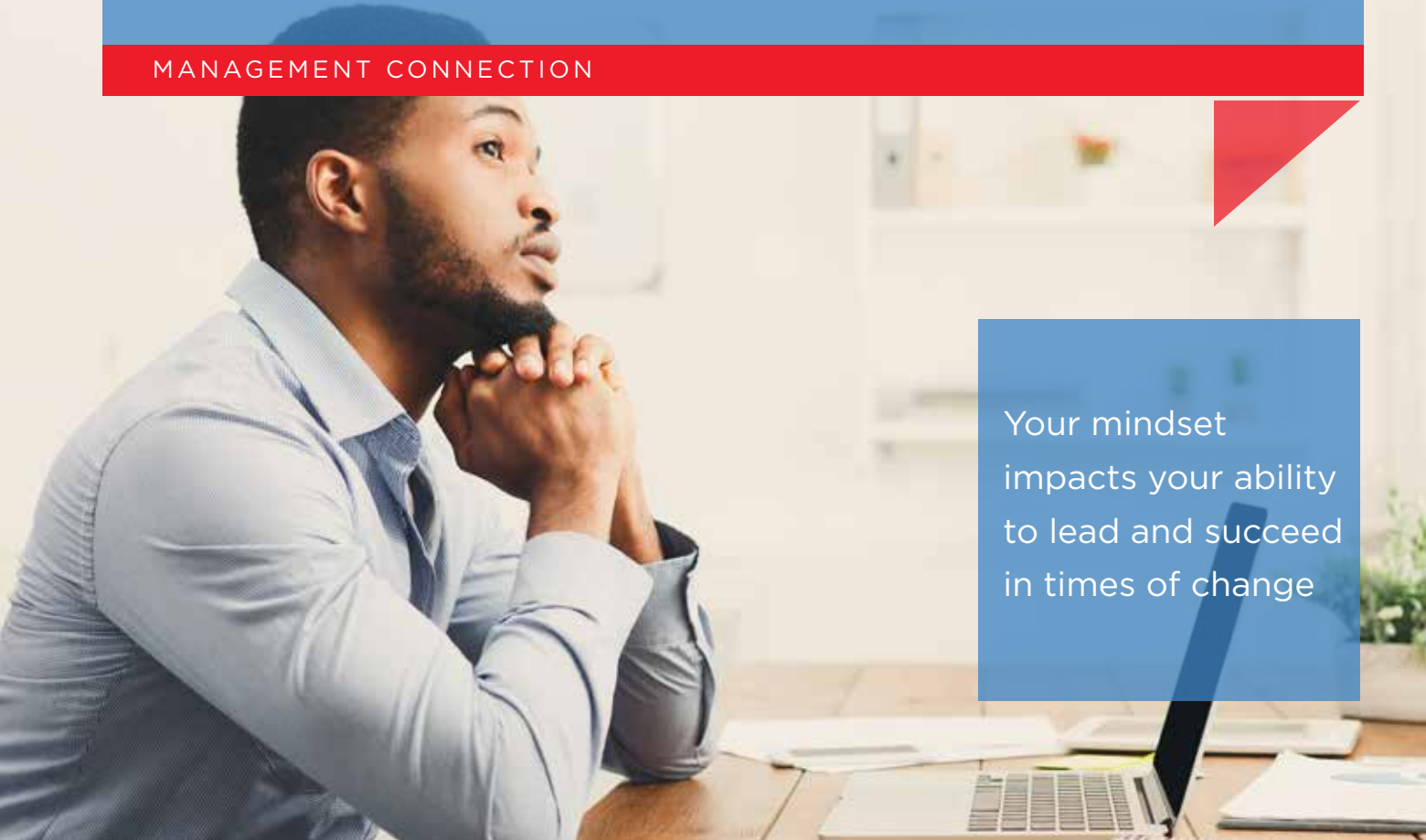


The Flexible Mindset

How a Simple Shift in Thinking Can Make You a Better Manager

MANAGEMENT CONNECTION



Your mindset impacts your ability to lead and succeed in times of change

Managing a foodservice operation requires the ability to adapt quickly – whether it’s to new budget restrictions, an inventory mix-up, or staffing challenges. Never before has the requirement to adjust swiftly been more evident than during the recent coronavirus pandemic.

