

THE POWER OF MINDSETS

Week #1 of the 2-Week Series, "The Psychology of Success"

April 11, 2021

Rev. Richard Maraj

Rev. Richard Maraj: Good morning, everyone! And welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center; welcome to our Sunday virtual worship celebration! I'm Rev. Richard Maraj, and I'm so glad that you are joining us this morning.

I'm also really thrilled that we'll be starting LIVE services back in the Sanctuary at 9 and 11 a.m. starting Sunday, June the 6th! We will be having Youth Ministry classes, as well, and they will resume at the 11 a.m. service on the 6th, as well. So looking forward to seeing you all there!

Also, if you want to get involved with some of our small groups; most are meeting by Zoom. And you just go to the website and look under "Get Involved" and you can check out and be a part of one of those wonderful groups.

Right now, we are going to enter a time of prayer and meditation. And to prepare us for that experience, we will now listen to the choir as they sing "Surely the Presence."

Unity of Phoenix Choir sings "Surely the Presence"

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place

I can see God's mighty power and God's grace

I can feel the brush of angels' wings

I see glory on each face

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place

MEDITATION

Rev. Lori Fleming: I invite you to join me in a time of prayer and meditation. As we close our outer eyes, taking in a deep and mindful breath, and releasing slowly. And taking in another gentle breath. And, as we let it go, release everything that's no longer serving you: any burdens, anything that you no longer need. Just give it to God; God will take care of it. And take in another deep breath. And, as you release it, begin to move your awareness within to that quiet, still place. Into our very souls, where there is unconditional love. Into the very depths of our being, where the peace that passes understanding is.

In this quiet, still place, we are one with the Divine. In this quiet, still place, we are in connection with the All of the universe. As we feel God's unconditional love in us -- and as us, and through us -- we begin to love ourselves more fully. No matter what we've done, or where we've been in the past, we are God's beloved children: perfect -- created in God's image: a spiritual image. And each and every one of us is an important and unrepeatable expression of the Divine. No matter what we look like, no matter where we've come from, each and every one of us is a necessary part of the whole. And each of us brings our own gifts and talents to make up the amazingly beautiful tapestry of life -- with different colors and different textures -- creating a wholeness. Creating a oneness. Creating us in community.

And so we take just a few moments as we move more deeply into the silence, as we feel the presence of God within.

SILENCE

And so we come in gratitude for this time together. For these amazing lives that we've been given. For the way that God illuminates us and brings us to wholeness. For all of the blessings that we enjoy that are too numerous to count. For this -- and everything -- we say thank you, God. And Amen.

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Maraj: Thank you, Rev. Lori! Really appreciate that meditation; it was wonderful!

So this guy goes to a club, and the bouncer says, "No tie; no entry." So the guy goes back to his car to look for a tie, and all he found were jumper cables. So he tied the jumper cables around his neck -- just like a tie. He goes back and says, "How's this?" And the bouncer looks at him and said, "Okay; I'll let you in this time. But don't start anything." [Laughs]

I think I need to start looking for some better jokes! But what we are starting today is a new series entitled, "The Psychology of Success." And the reason we're doing it is because everybody wants to have success. Everyone wants to be a success. Everyone wants to achieve success: success with our goals and dreams; success in our business and our career; success financially; and in our relationships. We all want success!

But the question is: what does success -- or more success -- mean to you? What does it look like in your life? What does it feel like? And how will you know when you have reached your level of success?

You know, there are thousands and thousands of books written every year about success: the secrets to success; the formula to success; the keys to success; the steps; the tools to success. And so: what is the greatest thing that will affect and influence our ability to succeed in our level of success?

Psychiatrist Aaron Beck, back in the 1960s, was working with his clients when he suddenly realized what was the cause of their problems. And he realized it was their beliefs. Just before a wave of anxiety or depression, a belief would flash in their head that would influence them ... like, "Life is unfair" or "Things never work out for me" or "Dr. Beck probably thinks I'm such a loser." These type of beliefs cause a negative impact of feelings, and affected -- not only their therapy -- but affected their lives.

The truth is: the power of our beliefs affects what we want. And the power of our beliefs affects our ability in succeeding in getting them. Our beliefs -- especially about ourselves -- actually guide a large part of our lives. In fact, it permeates every aspect of our lives. And our collective beliefs are known as our **mindset**. And so, our mindset -- especially the ones about what we believe about ourselves and how we see ourselves -- absolutely helps or prevents us in fulfilling our potential and living a more successful life.

