



Changing Mindsets

Student Success Beyond Deficit Discourses

Workshop Overview

- Unpacking Resilience
- Challenging Deficit Discourses
- Understanding Mindset Theory
- Reframing Support
- Questions to Consider



Unpacking Resilience

In pairs: What words or phrases do you associate with the term 'Resilience' and/or a 'Resilient Student'?



Challenging Deficit Discourses

“Literature and the discourse around students from low socio-economic (SES) backgrounds in higher education often adopts a deficit conception in which these students are associated with low entrance scores, decreasing standards and academic struggle and failure”
(McKay and Devlin, 2015:2).

Mirza, discussing the experiences of high achieving BAME students, explained (1997:269): “No one wants to look at their success, their desire for inclusivity. They are out of place, disrupting, untidy. They do not fit”.

Challenging Deficit Discourses

It's more of the pressure again, because ... it's almost like we're staking a claim on our position in university. It's like, if we fail, it means the next ... generation ... that want to come to university, won't. ... If we don't get it right, they're not going to give other people chances.

It's quite hard, you know, to represent your background.

I can't win. If I am successful I have bucked a trend, 'Well done [Name]', they will say, 'Haven't you done well'. As if somehow coming from a single mother I must be mentally sub-normal. If I fail no one will really bat an eyelid. It's 'no wonder' they will say 'it's to be expected'. ... I'm not broken, I don't need fixing.

What is the Mindset Theory?

GROWTH MINDSET

Believe intelligence is **malleable** and can be **developed** through hard work and persistence



FIXED MINDSET

Believe intelligence is something you are **born with** and that you **can't** do much to change it

We all have different implicit theories of intelligence (mindsets)

What is the Mindset Theory?



Growth Mindsets

*I can continually grow,
learn and develop*



Fixed Mindsets

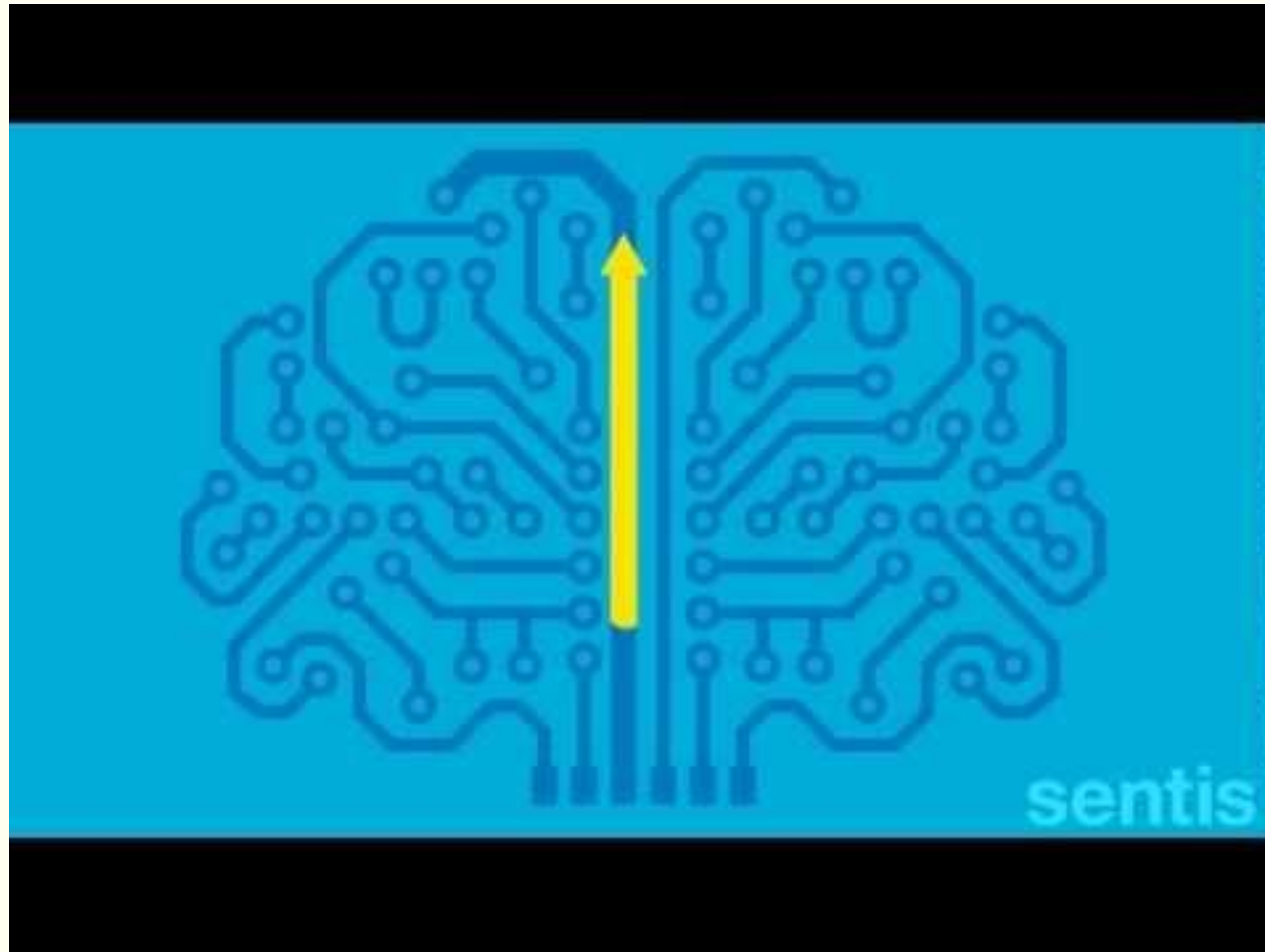
*I am (not) talented/ it's difficult
learning outside my comfort zone*