One surprising factor that may impact your ability to lead and succeed during times of change like this is your mindset. By embracing a flexible mindset, both personally and with your team, you may be surprised to find that you are better able to handle challenges and grow professionally.

THE TWO TYPES OF MINDSETS

In her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Carol Dweck recounts an experiment where children were given a

series of puzzles. The first puzzles were easy, but the subsequent puzzles were difficult.

Not surprisingly, some of the children got frustrated about the hard puzzles, and felt down about their inability to complete them.

But other children embraced the challenge of the hard puzzle, seemingly enjoying the difficulty. They didn’t perceive the inability to complete the puzzle as failing, but rather as learning.

This experiment is a simple look at the two types of mindsets that most people fall into: fixed or flexible (also called growth).

A fixed mindset views intelligence and ability as set in stone. While researchers would argue that’s not truly the case, it’s your perception (rather than reality) that matters. If you envision



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yourself to be someone that has trouble growing and adapting, you'll easily pigeonhole yourself into that mold.

As you can see in the puzzle experiment, some of these perceptions start from childhood. The children frustrated by the hard puzzles may view their own intelligence as limited, "evidenced" by the inability to complete it. In a fixed mindset, you always feel pressured to perform perfectly; to make the exact right choice or decision.

On the flip side, a flexible (or growth) mindset assumes that concepts like intelligence, leadership, personality, and ability are all things that can be developed and cultivated. This type of mindset encourages learning from failure and adapting to change.

In the case of the puzzles, you can see this mindset in the children who viewed the difficult puzzles as a fun challenge and as a way to learn, regardless of the outcome of being able to complete it.

MANAGEMENT AND MINDSET

Wondering how these concepts might affect the work environment? To start, it's likely to affect your own ability to handle stress and change at work. For example,

a meta-analysis in *Clinical Psychology Review* concluded that a flexible (growth) mindset was linked to less psychological distress and better active coping compared to a fixed mindset. That can certainly affect your job performance and satisfaction.

Your mindset also may impact your team as a whole, though. Consider the results of this research from the *Journal of experimental psychology*:

College students were asked about their perception of their professor's mindset beliefs. Specifically, they tried to analyze if the students felt the professor believed intelligence

and felt more negative and psychologically vulnerable in class.

While this is a teacher-student relationship, consider that a very similar power dynamic exists in manager-employee relationships. It's very plausible that employees who perceive their managers to have a fixed mindset with regards to their abilities and intelligence would have more negative perceptions about their job satisfaction, job security, and room for growth.

A PRACTICAL SCENARIO

Imagine a scenario where you're hosting an in-



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was set in stone (fixed mindset), or if the professor believed it could grow (flexible mindset).

When students perceived their professor to have a more stoic mindset surrounding intelligence, they reported feeling like they did not belong in class, were more concerned about grades,

service for your staff on proper temperature control procedures. You challenge one of your new employees to demonstrate how to properly use the meat thermometer in front of the group.

If that employee has a fixed mindset about their abilities, they may be very nervous.

