

GAMES OF MINDSETS

The 'mind' – the greatest gift bestowed upon us by our Creator. The mind is what distinguishes and makes us superior compared to other living and non-living beings in the world; the mind is what makes us human.

There are numerous scientific discussions, theories and questions regarding the mind. There are questions on whether the mind and body are separate in physical existence, whether other beings have a similar ability to use the mind or whether emotions actually form part of the mind – these are some of the questions and differences that continue to be discussed and argued by the scientific community, especially in the areas of psychology and neuroscience. Nevertheless, everyone agrees that the mind is what differentiates us from other beings – the ability of the human mind to process complex matters and form individual opinions, decisions and actions.

To provide an academic understanding of the mind, as extracted from Wikipedia, it is defined as a set of cognitive (mental abilities) faculties that enable consciousness, perception, thinking, judgment, and memory.

In short, it is the ability to use our brain and think.

Now the next question is – where does the mind reside?

Home of the Mind – The Brain

Science has proven that our actions and body are centrally controlled by a vital organ called the brain. It acts as our core operating system that controls everything we do through a process called thinking, which we do consciously, subconsciously and at times unconsciously. This process of thinking and the outcomes it produces are what we refer to as the mind.

The ability to think is undeniably the most important component of our life. Without it, we will not be able to function – literally. As much as it is important, it is also a gift and ability that is most taken for granted. We often hear people expressing about how fortunate they are to be able to see, speak, touch, walk, eat or breathe, but we seldom hear people counting their blessings on the ability to think. Maybe this is because such situation i.e. the inability to think, rarely happens.

In early December 2015, I had the chance to attend a leadership conference – Leadership Energy Summit Asia organised by the ICLIF Leadership and Governance Centre. The summit had a great lineup of speakers, including Chris Gardner, the self-made millionaire who was made famous through the movie “The Pursuit of Happyness”. The movie was based on his nearly one-year struggle with homelessness, which he went through when he was 28 years old while raising his 2 year old toddler son.

Besides Chris Gardner, there were many other prominent speakers at the summit including the co-founder of Wikipedia, Jimmy Wales, who shared his experience in setting up the online free encyclopedia. He also shared how he had failed in various other attempts in introducing something new, before and even after his success with Wikipedia.

Among the many speakers who were speaking at the summit, it was the sharing of a neurosurgeon, Professor Dr. Eka Julianta Wahjoepramono from

Indonesia that I remembered the most. He was the first neurosurgeon in South East Asia to successfully operate on a brainstem. I remember his talk the most due to several reasons: he was witty, he was real, the gruesome photos and videos of brain surgeries he had performed (I must confess that I can't stand the sight of blood) but more importantly, his commitment in serving underprivileged patients in need of brain surgery.

I can clearly remember the story about the first brainstem surgery he performed. The patient was a young and poor labourer who was admitted to the hospital paralysed and unconscious. The patient had a tumour the size of a grape in his brainstem, which needed to be removed in order for him to survive. The young man's brother pleaded with Professor Dr. Eka to perform the surgery even after being told that the chances of survival was close to zero. The brother committed to sell their family's only property, a hut by the side of the beach to pay for the bills.

Despite the odds, the surgery turned out to be a success. The young man, 20 year old Ardiansyah left the Siloam Hospital after ten days able to walk just like he did before. What was more of a relief to both patient and his brother was that they did not have to pay a single cent for the procedure.

It was during Professor Dr. Eka's talk that I truly realised the importance of the human brain – the home of our mind. Back in high school, although I was in the science stream, I did not take biology as a subject so I did not really learn much about the brain, what more the brainstem. The brainstem is an extremely complex and delicate organ. It consists of the midbrain, medulla oblongata and the pons. It is considered the most vital region for our body's survival. In layman terms, the brainstem is where life is.

If the brainstem stops functioning, a person is considered to be "brain dead" or "clinically dead" – technically, it means a person is basically dead.

However the person continues to be treated as alive as long as the heart is still beating despite being in a state of continuous coma.

