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Limitless Mind Book Discussion Questions

We have provided discussion questions for adult and children readers, organized by chapter.

Discussion Questions for Adult Readers

Introduction: The Six Keys

- What are you hoping to learn from reading the book? What are you excited for?
- In this section, Jo defines growth and fixed mindsets (p. 8 - 9). Describe your own experiences with growth and fixed mindsets in school and beyond.
- Jo shares that when she speaks to adult learners, educators, or parents, many of them recall a limiting experience they had as a child or young adult when they received a fixed praise message, such as being called "smart" (p. 10).
 - When have you received a fixed message (praise or otherwise) about your abilities? How did it make you feel and what impact did it have on your life?
 - When have you received a growth message about your abilities? How did it make you feel and what impact did it have on your life?
 - When have you given fixed praise to others? When have you given growth praise?
- Jo reminds us of a widely shared insight, "Everything you ever wanted is on the other side of fear" (p. 12). What are your thoughts about this quote?

Chapter 1: How Neuroplasticity Changes... Everything

- What research or anecdote stood out to you in this chapter? How will this information alter what you once believed to be true and/or how will it inform your work or practice?
- In this chapter Jo describes how the hippocampus grew for the London cab drivers during their learning and years of service, and then after they retired the hippocampus actually shrank, not from age but from lack of use (p. 16).
 - Did this or any other evidence she shared about how our brains grow and change surprise you?
 - Can you think of a skill or knowledge area that you have gained or lost because of practice or lack of use?
- Have you ever heard someone say they are not a "math person" or thought the same about yourself? How does our society picture someone who is a "math person?" Has any of the evidence Jo shared changed your view on this topic?
- After sharing research on giftedness (p. 32 - 34), Jo asks, "If the idea of giftedness is harmful to adults, how do you think it affects children?" What are your thoughts about this quote?

Chapter 2: Why We Should Love Mistakes, Struggle, and Even Failure

- We have all failed at something at least once. What have you failed at and how did it make you feel? Did it help you in the long run?
- Jo compares US math classrooms to those in Japan and China: while US teachers typically give students 30 repetitive problems to practice, teachers in Japan and China that she has seen gave no more than three problems to investigate and struggle through understanding (p. 53 - 54). In what ways, do either of these depictions resonate with your experiences when you were in school?
- How do you define struggle with respect to learning? How does your view of struggle influence your learning (in work and in life)?
- How can we support children (or others) to accept mistakes as a learning opportunity? Given that it's a whole cultural change, how can we help everyone around us learn to love mistakes, struggle, and failure?
- After reading this chapter, in what ways do you feel more prepared to embrace struggle in your learning?

Chapter 3: Changing Your Mind, Changing Your Reality

- Which of the research findings about growth mindset surprise you, if any?
- Describe your personal experiences as a child or adult with the word "smart."
- What are your thoughts about using the word "smart" to describe children?
- Jo shares that Carol Dweck has changed her thinking around mindsets, realizing that "we all have different mindsets at different times and places" (p. 97).
 - Describe a situation in which you held a growth mindset?
 - Describe a situation in which you held a fixed mindset?

Chapter 4: The Connected Brain

- What is an example of a subject/topic where you can use a multi-dimensional approach?
 - What would multidimensional learning look, sound, or feel like?
- Describe a time, if any, when you experienced a multidimensional approach to learning (inside or outside of school)?
- What strategies or resources do you use in school or work that promote multi-dimensional learning?

Chapter 5: Why Speed Is Out and Flexibility Is In!

- Describe a time when you felt as though you were not a good learner because you were not thinking or working quickly enough.
- Share your thoughts on replacing speed with flexible thinking. What personal experiences have you had with this?
- Can you think of any learning experiences you had (inside or outside of school) where speed was not emphasized? What did those experiences look/feel like?

Chapter 6: A Limitless Approach to Collaboration

- Which of the ideas Jo mentions – of opening minds, opening content and embracing struggle – seem important to work on?
- Where is your school or other work situation – do people around you have open minds? And encourage the opening of content, and the valuing of struggle?
- How do you see the limitless approach to collaboration applying to your life? How might you try out the strategies of opening minds and embracing uncertainty in your interactions with friends and family?
- Where do you “glow” and where can you “grow” in your collaborations?

Conclusion: Living without Limits

- What will you change in your life if you live in a limitless way?
- What can we tell ourselves if/when we feel ourselves becoming “locked up” again? How can we encourage ourselves to keep a limitless mindset?
- How can we help others in our school community and society adopt a limitless mindset?