You know, our minds are always monitoring, interpreting, evaluating and dealing with information it's receiving. And our mindsets are really the framework that accounts for all of the thoughts that go in through our head through the day. And it really affects and colors all of our experiences and what's happening to us: from the positive to the negative; from the hopeful to the hopeless; from believing that life is unfair to life is wonderful! Our mindsets have really proven to be the psychology of success: the great indicator of what we will succeed in or not.

Carol Dweck -- in her book, *Mindset* -- shares that, when she was a young researcher, she was really fascinated by how people handled failure. And they did a study with kids. They put them in a room, somehow made them a little uncomfortable, and gave them puzzles to solve, and they got harder and harder. And she was observing how some kids would grunt and moan and complain, and get discouraged and frustrated. But she also noted that some other kids would love the challenge. Some of the kids got excited about learning! It didn't bother them to make mistakes, because they got excited, because they felt like they were getting smarter and they loved to be challenged.

And so what she discovered is: our mindsets play a huge role in how we interpret and experience; how we cope and create; how we interpret and enjoy our lives and everything that happens to us

There are two dominant mindsets, she discovered, and the first one is called the **fixed mindset** and the second is called the **growth mindset**.

The fixed mindset believes that all of our beliefs and our talents and our qualities are fixed: that they are kind of set in stone; that that's just how you are. If you're good at something, you're good at it; if you're not, you're not ... and that's not going to change.

People used to think that IQs were just your intelligence that was unchangeable. That's how you were born, and that's how you were going to be, and there wasn't really any way to improve or change it.

So a fixed mindset -- when you have one -- it kind of shows up in a way that we always want to prove that we're smart, because we never want to look like we're stupid. We always want to hide our weaknesses; hide our deficiencies. And to protect our self-esteem, we will use excuses when we don't do well at things. We will work hard at things that we're good at, but when we find things that we're not good at, we will avoid. *[Laughs]* We will ignore; we will not try; and we will not risk anything. Also people with a fixed mindset: when they see others succeed, they feel diminished themselves. And it is a very, very rigid mindset.

And the worst part about it is that a fixed mindset tends to judge one's self very harshly. Have you ever judged yourself harshly, or been brutal with yourself in evaluating how you have done? That is a sign of a fixed mindset.

You know, they did this study where they were showing kids harder and harder puzzles, and they would get a choice of going on to a harder puzzle, or just staying with the easy one they were doing. And fixed mindset kids tended to stay with the one they were doing, because they didn't want to look stupid. They didn't want to make mistakes or fail, because success is connected with getting everything right and not making any errors ... where the other kids were willing to be challenged.

The interesting thing is, with IQ, Albert Binet -- who developed it -- developed it because some kids were not doing well in school in Paris, and he wanted to develop a baseline to improve educational programs so those kids would succeed in greater ways. His goal was never to say that you're intelligence is unchangeable; it was actually to help the kids develop specific programs through education that would help them increase their education.

And so that leads to the next mindset, which is the growth mindset, which believes that we can change. That we can grow; we can learn and develop and improve. And it's focused on a passion for learning and improving and getting better. Trying new things, asking questions, being curious, stretching and stepping outside of our box. And being willing to challenge ourselves and go beyond what we think we can do.

You know, the growth mindset kids are the kids who ask for the harder puzzles, because they believe that you get better and successful. The more you push yourself, the more you learn. And the more you understand.

Science even backs up this whole idea with something called neuroplasticity. It is the actual evidence that the brain has a lifelong capacity to develop and improve. That, no matter how unique our abilities are that we're born with, every one of us actually has the capacity to learn and to improve and to develop our minds in a lifelong way.

So here's a difference between how the fixed mindset and the growth mindset shows up in one particular scenario. Let me read it for you: So one day you're in an important class and you get your mid-term and it comes back as a C-minus, and you're really disappointed. Then, on the way to your car to drive home, you find you got a parking ticket, and you're a little frustrated. Then you get home to talk to your best friend on a phone call to kind of vent about your tough day and how disappointed you are, and they blow you off.

