

Growth is a Never-Ending Process

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In Carol Dweck's book *The Growth Mindset*, she describes the growth mindset as "The belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts, your strategies, and help from others." In other words, you can always work to improve or grow upon your previous efforts. Rather than a fixed mindset of "I've failed once so that means I'll keep failing," it turns into viewing a loss or failure as an opportunity to grow. Think about failing a test in school. Someone with a fixed mindset would think, "That's what supposed to happen" rather than a growth mindset of "Now it's time to find out what went wrong, fix it, and improve for the next test." One should not simply give up because of one failure. We can see this in the exemplar I have chosen. They have had to face more challenges than most, but still, they are continuously working to better themselves.

I believe that growth is more important than other qualities because of the positive consequences that come from it. With growth comes the opportunity to educate oneself. Whether it's about a certain topic, healthy coping mechanisms, or just about themselves, it would be hard to have that chance without growth. Growth can be a foundation and lead to someone developing more qualities and values. This can be seen in the journey my exemplar has gone through as well. They are a perfect example of why growth is an important quality to have in life because of what it can allow someone to accomplish.

Demi Lovato is a 29-year-old singer, songwriter, and actor. As a previous child star, they were in the spotlight most of their lives. What started as a small, featured role on *Barney and Friends* snowballed into becoming a Disney star. From there, they went into music and earned many awards for their songs. Even with all the successes, they had some other obstacles to go through. Behind the young teenager of the *Camp Rock* movies was an addict. They were deep

into a cocaine addiction, which is something they would battle throughout their whole career. When we hear or read about Lovato, one of the major takeaways is “Wow, they have grown.” Some were able to physically watch Lovato grow from a little kid into an adult, but their mental and spiritual growth is what people look at. Even when fighting their own battles, they still made time for activism and advocacy. This is because growth is a value that no one can live without.

Stating the obvious, there is the physical growth, but beyond that is the emotional, mental, and spiritual growth. If someone stays within the same mentality or mindset, they won't get far in life. Not everyone goes on the same path. These aspects of growth are unique to that individual, but one must grow to be able to see that path. Growth then leads to values and qualities. It can lead to educating oneself, whether in academics or on social injustices. This can be seen in Lovato's story: How they overcame their addiction, their eating disorder, and mental instability, and learned healthy ways to cope and manage them, and then go on to educate people about them.

Demi Lovato has awards and accolades proving their growth as an artist, but when looking deeper, their true accomplishments shine through. It started with their addiction, a young teenager just trying to take off the media's pressure. They went to rehab, where it was uncovered that they had a severe eating disorder, suffered from self-harm, and they were diagnosed with bipolar disorder. It had seemed as though the issues were resolved. They had celebrated six years sober in 2018, but shortly after, something horrible happened. In July 2018, it was released that the singer was hospitalized for a massive drug overdose. No one expected it; everyone thought that the struggles and the pain were gone. Lovato was able to paint that picture of “being okay.” After this, Lovato went back to rehab where they were able to start on the true path of recovery, a journey they're still on to this day.

Even with these experiences, they didn't let that be their defining feature. They have been nominated and won numerous awards. From the VMA's to the Grammys, Lovato has left their mark in pop culture. Aside from those, they have also advocated for many marginalized groups. They advocate for mental health awareness and the importance of self-care. They use their own illness, bipolar disorder, and their experiences to advocate and educate people about mental health. They said in an interview with *Vanity Fair*, "'You know, entering rehab while you're on the Disney Channel, it was kind of like, everything was magnified, in the spotlight. It's quite the headline,'" she told Elle last year. "And I couldn't get around it. So, I thought, you know, I can use this to help others. And that's what I did'" (Weaver, 2016, p. 3). They also used their experiences with eating disorders to educate others on that subject. Recently, they made a documentary on *YouTube* about their struggle with addiction, giving a timeline of what happened since the beginning of their career. All these examples show how they were able to take those bad experiences and turn them into an opportunity for advocacy, education, and growth.

While I cannot relate to the addiction, I know what it's like to suffer in silence with body image issues. I was never a "skinny" girl; I was chubby and on the heavier side. I was still healthy, but that didn't stop the typical middle school bullies. For as long as I can remember, people would say every stereotypical comment about my weight. At first it didn't affect me, but it got to the point in the seventh grade where every day multiple people would say those things to me. There was a period of time where every day, someone would write and put things on my locker such as "whale" or "fatty." I would report these instances, but nothing was ever done. This continued into eighth grade, and one day it was taken to a new level. Someone left a note in my locker saying, "No one likes you fatty, might as well do us all a favor!" I instantly broke.

Why did someone take the time to write this to me? Why did someone care about me and my body this much?

Again, I went and reported it, and no surprise, nothing was done. Although I never got another note, the verbal comments never stopped. I got to a point where I would wear the baggiest clothes I could find, skip classes to hide from the bullies, and make up any excuse to not go to school. This is one of the first times I really struggled with my mental health. I wasn't the bubbly, positive, and outgoing person I used to be. My parents started to notice, and that's when I decided to keep telling the administration about what was happening. I needed to be the strong girl my parents raised me to be. Sure enough, the first few times I told the authorities, nothing was done, but I never gave up. I reported and documented each instance until finally, the bullies were reprimanded. Thanks to my documentation, they were given a massive punishment, and I was almost guaranteed that I wouldn't see them in school for a while. I had this massive weight lifted off my shoulders; knowing they weren't going to be in school made me feel 10 times better.

Somehow, even though they were gone, I still felt the need to cover up and not show my body. I didn't realize that those comments would have that effect on me. But they did and sometimes still do. I never stopped being self-conscious; it was almost like the bullies were still there, but in my head telling me all those nasty things. I just wanted it all to stop. I was in one of the worst mental states I've ever been in even after getting rid of that external negativity. I knew I had to seek help and went to my school counselor, who assisted me on the road of self-love and appreciation.

If I didn't get help that day, I wouldn't be here. My mental health would've taken me from this world. I would've missed so much. During this time, my grades were the worst they've

ever been. After this, I worked on my grades. I didn't get them exactly where I wanted, but I improved. I found creative outlets to express myself, like theater and choir. I found friends that I knew were there to support me no matter what. I went through the next two years continuously working to better myself. I eventually worked my way up to the top ten percent of my class during senior year. I also earned the role of class speaker and spoke at graduation. I got into my dream school, Keuka, with a scholarship. I became an aunt, and I even share a birthday with my amazing nephew, Kairo. I got to spend a week in Myrtle Beach with my childhood best friend. Finally, I spent these past few years with my amazing father before he was taken from us too soon. I would've missed all these amazing things. It's all because I took an opportunity to grow that I was able to recognize how lucky I truly am.

Growth is a never-ending process. People have their setbacks and hardships, but they don't define a person. How they overcome them and what they learn from them is what they will be remembered by. Growth happens in ways no one would expect. Being dragged through the toughest times doesn't seem like an opportunity for growth, but it is the lessons learned that help a person to continue to grow into who they are meant to be. Lovato conveyed this message perfectly through their journey and the documentation of it all. I now know to never let one failure or hardship determine my outlook on life. Instead, I will continue to grow into who I'm meant to be.

References

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