This is when it struck me of how fortunate we are to be blessed with the ability to think; the ability to use our mind.

The Call to Think

The mind is there for a reason. Literally, it is there to reason and think. It is through thinking that we determine the way we live through our decisions and actions. This is what we refer to as the mindset.

Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason.

Al-'Anfal 8: 22

For Muslims, the call to think is repeated numerous times in the Quran. Islam is a religion that requires and encourages us to think, especially to understand and appreciate Allah's greatness. The term "thinking" (its Arabic translation – *tafkeer*) and its generally accepted equivalents appear in the Quran at least 169 times.

And He has subjected for you the night and day and the sun and moon, and the stars are subjected by His command. Indeed in that are signs for a people who reason.

An-Nahl 16: 12

There are various expressions in the Quran that describes the need for us to reason and think such as "Think!", "Will you not then understand?", "Do they not ponder?", "Look!", "Do they not see?" These expressions imply the importance and high status of the mind in Islam.

Or do you think that most of them hear or reason? They are not except like livestock. Rather, they are [even] more astray in [their] way.

Al-Furqan 25: 44

Besides beliefs (*aqidah*), principles of character (*akhlaq*) and Islamic law (*shariah*), Islam does not limit where the mind is willing to go as long as it is in the path of righteousness. In actual fact, Islam encourages active thinking for us to explore and discover the treasures of the world so that we are able to appreciate Allah's greatness more.

Thinking can be considered obligatory in Islam as we are called to become a generation of *ulul albab* as championed by the Quran. The word *ulul albab* is mentioned 16 times in the Quran. Muslim scholars are almost unanimous in stating that the word *ulul albab* in the Quran refers to a group of people who possess a mature mind and comprehension that enable them to make accurate judgments. The climax to it is that they will find the reality of truth that will save their life in this world and hereafter – the ability to make good use of the mind.

Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.

Ali Imran 3: 191

The Function of Mindset

We had discussed in previous chapters that ultimately, what is important is our attitude – internally and externally.

We may be the smartest person on earth but with a bad attitude, we are nowhere close to success. Attitude is the distinct factor that differentiates between the successful from the not so successful and the good from the great.

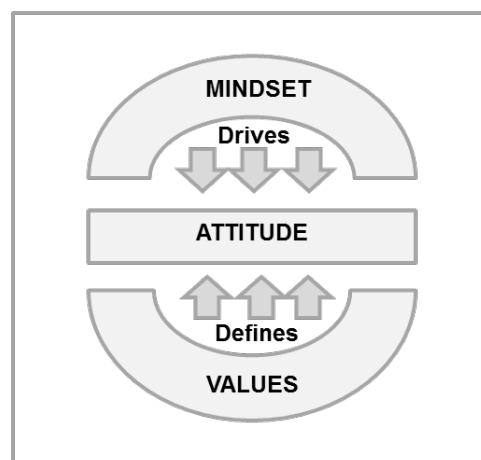
We had also discussed that attitude is formed and defined by the values we carry. The formula is relatively simple; the different individual values add up to form a single view of our combined values, which is represented by our attitude.

So where does mindset fit in the picture?

Mental attitude is more important than mental capacity.

Walter Dill Scott, first applied psychologists

Although values define attitude, what actually drives attitude is our mindset. We may set the best values in our life system and think that we have the best attitude based on it, but if our mind is set to behave the opposite, it will behave as such, no matter what.



Mindset-Values Relationship Model

Most of the time, the misalignment between our values and attitude, i.e. our behaviour is due to our surroundings and the circumstances we are in. We may be someone who is positive by nature but due to current circumstances such as continuous stress and pressure, we may behave the opposite and turn out to be a pessimist.

My greatest challenge has been to change the mindset of people.

Mindsets play strange tricks on us.

We see things the way our minds have instructed our eyes to see.