What number comes next?

10, 9, 60, 90, 70, 66

What is plasticity?



Evidence from Neuroscience

- Neurones in the brain transmit information through connections (synapses).
- The more we keep our brains active through learning new information, the more connections the brain makes.

Research out of UCL with London taxi drivers

- Brain scans = larger hippocampus
- Grew as they spent more time in the job.
- Suggests brain adapts to help them learn 'The Knowledge' and store mental maps.



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Mindset Theory and Approaches to Learning



Learning is focused on **improvement and interest**

Mistakes are part of the **learning process** and **information to grow**

Challenges are **welcome** and offer **sense of achievement**

Effort is **necessary** and part of the process – will **change strategies**



Learning is focused on **performance and 'looking clever'**

Mistakes are **embarrassing** and a **sign of low ability** (avoidant behaviour)

Challenges are **risks** and can lead to **feelings of failure**

Effort is a **sign of low ability** and will **disengage**.

Exploring the Evidence

Research studies have shown that a **growth mindset:**

- **Increases attainment** (Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007; Paunesku, Goldman & Dweck, 2011)
- **Increases effort** (Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993)
- **Improves students' motivation** (Dweck, 2014)
- **Suppress stereotype effects** (Good, Aronson & Inzlicht, 2003)
- **It's not all about the students** (Johnson & Beach, 2012; Karkkainen & Raty, 2010; Karkkainen, Raty & Kasanen, 2010; Shim et al., 2013)

