

REFRAMING COMMON QUOTES AND CLICHÉS

What we say, both to ourselves and to others, can drastically affect behavior and ways of thinking. However, sometimes the feedback we offer perpetuates “fixed mindsets” rather than “growth mindsets.” Take the phrase “failure is not an option,” for example. This phrase seems motivational but if you don’t allow for failure, you’ll never take risks. A better way to put it is “we learn from our failures.”

Let’s reframe some common sayings and clichés below. Here are some tips:

- Be concrete and sincere.
- Focus on an action that can be maintained or improved.
- Don’t over-inflate. It gives the impression that you have to meet exceptionally high standards.
- Give detailed information — it reinforces strategies that can be used when similar situations come up in the future.
- Avoid comparison to others. That can invite unfair competition that often defeats motivation and learning.

Saying	How is this “fixed mindset”?	Revise it to reinforce a “growth mindset.”
“Failure is not an option.”	Only one way to see failure.	“We learn from our failures.”
“You are so smart.”		
“You did great on that project.”		
“I give up.”		
“She is amazing at everything.”		
“This is too hard.”		
“I’ll never be as smart as her.”		
“Wow, you make it look easy.”		
“I’m not good at this.”		