Muhammad Yunus, Bangladeshi social entrepreneur, Nobel Peace Prize
Winner

However, if we are able to develop and maintain the right mindset, we will continue to have a positive attitude despite the unfavourable conditions or circumstances we may be facing. This is the role and power of mindset; it holds us strong to our values, consistently and persistently driving our attitude.

The Right Mindset

Now that we know that mindset drives attitude, if we were to put all the pieces together, it seems obvious that mindset has a lot to do with achieving success.

We often hear phrases such as "it's all in the mind" or "mind over matter" – all of these are, most of the time (if not *all* the time) true.

The fundamental question is then – what is the right mindset?

The common answer people would usually give is a positive mindset, which is a given.

But what we do actually mean by a positive mindset?

How do we define it?

To different minds, the same world is a hell and a heaven.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist, lecturer, and poet

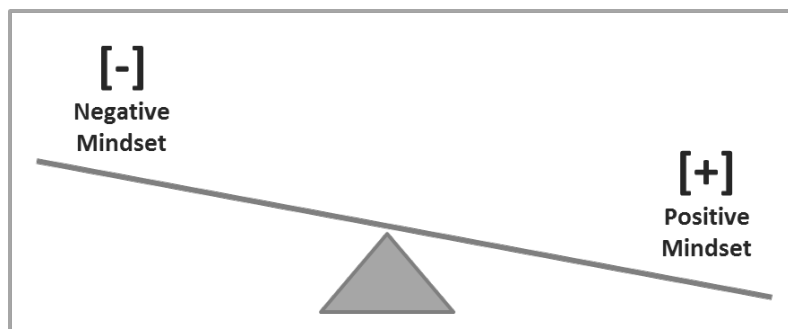
Mindset has both spectrums – positive and negative. It depends on us which side we want to be on. In actual fact, it is difficult to consistently be on one side of the spectrum. Humans are able to experience both positive and

negative life components at a single point in time. On many occasions, such situation is not by choice but due to the circumstances we are facing. Because of this, there is a need to balance both mindsets. In the case of mindset, what we actually mean by balancing is skewing it to the positive side.

***Once your mindset changes,
everything on the outside will change along with it.***

Dr. Steve Maraboli, bestselling author, behavioral science academic

This balancing act is a difficult task. Besides logic and reasoning, it involves emotions, which is by nature like a roller coaster – it continuously has its ups and downs. No matter how hard we try to deny it, our emotional state influences our state of mind.



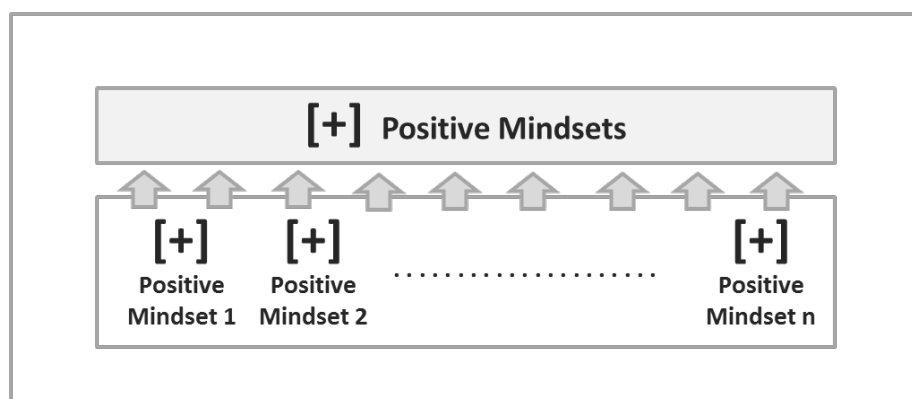
Balancing mindsets is a difficult task

Imagine starting the day with challenges, misfortunes or mistakes. It can be as simple as being stuck in a traffic jam. We start our day feeling annoyed and irritated. If such emotion is not managed at the point of occurrence, we will continue to carry the negativity baggage and allow it to form part of our mindset for the day. In short, our whole day is ruined because of that one particular incident. Subconsciously we have set in our mind that everything is by default negative for the rest of the day.