So here are the two different ways the mindsets might react to that. The fixed mindset person might think, *"A C-plus. I just blew it. I'm such an idiot and knucklehead. And things never go well; that parking ticket. That was just horrible. And then my friend doesn't have time for me; she just doesn't really care*

about me at all." Notice how this person: first, they put down themselves -- their competence, their worthiness. And then it spreads to their life: that people don't love them, and things will probably get worse.

Now the growth mindset person would say to getting the C-plus, *"I should have worked harder; maybe I'll get some help and get a tutor. You know, I've really got to be more careful about where I park. And maybe my friend was just having a tough day; didn't have time for me. But I know that she still loves me."* Notice a growth mindset doesn't label or put down. It doesn't get hopeless and does not project that the future is going to get worse.

You know, 143 creative researchers said the number one ingredient in creative achievement was the qualities of the growth mindset, which include: loving a challenge; believing in the importance of effort and hard work; using setbacks to help you get better; and to know and believe that greater success and possibilities are available to us.

And so, let me ask you a question: when do you feel most successful? And when do you feel smartest? And I'll give you two scenarios. Is it when things come easy for you? And you do things better than others, and you make no mistakes? Like, things come out perfectly? Or is it when you try hard, and then you're able to do something you've never done before? Or you were able to figure out something that was really challenging, and that you see yourself learning and making progress?

The first one is a fixed mindset: want everything to go perfect all the time and get it right to prove we're smart. And the other one is a willingness to learn and grow and continue to get better. So my question for you is: generally speaking, do you have more of a fixed mindset or do you generally have more of a growth mindset?

You know, whenever we think about success, most of us think of things like, *"Make sure you have a vision! Make sure you have goals! And make sure you take action!"* But the truth that research seems to be showing is to work on the mindset we have behind those things! Because it is truly the mindset of how we feel about ourselves -- what we believe about ourselves -- that plays a big impact with our success with goals and vision and the actions that we take.

So let's look at the impact that mindset can have on certain things. First let's look at its impact on failure. How well do you deal with failure? How well do you interpret and respond to things in your life when you fail?

In the *New York Times*, it said that it's interesting how we human beings can transform a failure -- just a mistake or an event like, *"I failed"* -- into an identifier like *"I am a failure."* There's a huge difference between *"I failed and didn't do well in this"* to saying, *"I am a failure."*

There was a guy named Bernard Loiseau, who was one of the greatest chefs in the world. His restaurant had a three-star Michelin rating, which very few restaurants have. He was considered one of the best in the world. And, for some reason, his scores on a different restaurant rating went down from 19, it went down to 17. And he heard that his Michelin -- one of the Michelin stars -- might have been taken away. He was so devastated -- he was so humiliated -- he felt like such a failure. It literally destroyed him. He felt like his life was over; his career was over. And it was a haunting trauma that he could not get over, and he ended up taking his own life from this. This failure he felt was so identified with who he was as a human being and a professional that he literally took his own life. It destroyed him.

In 1964, the Minnesota Vikings were playing the San Francisco 49ers. And a football player named Jim Marshall, a defensive player for Minnesota, saw the ball -- it came out a fumble -- and he picked it up and he ran it all the way for a touchdown. On the wrong goal line! He scored a touchdown for the 49ers instead of for the Vikings! And it was on national television: one of the biggest blunders in NFL history, covered on national TV. And here's what he said. He said, *"It was the most devastating moment in my life. And the shame I felt was almost overpowering."* He said he knew he could sit there in his misery, or

he could get up and try to do something about it. In the second half, he played some of the best football he ever played in his career. And they ended up winning the game.

Jim Marshall actually went on to do talks about how he handled his failure. He responded to different people's letters; he became a more aware football player. And he said, because of that failure -- and the opportunity he had to walk through it -- he felt he not only became a better player ... he became a better father, a better parent, and a better human being.

How we handle failures makes a huge difference in our success. Because the fact is: we're all going to fail! We're all going to mess up! We're all going to make mistakes! And it is how we handle -- how we perceive it and show up in it -- will determine whether it takes us down, or whether it lifts us up.

And so, one of the things about this growth mindset: it's a belief that we can get better. It's a belief we can bounce back. It's a belief that we can learn, improve and cultivate any skills to be better than we are today. That we can evolve! And that we can grow. That's why I like that mindset is captured, to me, in my favorite affirmation! And here it comes: *"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better."* That's a beautiful mindset for all aspects of life, especially failure. That, each and every day, and each and every way, that your life is getting better and better and better.