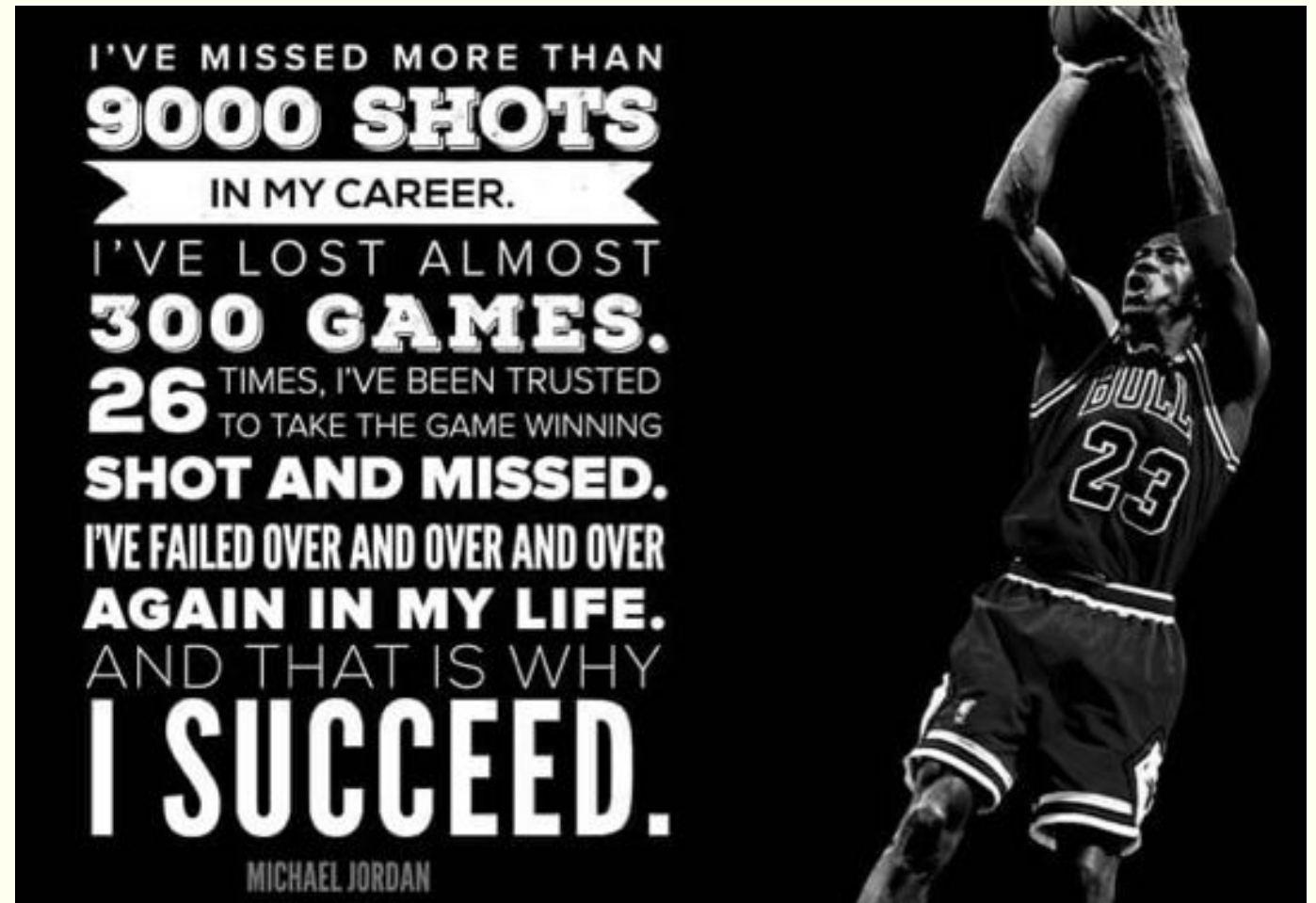
THE POWER OF
YET



I can't do this...*yet.*
This doesn't work...*yet.*
I don't know...*yet.*
It doesn't make sense...*yet.*
I don't get it...*yet.*
I'm not good at this...*yet.*

Supporting the development of a **Growth Mindset**

- Set High expectations
- Celebrate mistakes
- Specific plans development
- Role models as examples
- Feedback for growth



Reframing Support

“A lack of attention to the ways some groups have unfair access to the material and cultural resources needed to get ahead tends to individualise ‘failure’, explaining it in deficit terms as lacking ability, determination or aspiration” (Burke, 2013:111).

“Prevalent discussions about transitions to HE position working-class students as needy, in the sense of personally inadequate and unable to cope with the rigours of transition. In rejecting this position, we should talk more of rights: the right to enter university successfully and succeed. This is a common right of all students, but structural disadvantage ensures that many students require support if they are to take up this entitlement” (Quinn, 2010:125).

Reframing Support

*I personally had a lot of extenuating circumstances around the time I started university and I did struggle. But I found the [support] services were great, **people were really helpful** and set out a plan for me and told me exactly what needed to be done at a time where I was quite lost. **This helped my emotional well-being and made me feel a part of the University community, as well as impacting the quality of my studies.** Really couldn't thank them enough.*

*It is very supportive and there are **always people around who are willing and want to help you** if you are struggling.*

*The university and course offers a lot of **help and support when students are struggling** and this proves to be very beneficial to all students, including myself.*

***The large amount of support that's available** if you start falling behind say in the work, there's a vast amount that you can get to help you catch up, do better, learn the stuff in the lectures in a different way to make it sink in better.*

*The university offers **a range of help to all students**; financial, social, health and course specific.*

Questions to Consider

- How and when are support services promoted and discussed with students?
What language is used to promote support services?
- What words/feelings do your students associate with accessing support services?
What do your students think about their peers who access support services?
- Which students are more likely to access particular support services? Which students are less likely?
- How (and using what language) does your institution or department encourage particular student populations to access support services? (Such as BAME, low SES, first generation, LGBTQ, religious, students with disabilities, international, mature, part-time, working students, students with caring responsibilities, estranged students, students from care backgrounds)
- **What could be done to normalise support services so accessing support becomes a natural part of the student experience?**



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Thank You! Questions?

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Mid-project Report:

bit.ly/cm-report



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