Nevertheless, it is easier to manage our emotions if we are able to establish a dominant positive mindset. This would enable us to stay positive even when negative emotions rush in and try to sway us. Once we are able to establish this, whenever we are filled with negativities, the dominant positive mindset will persuade us to return to positivity. The stronger our mindset capabilities are, the easier and quicker the persuasion cycle would be. After a while, it would eventually turn out to be just like any other event that happens in our lives.

We have deliberated quite a bit on the basics of mindset but we have yet to answer our earlier questions – what do we mean by positive mindset and how do we define it?

After pondering and giving a lot of thought, I have come to realise that there is no such thing as *a* positive mindset. Instead, it is about positive mindsets – i.e., multiple positive mindsets.



“Positive mindset” actually consists of multiple positive mindsets

At one point in time, we actually need more than one positive mindset to battle the different situations we are facing. Life is constantly changing with so many things happening all at the same time. Different situations require different approaches or treatments. Dealing with them therefore requires us to

have the relevant and correct mindsets. Each mindset needs to be appropriate and applicable to the relevant situation.

Knowing these facts, the fundamental question still remains – what is the right mindset that we should adopt?

Right Mindset – Games of Mindsets

The answer to this perplexing question is similar to how we had just defined positive mindsets – to develop and register a variety of positive mindsets in us. The more positive mindsets we are able to establish and register, the better we will be at adapting to the ever changing life situations and circumstances.

Changing the game is a mindset.

Robert Rodríguez, film director, screenwriter, producer, cinematographer,
editor, cartoonist and musician

Life is like a spread of games; we would need to choose an appropriate and specific gameplay to win a particular game. In the context of our discussion, a gameplay is equivalent to an appropriate mindset. It might require us to have more than one gameplay in order for us to win, which basically means we might need to adopt multiple positive mindsets at a particular point in time. At the end of the day, the sum of the individual positive mindsets would produce a single outcome; an overall positive outlook of life – our own individualised positive mindset.

This is why it is important for us to form and register as much positive mindsets as possible, as we will never know what to expect in life. Essentially, the mindset is all about preparation – in particular, mental preparation. As we fill ourselves up internally with the necessary bullets, i.e. the different types of

positive mindsets, the more prepared we will be to face the world and the challenges it brings. Why is this exercise necessary and relevant in our lives?

The worst bullies you will ever encounter in your life are your own thoughts.

Bryan McGill, author, speaker and activist

Preparation of positive mindsets is critical and necessary simply because the main enemy that stops us from attaining success is none other than our own self – the internal struggles we continuously have with our own thoughts.

The moment we are able to have control over these internal struggles, we will be able to control ourselves better and overcome these challenges and in the end, enabling us to produce greater results.

Besides mastering positive mindsets, there is also a need for us to understand the different types of negative mindsets. By understanding them well, we will be able to shield ourselves from falling into the traps of negativity. At any time we realise that we are swaying towards a negative mindset, we can quickly stop and remind ourselves, "Stop! This is the wrong mindset to adopt! Snap out of it!"

This is what we mean by balancing mindsets, by having a good understanding of both positive and negative mindsets, we will be able to balance out the situation and remain positive at most times, if not all the time.

How do we do this again?

By managing our mindset.

***Everything we hear is an opinion, not a fact.
Everything we see is a perspective, not the truth***

Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor

Right Mindset – Variety of Positive Mindsets

When we talk about positive mindsets, there are so many of them around, making it impossible to list everything down. In most instances, the different mindsets actually resemble one another and share similar characteristics, but they still remain separate mindsets due to the slight differences they have. This is mainly due to the different interpretations people have on things, which is impossible to avoid.

The rule of thumb is simple – as long as the principles behind a mindset are set on righteousness, it is considered a positive mindset.

Along the journey, I have been introduced to many different mindsets that focuses on achieving success and living a happy life. Many of it formed the person I am today and helped me go through the challenges I face in life. Nevertheless, there are many other positive mindsets out there that we should consider and continue to adopt to improve ourselves.