And so that mindset towards failure is the best thing to set us up for success. And so think about what you're going through right now that feels like a failure. And can you bring this growth mindset? That you're getting better, that you will learn from this, that things will improve, you'll be a better person from it? Because it is really one of the key ways to ensure that we have success.

So the next one we want to look at is the mindset influence on effort and hard work. You remember the story of the tortoise and the hare? So the tortoise was slow and clunky and, of course, the hare was fast and swift. And they had this race, and the hare took off -- I mean, the tortoise, he left him in his dust. But he got so cocky and arrogant, he ended up taking a nap -- and I think, maybe, several -- and he ended up losing the race. And the moral of the story is that slow and steady wins the race. It is really a lesson on work. It is a lesson on consistency and effort.

And so, even though the "slow and steady wins the race," and the tortoise was the hero in the story, no one ever wanted to be the tortoise! We still want to be the hare! We want to be fast and swift! We would like to be less arrogant and foolish ... you know, a little smarter. But everybody wants the easier way. We want to have all the talent!

You know, Carol Dweck said it's interesting: that she finds that story gave effort a bad name. Because it believes that if you're a plodder and a tortoise, you've got to work hard. But if you're like the hare, it can come easy to you. And it really sets a mindset in us that says, *"If I have to work hard, that's usually a sign that I'm not very good at it."* And for those that "it comes naturally to," they can be more successful.

Malcolm Gladwell -- who wrote the book, *Outliers* -- said something that I didn't believe at first. I had to read it three or four times! And here: I want you to think about what it says. He said, *"In our society, we value natural, effortless achievement over the accomplishments through effort."* We value natural, effortless achievement over achievement done through effort. Because he says that we admire these heroes, and we thrust superhero powers upon them, because we believe that they're extraordinary. That they are so good -- they're natural -- these things they just make things look easy, because they're so great.

I mean, Michael Jordan and Tom Brady: we think these guys are the greatest of all time, because they're "naturals." Because they're easy. I remember Michael Jordan used to say that it really ticked him off that people thought -- would always say he was a "natural" -- because it was discounting all the hard work and effort that he put in.

Here's an interesting example: Nadja Sonnenberg, the great violinist. When she was young, she was a prodigy. She was so brilliant and talented, but she had some horrible habits. And she didn't have the

best work ethic. So, after a while -- she was always good -- all the other girls started getting better. And then she started feeling like a failure. And then she would be scared to try; scared to risk; scared to work hard. Because she was afraid to fail and look bad. And here's what she said, *"If I go to an audition, and don't try or prepare or work as hard as the others, and I don't win, then I have an excuse. But nothing is harder than saying that I gave it my all, and I still wasn't good enough."*

You know, the idea of trying and still failing -- without any excuses -- is one of the most frightening things for a fixed mindset. I believe it is sometimes why we don't try as hard in our relationships. Sometimes I think it's why we don't try as hard in our work or all aspects of our lives. Because if we really gave our everything to something, and didn't succeed, there is some part of us that would feel like we weren't good enough. But the truth is that it is good enough. Just our best effort is the best thing! But we sometimes think it's all about winning. It's all about the outcome. And it's all about being the very best. But the truth is that effort -- even regardless of the outcome or the result or winning or succeeding -- is still a good thing. It is a good investment.

You know, there was a lawyer who spent seven years on a case. It was a class-action suit against a bank for some of its practices that kind of cheated its customers. And, after the seven years, the ruling went in the bank's favor! And someone asked him, *"Did you just waste seven years of your life?"* He said, *"No; I spent seven years pursuing something I was passionate about, and believed in, and wanted to help those others."*

Sometimes we get so focused on the outcome that we sometimes miss that it's just the activity -- the love and the passion and doing good, and doing something we're called to do -- that is the most important thing. And that is the sign of a growth mindset.

Another thing is about effort. Because it is important. But it's also effort done over time. You know, Michael Jordan wasn't Michael Jordan overnight. Thomas Edison wasn't smart and successful overnight. Mozart took 10 years of writing some bad compositions before he became as successful and great as he was. Jesus wasn't the same Jesus at 12 that he was at 30. It takes time! It takes progress! It takes work! It takes dedication! Expertise comes from what is called "purposeful engagement." That is taking action with a hopeful and positive intention to get better and become better.