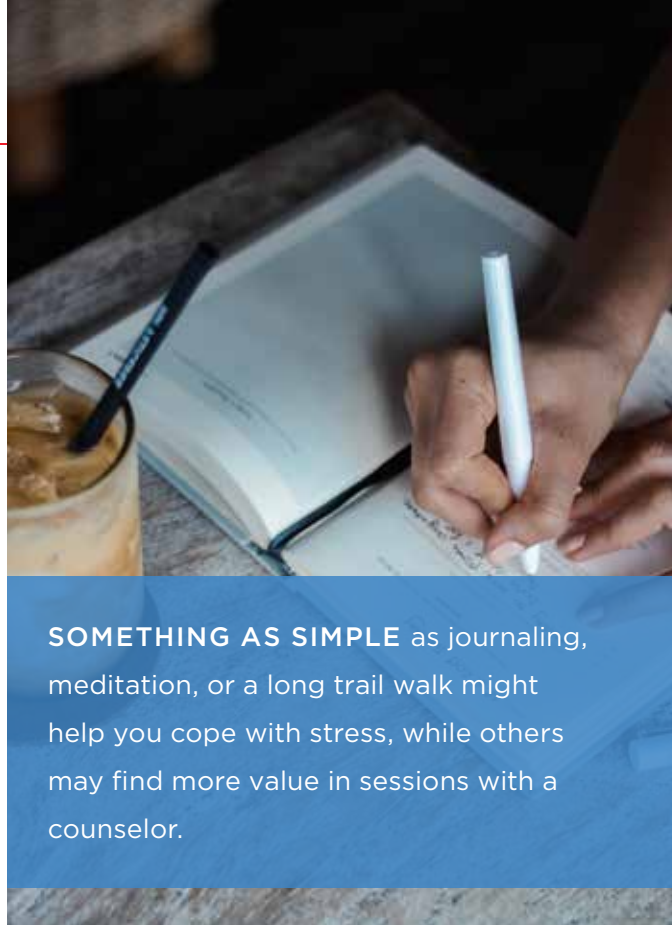
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They may worry that they'll demonstrate incorrectly. If they perceive you (as their superior) to have a fixed mindset, they may also assume they'll be reprimanded or even fired if they make a mistake. You can imagine the psychological tension this creates.

On the flip side, if you and your employee embrace a flexible mindset, you both acknowledge this is a learning experience. If the temperature technique is not demonstrated correctly, it won't be perceived as a failure of the staff member, but rather a learning experience for everyone.

Similarly, managers with a flexible mindset are quick to take responsibility. In this case, perhaps you need to implement new learning activities about temperature control into onboarding training, or create mentoring opportunities where new staff can learn from long-term employees.

Of course, there is a fine line to toe here. We need to prevent errors in food safety protocols to protect residents, students, and patients, and as such, we need employees that can follow rules and regulations correctly. But sometimes, small mistakes or "silly" questions are learning opportunities, and signal that we as managers need to do a better job preparing and



SOMETHING AS SIMPLE as journaling, meditation, or a long trail walk might help you cope with stress, while others may find more value in sessions with a counselor.

building up our employees.

EMBRACING A FLEXIBLE MINDSET

When it comes to ways to embrace a flexible mindset in your role as a CDM, CFPP, here are a few ideas that you can start putting into place right now:

Self-Assess and Shift if Needed

If you find yourself negatively questioning your abilities or your team, fearing failure, or blaming others for your mistake, you may be stuck in a fixed mindset. When you see those patterns occurring, take a step back and commit to change. Remember, even as an adult, the brain can adapt to something new (just like you can still learn to play the guitar or swim). You can learn to respond with optimism, responsibility, and the

capability to make challenging decisions.

Progress Over Perfection

In times of change, it's easy to feel stifled by the unknown. It can cause analysis paralysis; you don't know what decision to make because the "right" path is unclear. Instead of trying to make the perfect decision, focus on forward progress given the information currently available. There will be setbacks and you may need to pivot in the future, but that's okay.

Encourage Open Dialogue

You can probably remember being a teenager in school and sitting in a class where you despised asking a question. Think back—what was it about that class? In many cases, the teacher may have

criticized wrong answers or "silly" questions. Now, take an honest look at yourself in the workplace. Did you unintentionally develop the same dynamic with your employees? Are they nervous to ask you if they forgot how to do a task? Do they feel like they can't approach you with feedback for improvement? If so, it's never too late to change that and encourage open conversation.

Embrace Professional Growth

When presented with a challenge, managers with a fixed mindset may throw their hands up, feel frustrated, and assume they're not doing a good job. But those with a flexible mindset see this as an opportunity for growth. Perhaps it means reading articles on a topic, taking a class, or getting a new certification.

Challenge Your Employees to Grow and Learn

Along the same lines, avoid projecting a fixed mindset onto your employees, assuming they are only so smart or limited to certain tasks. Work to inspire and motivate them, perhaps teaching them a new skill.

Get Creative

Thinking creatively is a major factor in flexibility. During

the pandemic, many in food service have done so—from chefs creating livestream cooking videos for assisted living residents stuck in quarantine, to school districts using bus stop delivery to ensure children get their meals.