The formula remains the same – develop and register as much variety of positive mindsets in us. The more positive mindsets we acquire and adopt, the more prepared we will be.

1. “Yes We Can!” mindset

“Yes We Can” was the main slogan used by Barack Obama in his 2008 presidential campaign. He shocked the world and made history that year by becoming the first African American U.S. President.

To succeed, we must first believe that we can.

Michael Korda, English-born writer and novelist who was editor-in-Chief of Simon & Schuster in New York City

The truth is that the “Yes We Can” mindset has been always around us, inculcated in us since we were young. When my son Ruzain was about 3 years old, I spent a lot of time watching cartoons on television with him, including the British animated series, Bob the Builder. The words “Yes We Can” was repeated numerous times in the chorus of the animation’s theme song, “Can We Fix It?” The tune still plays in my mind, repeating the catchy chorus lyrics – “Bob the Builder, can we fix it? Bob the Builder, yes we can!” This illustrates the efforts taken to inculcate this fundamental mindset from a young age through various mediums.

“Yes We Can” can be as considered the basic positive mindset that motivates us to move forward in life. A classic example is how parents encourage their toddler to start walking. We often hear the words “come on, you can do it” uttered excitedly by parents when their toddler starts to clumsily tip toe towards them. Parents usually continue to encourage their children as they grow up, as they go through the different phases in life. Some of us receives the encouragement more often than others.

During the Leadership Energy Summit I attended, there was another inspiring speaker – a young lady named Jennifer Bricker, an American acrobat and aerialist. The inspiring part about her is that she is not like most acrobats and aerialists – she is an acrobat and aerialist without legs.

She was placed for adoption by her biological parents the moment they realised she was born without legs. It turned out to be the best blessing for her as she was adopted by an amazing family who always wanted a daughter.

Her adoptive family, especially her parents gave her a simple rule in life – “never say the word, can’t.” She shared how her parents was adamant that there is more to life for her even after being advised by the doctor that

she will never be able to move or stand on her own. The parents decided to go for a second opinion and this time around the doctor said, “She can do more than just stand.” (I can’t remember the exact words but it was something to that nature). The parents were filled with joy knowing there were others who believed the same.

Holding strong to this mindset, she tried out everything that caught her interest. She was climbing trees, swimming, roller-skating (with her hands), played softball, basketball, volleyball and following her obsession with gymnastics, she went on to compete against able-bodied athletes and became a State Champion in power tumbling – she was crowned power tumbling champion of Illinois at age 11. Little did she know that her childhood icon who influenced and inspired her to start gymnastic in the first place is her biological sister – United States Gold Medalist in women’s gymnastics, Dominique Moceanu. The sisters reunited in 2008 and have stayed close ever since.

Jennifer has also travelled with Britney Spears World Tour and has headlined several shows in U.S. and Dubai.

Recalling the stories she shared, she kept emphasising that her achievements in life today are mainly because of the “Yes We Can” mindset that her parents had inculcated in her ever since she can remember. At times when she is faced with difficulties, she would remember the words uttered by her parents, which included the version from the children storybook, “The Little Engine That Could”.

The story was about a little blue engine that was the only one willing to push a stranded train over a difficult terrain to reach its destination. The little blue engine tried to overcome a seemingly impossible task while repeating the mantra "I think I can, I think I can" and in the end, he finally did

it. This was among the motivational words that helped her to overcome a lot of the supposedly “seemingly impossible” tasks for someone in her condition.

***Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion.
Impossible is not a declaration. It's a dare.
Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary.***
Muhammad Ali, heavyweight boxing legend

The “Yes We Can” can also be translated to the more driven and aggressive phrase – “Impossible is Nothing”.

Sometime in late 2015, two of my colleagues, Raduan and Faiz decided to go on a journey to lose weight – something a lot of us do when our mid-life crisis starts. My brother actually did it sometime in 2014 where he lost a significant amount of weight within a short period of time. My brother has always been conscious about his appearance, contrary to my personality.