Discussion Questions for Children

Introduction: The Six Keys

- What in this section surprised you?
- Consider the examples of fixed and growth praise (p. 11).
 - Can you think of a time when you have heard someone--a teacher, parent, peer, even yourself--give fixed or growth praise? What was the situation? How did it make you/the person involved feel?
 - Can you think of a time when you received fixed or growth praise? What was the situation? How did it make you feel?
- Can you share a time when someone praised you in a way that made you want to try harder?

Chapter 1: How Neuroplasticity Changes... Everything

- Do you believe anyone in your school can learn all subjects to the highest level? Why or why not?
- Are some people born with a brain that is better for math and others with a brain that is better for language or art or something else? Why or why not?
- What factors are important to learning other than your brain?

Chapter 2: Why We Should Love Mistakes, Struggle, and Even Failure

- Everyone makes mistakes and when we do there is an opportunity to learn something new. Think back to the last time you made a mistake. What was it? What happened after? What did you learn?
- When we struggle with something, sometimes we persist and sometimes we give up.
 - Can you think of a time when you gave up on something because you struggled with it? What was it? How did the experience make you feel?
 - Can you think of a time when you persisted through something even though you struggled with it? What was it? How did the experience make you feel?
- Is it okay to make mistakes in math class? Why or why not?
- When you grow up, do you think mistakes, struggle, and failure, will be a good thing or a bad thing? How might making mistakes be helpful to you in your future? How might making mistakes be helpful in whatever job you envision yourself having?

Chapter 3: Changing Your Mind, Changing Your Reality

- What is something that you want to learn or accomplish while having a growth mindset?
- In this chapter, we read the stories of several people who changed their mindset and their future. Which stories do you relate to and why?
- Describe a situation in which you had a growth mindset. What did you learn about yourself?
- Describe a situation in which you had a fixed mindset. What did you learn about yourself?
- What are some things that you can do to help yourself have a growth mindset?

Chapter 4: The Connected Brain

- What does multi-dimensional learning mean to you?
- Describe a time when you learned something in a multi-dimensional way. How did it feel to learn in this way?
- Think of a task or challenge in your life. How could you approach this task/challenge in many different ways?
- Think of a current event or problem that needs to be solved. How could this problem be addressed with a multi-dimensional approach?
- What subject or topic do you want to learn using a multi-dimensional approach? Why?

Chapter 5: Why Speed Is Out and Flexibility Is In!

- In what ways do schools value speed over depth of knowledge? How could that be changed?
- In learning, what is more important: memorization and speed or flexibility and creativity? Why? Come up with some examples from school, hobbies, sports, work, and any other aspects of your life.
- How can flexibility and creativity lead to more effective problem-solving and/or finding new ways to do something? Give examples from school, hobbies, sports, work, etc.

Chapter 6: A Limitless Approach to Collaboration

- Describe a time when collaborating with others was helpful to you in your learning. What were you working on? How did working with others help your learning?
- Can you think of a time when hearing a classmate's idea made you think in a different way or changed your thinking in some way? What did that experience look/feel like?
- What are some strategies you've used to collaborate with peers that worked well in the past?
- Is there something you are working on now, where it would help you to find some people to work with?
- How could Jo's strategies of having an open mind and embracing uncertainty also help in your collaboration?

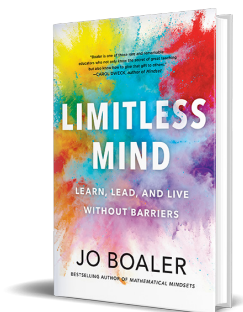
Conclusion: Living without Limits

- What did you think of--and learn from--Henry's story? (p. 206 - 209)
- What are some ways that the six keys connect to or build on each other?
- What can we tell ourselves if/when we feel ourselves becoming "locked up" again? How can we encourage ourselves (and our friends) to keep a limitless mindset?

General Discussion Questions

- What was your main take-away from reading the book?
 - Of everything you learned from the book, what most surprised you?
- Think about something you are good at. It doesn't have to be school-related-- it can be anything, being good at a computer game, art, history etc.
 - How did you become good at it?
 - Did you give up when you struggled or did you persist through the struggle?
 - What factors from your home, school, or environment helped you become good at it?
- How would you recommend schools and teachers incorporate the limitless mindset into other disciplines (besides math)?

Acknowledgements: Many thanks to Kyalamboka Brown, Suzanne Downes, Tanya LaMar, Miriam Leshin, Ranjani, Megan Selbach-Allen, Marcela Tica, and Caitlyn Wilkerson for contributing questions.



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