Ask for Help or Insight

As the leaders in the kitchen, there can be pressure to have all the right answers. Those with a flexible mindset know they may not always have them, and are not afraid to ask for help. They may ask for input from their team, speak with their manager, or reach out to trusted colleagues for insight.

Allow Yourself Grace

In work and life, you're bound to experience emotionally taxing times—and a pandemic is no exception. From the stress of

constant changes to dealing with grief, it is a challenging time in food service. A flexible mindset allows space for those feelings; they are not a sign of weakness. Depending on what you are feeling, something as simple as journaling, meditation, or a long trail walk might help, while others may find more value in sessions with a counselor.

As a parting thought, consider the Oxford dictionary definition of flexible: “*capable of bending easily without breaking.*” As a foodservice manager, there is no doubt that you have embraced many moments of flexibility in your work. Incorporating that into your mindset more regularly will serve you well as you continue to enter uncharted territory with any future challenges that may arise. **E**

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Gap Analysis Tool Helps CDM, CFPPs Identify Education Needs

Identify personal knowledge gaps and find programs to address individual learning needs with help from the CBDM's **Gap Analysis Tool**.

The Gap Analysis Tool contains all of the Competency Areas in the CDM, CFPP exam blueprint. The tool helps identify competency levels to assist CDM, CFPPs in prioritizing CE opportunities. Check off your level of knowledge and skill in each of the competency areas, and your responses will point to any learning needs.



No Knowledge/Entry Level Knowledge or Skills:

Suggest Level I courses and basic resources



Basic/Foundational Knowledge or Skills:

Suggest Level II courses and basic to advanced resources



Thorough Knowledge of Topic:

Suggest Level III courses and advanced resources

The Gap Analysis Tool is available at www.CBDMonline.org/GAT



This Level II article assumes that the reader has a foundation of basic concepts of the topic. The desired outcome is to enhance knowledge and facilitate application of knowledge to practice.

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Reading *The Flexible Mindset: How a Simple Shift in Thinking Can Make You a Better Manager* and successfully completing these questions online has been approved for 1 hour of continuing education for CDM, CFPPs. CE credit is available ONLINE ONLY. To earn 1 CE hour, access the online CE quiz in the ANFP Marketplace. Visit www.ANFPonline.org/market and select “CE Articles.” If you don’t see your article title on the first page, then search the title “*The Flexible Mindset: How a Simple Shift in Thinking Can Make You a Better Manager*.” Once on the article title page, purchase the article and complete the CE quiz.

1. What type of mindset assumes that intelligence and personality is set in stone?
 - A. Fixed mindset
 - B. Flexible (growth) mindset
 - C. Neither of the above
2. What type of mindset assumes that intelligence and personality are able to grow and change in adulthood?
 - A. Fixed mindset
 - B. Flexible (growth) mindset
 - C. Neither of the above
3. In the study in the *Journal of experimental psychology*, which was true about students who believed their professor had a fixed mindset?
 - A. Those students enjoyed class more and worried less about grades
 - B. Those students disliked class and worried more about grades
 - C. The professor’s mindset made no difference on the students
4. Which would be an example of encouraging an employee to embrace a flexible mindset?
 - A. Discouraging unnecessary chatter during worktime
 - B. Emailing the employee their work schedule
 - C. Recommending the employee pursue their CDM, CFPP credential
5. Which is a technique that can help you adopt a more flexible mindset in the workplace?
 - A. Self-assess and shift as needed
 - B. Avoid scenarios that require change
 - C. Don’t let others know you need help
6. You are faced with a challenge at work that you don’t know how to navigate. Which reaction best showcases a fixed mindset?
 - A. Ask your boss for help in figuring out best practices
 - B. Take a course that can help you learn more about how to handle it
 - C. Acknowledge there’s nothing you can do to move forward
7. You’re conducting an in-service on glove use. You ask an employee a question, and they answer it incorrectly. Which response best showcases a flexible mindset?
 - A. You reprimand the employee for their lack of knowledge
 - B. You don’t acknowledge the incorrect answer and move on
 - C. You take responsibility for needing to expand on the concept, and develop a learning activity



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