I can't actually remember how fast or how much it was but the process he went through was drastic enough for us to notice. I shared my brother's success story with my colleagues proving it with “before and after” photos of my brother.

Without being able to recall the exact details, I might have exaggerated a bit in telling them that my brother lost about 10 to 15 kilograms within two months. At first, both of them thought it was something difficult and close to impossible to do but were nevertheless motivated to try to replicate the same.

They stuck to their plan and after two months, both of them lost 15 kilograms as targeted. Later on, I called my brother to confirm his experience and it was then that I realised he lost the same amount of weight over a

period of four months instead of two. This simply proves that if we set our mind that we can do it, we surely can.

2. “Entrepreneur” mindset

***If you want to be successful,
develop an entrepreneur mindset even if you are an employee***
Unknown

The entrepreneur mindset was one of the first mindset that was inculcated to me by my mentor in the early years of my career. As a salaried man, knowing that we work for someone or for an organisation, we tend to hold ourselves back and not give it all. Our working habits and culture reflect that of a salaried man – we lack the sense of responsibility and ownership; we tend to become wasteful, just follow the existing processes and accept any weaknesses it may have – these are some of the rather negative traits of a person who adopts a salaried man mindset.

By default, entrepreneurs are self-driven individuals. This is because they have to make it no matter what in order to survive – there is no other option. It is only natural that they would give their best in everything they do. As every asset and liability are owned by them, hence to entrepreneurs, each single cent counts. Motivated by the need to manage their financials in an economical efficient manner, they naturally develop a habit of being thrifty, most of the time in a positive way – spending only when necessary.

Because of huge competition and the need to make it, entrepreneurs always look for ways to innovate and improve themselves in order for them to remain competitive. These are some positive and driven traits of entrepreneurs. If an entrepreneur adopts a salaried man approach, their

business would have remained stagnant and never grow, eventually causing it to fail.

In short, entrepreneurial mindset is all about optimising opportunities, innovation and new value creation. Imagine if all salaried workers adopt such a mindset, an organisation would be able to grow leaps and bounds, creating a sustainable success.

Although an entrepreneur mindset mainly talks about innovation and value creation, at a fundamental level, it gives birth to people who truly care for an organization and treats it as if it is their own. Once this happens, the positive traits of an entrepreneur would start to come in naturally.

It is only natural for us humans to care more of our own belongings. Just look at how we treat public property and our own differently. It is so obvious that we care for our own possessions more. How many times did any of us actually sweep a public walkway? – For many of us, never.

The same concept applies here, when we truly care for something and feel a sense of belonging to it, we would give it our best and go the extra mile. A simple yet refreshing concept in life.

3. “Simply the Best” mindset

The name of this mindset is taken after the song “The Best”, originally sang by Bonnie Tyler, and made famous by the legendary entertainer, Tina Turner. The song has been used in many occasions, usually as a tribute to successful legends and to motivate people. When I used to help out with training programmes as a freelance trainer assistant back in 2004 to 2005, I can still remember the song being played repeatedly at the closure of team building programmes.

***To be a great champion you must believe you are the best.
If you're not, pretend you are.***

Muhammad Ali, heavyweight boxing legend

Basically, this mindset prepares us with the end in mind believing we are already the best or a champion. Once we are able to instill this mindset or spirit in us, our decisions and actions would reflect those of a champion, which increases the probability of us attaining success. It gives us the competitive boost to drive us with an eagerness to win, which results in us giving our best and refusing to give up even during difficult times. The mindset also builds a strong self-defense mechanism that protects us from any external or internal negative attacks intended to demotivate us.

Do what you have to do until you can do what you want to do.

Oprah Winfrey

These are some of the traits of the champions that we inherit once we adopt the driven and competitive “Simply the Best” mindset.

4. “Stay Focused” mindset

We are surrounded with so many distractions in life, which usually affects the delivery of our work both in terms of timing and quality. Along the way, as we get more and more distracted, we start to produce mediocre results and outcomes, which are then reflected in the quality of our work.

