

GOAT: BEYOND THE GAME

Lesson Four – Growth Mindset & Resilience with Will

CREATIVE ACTIVITY – LETTER TO YOURSELF

Lesson Intention:

Will has always been told that smalls can't ball, but he believes in himself, embraces challenges, and proves the doubters wrong. Sometimes, he feels like he doesn't belong on the team, but he leans into the qualities that make him unique and keeps pushing himself to grow. Like Will, Jett also learns to see challenges as opportunities to trust her teammates, which helps her grow as both a player and a person. This way of approaching challenges is called a growth mindset, which means understanding that your abilities can develop through effort, persistence, and believing in yourself. Whether you are practicing a sport like basketball or learning new concepts in an academic class, a growth mindset will allow you to be resilient when things get tough.

In this lesson, students think about a time when they doubted themselves or their abilities. They will write a letter to themselves, practicing this idea of a 'growth mindset.' They will offer encouragement and a reminder that growth takes time, and believing in yourself is a powerful first step – just like Will believed in himself and discovered his own worth.

Learning Goals:

- Use writing as a tool to overcome self-doubt and to build self-worth.
- Understand how having a growth mindset can help build resilience in the face of challenges.
- Recognize how friendship and community support can strengthen resilience and encourage growth.

Materials for Lesson:

- [Featured Video – Roarball Roundup: An Exclusive Interview with the Vineland Thorns](#)
- [Downloadable Lesson Plan](#)
- [Storyboard Lesson Handout](#)

Prior to Teaching the Lesson:

1. Watch the videos that accompany this lesson.
2. Create your own example letter to yourself that you will share with your students.
3. Have paper and pencils for each student to write their letter.

Lesson Plan:

Launching the Lesson:

- Introduce the idea of a ‘growth mindset’ – that students can notice their strengths, continue to believe in themselves, and see challenges as opportunities to grow.

Example of What You Could Say:

“I want to start today’s lesson with an important question: In the movie GOAT, did you feel a personal connection with Will when he was being criticized by others and told that ‘smalls can’t ball?’ As he practiced and improved as a player, there were moments when he doubted himself. Can you think of a time when you were learning something new or facing a challenge and doubted yourself? Maybe you felt unsure of yourself when you were playing a sport, or maybe it was when you were working on something in school like a test or a project? I want you to think about that time right now, and I would like to share an example from my life when I felt this way.

(Share an example of a time when you doubted yourself while learning something new or facing a challenge. Select an example that is age- appropriate.)

There is something I noticed about Will that is important to think about. When Will doubted himself, he could have said “I’m terrible at roarball!” and given up. Instead, he realized that he needed to practice more in order to get better so he could join the team.

Similarly, Jett learned that she had to work hard to get better at something, which was learning how to trust her teammates. This didn’t come naturally to her and was something she had to practice.

There is a name for this type of thinking and it’s called a ‘growth mindset.’ It means seeing things that are difficult as opportunities to learn and grow. Instead of giving up, you choose to believe in yourself and have confidence that if you keep trying and practicing, you will improve and get better.

There are two things I want us to learn about today that go hand in hand: growth mindset and resilience. As we've just learned, having a growth mindset is like a superpower that allows you to be resilient when life gets hard. Have you heard that word before – resilience? It means you are able to experience losses and challenges but not give up. It is a useful skill for sports, school, and even friendships. Resilience helps us to keep moving forward when things are hard."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Introducing the Creative Activity:

- Invite students to write a letter to themselves. In the letter, students will reflect on a time when they doubted themselves or felt uncertain about their ability to learn a new skill or overcome a challenge. They will now look at this experience through a growth mindset, reminding themselves that with practice, they can improve. In their letter, they will offer words of encouragement to themselves and notice the strengths that will allow them to navigate this challenge.

Example of What You Could Say:

"Now let's think about a time when you doubted yourself or when you felt uncertain about your ability to do something difficult or learn a new skill. I want you to see if you can look at this situation in a new way. Instead of viewing it as a problem, I wonder if you can be a bit more kind to yourself and look at it as something that you still need to practice? You can see this as something you just haven't learned yet. When I think about the situation I shared with you earlier about a time when I doubted myself, I can now look at this situation in a new way, as a time when I needed to practice and grow. In my letter, I reminded myself of what I am good at, and that if I keep working at this, I feel confident that I can get better at it.

(The educator should read the letter they wrote about a time they doubted themselves. Reframe the situation through a growth mindset, as an opportunity to learn something new or grow. Include in your letter a message of encouragement – to trust that you have the ability to navigate this situation.)

Now, I want you to use your imagination and pretend like you are able to somehow communicate with yourself in that moment when you doubted yourself. After thinking about growth mindset and resilience, what would you now say to yourself?

Let's take around 10 minutes to work on this."

(Give the handout to students to guide them through the letter-writing process.)

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Creative Activity:

- Using the handout, students write letters to themselves about a time when they doubted themselves or felt uncertain as they were learning something new. In their letter, students view this situation through this perspective of a growth mindset, as something they are still learning. Students write for about 10–15 minutes.

Lesson Closure:

- Invite students to share their letters.

Example of What You Could Say:

"Is there anyone who wants to read a part of their letter or just share what it was that you wrote about?"

(Invite a few students to describe their letters.)

I am curious what it felt like for you to think about a time you doubted yourself. Did it feel uncomfortable? Did knowing that you have the ability to practice and get better help you think about this in a new way? *(Invite a few students to share how the activity felt for them.)*

We all learned two new tools today—having a growth mindset and practicing resilience. We looked at a time in our lives that felt difficult and learned to reframe our way of thinking, which we can now use next time we doubt ourselves. This will hopefully help us to keep learning and growing through the hard times.

I also want to remind you that you don't have to be resilient all by yourself. One of the most effective ways to be resilient when something difficult happens is to reach out to the people who care about you. You can share your thoughts and feelings with someone you trust. Maybe you want to talk with me, or one of your other teachers, or coaches, or a parent."

Notes on What You Plan to Say:

Supplemental Links & Activities:

1. In addition to the letter writing activity, you can lead students through one of these extension activities:
 - Play a song that helps ‘hit the reset button.’ Choose a song that is energizing and motivating so that students can give themselves a fresh start.
 - Pretend like the class invented a machine – a time travel post office box – that allows your students to send letters to themselves in the past. Invite students to write a letter and put it into this machine, giving their ‘past selves’ advice and sharing words of wisdom that can help them as they are learning something new or facing a challenge.
2. In the article [“What You Can Learn About Failure from NBA star Stephen Curry”](#) Stephen explains the way he reframes setbacks as an opportunity to learn. The article highlights one of the key messages of the film Underrated– Stephen’s ability to apply a growth mindset during a game.
3. Stanford University created a project called [“Stanford, I Screwed Up”](#) to encourage their students to adopt a growth mindset. The videos in the collection are more appropriate for high school students, but [the introductory video](#) offers an overview of the central message in the campaign and would be appropriate for elementary students.
4. For younger elementary students, Sesame Street teaches growth mindset through their concept [“the power of yet”](#) which highlights that we might not understand something, yet, but can continue to practice and get better.
5. [The Kevin Love Fund curriculum includes a lesson on self-compassion.](#) For students who are interested in this topic, they may want to complete this lesson too.