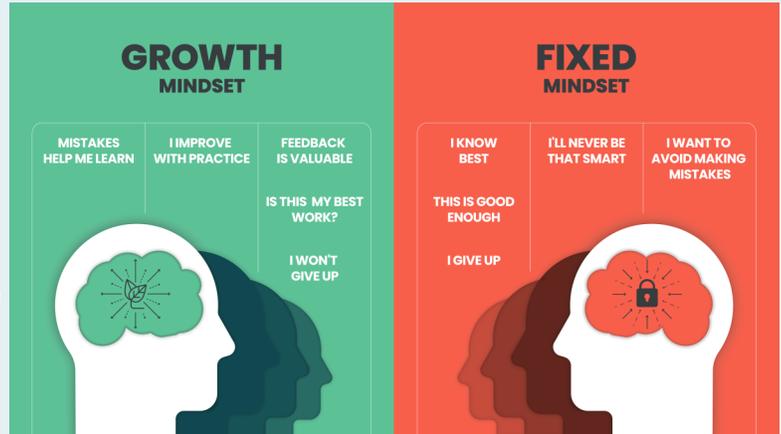
Children learn a lot while they’re young, and it isn’t simply from the brain developing at a fast pace. Think of the mindset that a child has. They have countless questions. They want to discover and learn new things. As we get older, our attitude shifts. We gradually stop asking so many questions because we just can’t be bothered to learn new things. We simply accept things as is. But it can be good to ask questions. When you wonder how something works, why someone makes a certain decision, or why something is a certain way, you exercise your sense of curiosity. You open yourself up to learning and openness.

Treasure the Early Stages

When I reach the end of something, whether it’s a program, a trip, or an event, I find myself looking at the beginning and thinking, *“That was my favorite part.”* I think back to how I knew nothing, and ahead of me was everything. Isn’t it interesting how things can turn out so differently from the way we imagine them to?

Even if you don’t consider yourself a beginner, there is more than one way to start anew. You can begin exploring a new topic, a new skill, or a new place. You can practice looking at things with a beginner’s eye.

Sometimes, a new beginning is the very thing you need to find a purpose.





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Save the Dates

February 4, 2024: National Girls & Women in Sports Day Brunch and Awards Celebration @ OES

April 6, 2024: OSAA Student Leadership Conference @ Camp Withycombe, in Clackamas, OR

April 27, 2024: Oregon Girls Sports Leadership Summit @ OES

RESOURCES

[Oregon Youth Authority](#)

[Mentoring Professional Learning Materials](#)

[Speak Up in School](#)

[LGBTQ+ Books for Schools](#)

[New Beginnings for Tribal Students](#)

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