So my question is: in your life, what is your purposeful engagement? What is something -- an action that you want to take with a hopeful, positive intention that you will get better, that you will improve? Because it is one of the most powerful ways to lift up our lives: to intentionally and purposefully do things with the desire to improve and get better, and be more successful with it.

I read -- I heard -- this talk by a guy named Sam Vaknin. And he was comparing ... you know, when God said, *"I am that I am?"* He told Moses, *"Tell them I am that I am sent you?"* Vaknin said that that's wrong! And I always think "I AM that I AM" is in the present: the "I AM" of God is in us. He says what it really translates to is, *"I will be that I will be."* And his interpretation of it was that "I will be that I will be" shows that God is not static. That God is dynamic; that God is expanding; that God is unfolding; that God is transformative; that God is about becoming. That we are in a process of growth and expansion and becoming. And he said it is about the unending flow, and the upward movement of the intelligence and the creative power of the Universe.

And I just find that so amazing! I mean the word "heaven" means expansion. Heaven is expanding our love, expanding our faith, expanding our joy. That, when we expand our belief and our awareness, our belief in ourselves -- and when we live with purposeful engagement -- it will raise us to a level of joy, happiness and success.

So this week, what I want you to do is notice your mindset. Do you have a tendency to be in a fixed mindset or in a growth mindset? And notice your mindset, especially towards failure and your mindset towards effort and hard work. Because if you do that, I guarantee you, when you pay attention to your mindset, you will truly discover the psychology of success!

God bless you all!

SOLO

Guest artist Todd Herzog sings "Best Day of My Life"

Oo-o-o-o-oo

I had a dream so big and loud

I jumped so high I touched the clouds

Wo-o-o-o-o-oh

Wo-o-o-o-o-oh

I stretched my hands up to the sky

We danced with monsters through the night

Wo-o-o-o-o-oh

Wo-o-o-o-o-oh

I'm never gonna look back

Whoa, I'm never gonna give it up

No, please don't wake me now

(2, 3, 4)

Oo-o-o-o-oo

This is gonna be the best day of my life

My li-i-i-ife

Oo-o-o-o-oo

This is gonna be the best day of my life

My li-i-i-ife

Oo-o-o-o-oo

Oo-o-o-o-oo

I howled at the moon with friends

And then the sun came crashing in

Wo-o-o-o-o-oh

Wo-o-o-o-o-oh

But all the possibilities

No limits just epiphanies

Wo-o-o-o-o-oh

Wo-o-o-o-o-oh

I'm never gonna look back

Whoa, I'm never gonna give it up

No, just don't wake me now

Oo-o-o-o-oo

This is gonna be the best day of my life

My li-i-i-ife

Oo-o-o-o-oo

This is gonna be the best day of my life

My li-i-i-ife

Oo-o-o-o-oo

Oo-o-o-o-oo

I hear it calling outside my window
I feel it in my soul (soul)
The stars were burning so bright
The sun was out 'til midnight
I say we lose control (control)

Oo-o-o-o-o
Oo-o-o-o-oo
This is gonna be the best day of my life
My li-i-i-ife
Oo-o-o-o-o
This is gonna be the best day of my life
My li-i-i-ife

This is gonna be, this is gonna be, this is gonna be
The best day of my life
Everything is looking up, everybody up now
Oo-o-o-o-oo
This is gonna be the best day of my life
My li-i-i-ife

OFFERING

Rev. Lori Fleming: It's that time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. Our offering blessing is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive."*

And so we say thank you, Mother/Father God, for these gifts, these tithes and these offerings. We know they are given in love, they are received in love, and that they move through this ministry with the energy of divine love out into the world as good. And that each giver is blessed – heaped up, pressed down and overflowing – for that is the Law. And so it is. Thank you, God! Amen.

CLOSING

Rev. Lori Fleming: We're so grateful you could be with us today. We hope you've been uplifted by our music and our message and our meditation. And now will you join me in our Prayer for Protection?

The light of God surrounds us;
The love of God enfolds us;
The power of God protects us;
The presence of God watches over us.
Wherever we are, God is. And all is well!

Have a fabulous week! And now join us as the Choir sings our Peace Song. Namaste!

Choir sings Peace Song:

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me!
Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be!

With God as Creator
Family all are we!

Let us walk with each other
In perfect harmony!

Let peace begin with me;
Let this be the moment now!
With every breath I take
Let this be my joyous vow:
To take each moment and live each moment
In peace eternally!

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me!

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