***To create something exceptional, your mindset must be relentlessly
focused on the smallest detail.***

Giorgio Armani, Italian fashion designer

There is no other solution to this problem except to exert focus in whatever we do. By being focused, we will be able to look at all the related items in detail and ensure that everything is in order. By religiously sticking to this thorough and disciplined process, eventually, our efforts would produce good results. Focus also allows us to expedite the process with minimal procrastination, enabling us to deliver results on time and if we are really focused, we will would even be able to do it far ahead of time.

5. “A Step Ahead” mindset

This is another mindset taught by my mentor during the early years of my career. The concept is simple – if we want to become a manager or a leader, we have to behave like one despite the fact that we are only an officer or a follower – being one step ahead of our current position.

This would mean that we would need to carry extra responsibilities or work that are beyond our current readiness. It would force us to find ways to prepare ourselves to become the leader we want to be. The self-created situation provides us with an opportunity for us to practise to be in the role without having to worry about the risks that comes with the actual role.

As we start to exhibit the proactive traits and behaviours that are unexpected of us, people would start to notice our value and *insha Allah*, in a matter of time, we will be given the role. It’s a win-win situation for us, we get to continuously improve ourselves and at the end, achieve our original goal.

6. “No What If” mindset

In life, it is common for us to wonder whether we have done the right thing or given our best in the things we do. The question “what if?” always

plays in our mind. To a certain extent, it is good to ask ourselves this question from time to time. It reminds us on the fundamental need for us to continuously identify ways to improve ourselves.

However, excessive and frequent questioning demotivates and stops us from moving forward as we build up a register of excuses for things not going our way. We were reminded on this by our beloved Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) –

Abu Hurairah reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: A strong believer is better and is more lovable to Allah than a weak believer, and there is good in everyone, (but) cherish that which gives you benefit (in the Hereafter) and seek help from Allah and do not lose heart, and if anything (in the form of trouble) comes to you, don't say: If I had not done that, it would not have happened so and so, but say: Allah did that what He had ordained to do and your "if" opens the (gate) for the Satan.

Muslim

By having this mindset, it helps us to remain focus on our objectives despite the challenges we may face along the way. It forces us to understand, see and believe that there is always a reason behind everything that happens to us. This gives us the will and energy to move forward.

7. “Problem Solver” mindset

I basically built my credibility using this mindset. My mentor used to tell people about this particular trait of mine. In his words, “the difference between Najib and others is that he comes to me with possible solutions and options, not just issues.”

It is easy to identify and highlight issues and problems; this is what most of us enjoy doing. Some of us take it a step further by pinpointing the blame on someone else. If not managed well, this vicious cycle creates an

unhealthy “dog-eat-dog” culture that would eventually kill the teamwork spirit within a team or an organisation.

Fix the problem, not the blame.

Japanese proverb

There are always two sides of the coin to everything and it depends on us on how we want to see it. If we choose to view things positively, there will always be a positive horizon even in the most problematic and chaotic situations. An intelligent and smart person would be able to see and realise that there are great opportunities lying around during troubled and problematic times. It gives us the opportunity to display our capabilities and prove our worthiness.

A problem is a chance for you to do your best.

Duke Ellington, composer, pianist and bandleader of jazz orchestras

There is another story about my brother that I can use to illustrate this important point. My brother is a Chartered Accountant – a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Australia. He had spent close to eight years in Melbourne before coming back to Malaysia to join a troubled composite insurance company as its Chief Internal Auditor. He was later appointed as its Chief Financial Officer (at the age of 27) in 2004.

The insurance company he joined was in a mess after going through a merger exercise involving three insurance companies that carried unprofitable and problematic business portfolios. I can still remember his long hours at the office, often coming back late at night to settle the issues at the office. He wasn't there long but because the situation was so dynamic

and fast paced, he learned a lot through the experience. His last major task before moving on to his next journey was selling off the life insurance license of the company, which involved active interaction with consultants, auditors as well as regulators.

