Growth Mindset Icebreakers for 4-H Volunteers

Icebreaker Idea 1:

- Instruct the youth to get into partners. In partners, make a list of the things you feel you are good at and some of the things you do not feel you do well (suggest 3 for each).
- For each item explain your reasoning as to why you feel you are good or not good at each with your partner.
- Pick two items on your "not good" list and discuss what it would take for you to become better at each. Make a list of these ideas and be prepared to share.
- Debrief with the youth, highlighting that we all have areas that we do well in and we all have areas that we struggle, but with effort, practice, and a supportive learning environment (such as the club) we can overcome challenges.

Icebreaker Idea 2:

- Instruct the youth to get into groups. In groups discuss a time when you overcame a struggle in learning and learned to solve a problem or a new skill. (Club leader may want to share a story of a time they struggled with a problem or learning a new skill and how they overcame it.)
- Allow the youth time to discuss and report back.
- Highlight the ways in which the youth share they solved a problem, overcame a new learning skill or gained new skill, examples below:
  - Hard work
  - Strategies
  - Help from others
  - Persistence
- Share with the group that according to the science regarding our brain and learning, (refer to video if youth have viewed the video on brain science and resilience) with each of their examples of overcoming a new learning challenge or gaining a new skill that their effort and practice helped to create new connections in their brain, they “stretched their brain” when they applied hard work and effort to learn a new skill or concept.

Optional large group summary for either icebreaker: Think about what you discovered or learned about yourself as well as the others around you when you shared and heard stories of struggles, challenges, hard work, mistakes and success. The researcher that developed the term Growth Mindset, Carol Dweck, and her colleagues say that many of us view our intelligence as a fixed quantity, that they either do or don’t possess. Students or youth with this mindset tend to worry about proving this fixed mindset vs. improving it. Learning about growth mindset and how we can strengthen pathways in our brain with persistence and practice, including using our past struggles and applying what was learned to future challenges is a having a growth mindset. (Refer to the video on brain science & resilience.) The video provides science to help us understand the how and why! For Growth Mindset to work youth (and adults) need to understand the why.