In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.

Albert Einstein

His capabilities to adapt and manage problematic situations did not go unnoticed. In 2006, at the age of 29, he was invited to join the startup of a statutory body – Malaysian Deposit Insurance Corporation as its Chief Financial Officer. This would not have happened if he did not embrace the situation he was in before and make the best out of it.

8. “Be Different!” mindset

The norm produces stability and promotes equality. At the same time, it also limits creativity and innovation. Over time, if we let it sink in, it might cause complacency, which subsequently produces mediocre outcomes.

In order for us to stand out from the majority, the only way is for us to be different, in a good way.

When others choose to take a back seat, we choose to stand up and be counted.

When others choose to run away, we choose to stay back and fight.

When others choose to say no, we choose to say yes.

Being different has a lot to do with looking at things outside of the box or as we had discussed in an earlier chapter, to look at things without the box. We find new ways to improve things for the benefit of mankind – for things to be more effective and efficient.

I recently found this interesting quote on social media –

It's very easy to be different but very difficult to be better.

Jonathan Ive, Chief Design Officer of Apple Inc.

I must admit that to a certain extent, this quote is also true. There are times we choose to be different but in a wrong manner. There are also times we choose to be different but it does not bring much benefits; things remain the same just like before.

Becoming better takes a lot of efforts, as we have discussed in previous chapters. At the same time, I would also have to agree with the following quote –

Being different is sometimes better than being better.

Chris Ducker, British businessman

Although being different might not necessarily produce better results, at least it marks the start to change and development. With the right intention, even if we are unable to complete what we started, there will be people who will pick up what we left and continue to finish it.

Being different allows us to address the seven most expensive words in business, “we have always done it that way”, which can also easily be applied to other parts of life. In short, being different represents creativity and innovation.

***If you are not willing to risk the usual,
you will have to settle for the ordinary.***

Jim Rohn

9. “Give Our Best then Leave it to Allah” mindset

We get easily demotivated when things don't go our way. Some of us even decide to give up and not move forward anymore. It is normal for us to feel demotivated when things go wrong, especially when we have given our best – we are, after all, mere human beings rich with emotions. But we need to realise that sometimes, just giving our best is enough.

Ultimately, the outcome is not determined by us but by a power far greater than us, Allah. Everything and anything only happens in this world with His will and blessings, nothing will happen without it.

Nevertheless, we are reminded to put in the necessary efforts before leaving it to our Creator –

Anas bin Malik narrated that a man said: "O Messenger of Allah! Shall I tie it (my camel) and rely (upon Allah), or leave it loose and rely (upon Allah)?" He said: "Tie it and rely (upon Allah)."

Graded Hasan by At-Tirmidhi

The hadith beautifully explains the law of nature. In everything we do, we need to put in our efforts to our best ability first and only after that we leave it to Allah to determine the outcome. Whatever happens after that is Allah's will and remember, Allah is always fair – If we have given our best, the best will come back to us. If it does not turn out to be as we expected, remember there is always a reason behind everything and Allah knows best. The blessings in disguise will unfold itself over time.

Once we are able to adopt this key mindset, we are on the right path in life – there is nothing that we cannot take in.

These are some of the positive mindsets that I strongly hold on to. There are many other positive mindsets out there that we can adopt and equip ourselves with – the more the better.

It's all about the Mindset

Fundamentally, in whatever we do or face in life, what matters most is our mindset. The ability to define and control our mindset lies with us and no one else. It is up to us to fill our minds with positivity while protecting it from the negative influences that continues to come from within us or otherwise.

As discussed, mindset is all about preparation and preconditioning. The more well prepared we are, the stronger of a character we become.

Life is full of surprises and it takes a lot to take in all that it can offer. There are various angles and perspectives that we need to prepare ourselves for us to be able to do just that – which in the end comes back to us – our mindset.

Whether you think you can or you think you can't, you're right.

Henry Ford