



Change your mindset, improve your chess

What does it take to improve at chess when you hit a barrier or poor form?

In an attempt to answer that question, psychologist and growth mindset expert Professor Barry Hymer and Grandmaster Peter Wells have recently collaborated on a book that draws on a field of psychology which examines the crucial role that beliefs about the concept of 'ability' play in influencing our learning behaviour. This is the concept of mindset. As Barry explains, "Mindset theory is the brainchild of the Stanford developmental psychologist Professor Carol Dweck. It has been over four decades in the making and it continues to evolve and grow in response to new research findings, new challenges and new applications in fields as diverse as education, business, sport, art, interpersonal relationships and geopolitical conflict resolution – indeed, any conceivable domain of human achievement."

"A mindset is simply a belief about the mutability or otherwise of concepts such as intelligence. Individuals holding fixed mindsets for intelligence tend to believe that intelligence or talent is essentially stable and resistant to significant change. With this mindset, the provenance of intelligence is something of a mystery, but it's likely to lie in our genetic make-up. For individuals holding growth mindsets, by contrast, we see our skills or talents not simply as the fruits of some chromosomal alchemy but as an indicator of the extent to which we have seized on learning opportunities, persisted in the face of obstacles,

increased our effort, improved our learning strategies and so on. We don't deny the existence of such abstract concepts as 'intelligence' or 'ability', but we see these things as starting points, not as predetermined destinations."

Nowhere is this more apparent than in chess, where many gifted players fall prey to plausible but self-defeating beliefs and practices – and thereby fail to achieve the levels their 'natural' abilities predicted. Happily, however, the reverse can be true too; through learned dispositions such as grit, risk-taking, strategic thinking and a capacity for sheer hard work, players of apparently modest abilities can achieve impressive results.

Barry and Peter's highly acclaimed book, *Chess Improvement: It's all in the mindset*, is an engaging and instructive guide that sets out how the application of growth mindset principles can accelerate chess improvement.

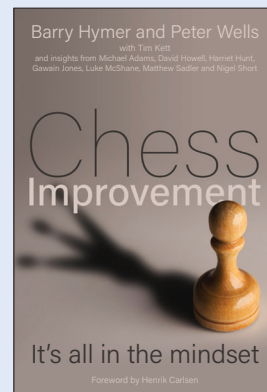
The authors draw on interviews conducted with members of England's medal-winning elite squad of players and provide a template for chess improvement rooted in the practical wisdom of experienced chess players and coaches. They also include practical illustrative descriptions from the games and chess careers of both developing and leading players, and pull together themes and suggestions in a way which encourages readers to create their own trajectories for chess improvement.

The book is suitable for any player looking to improve their chess, or coach or parent of an aspiring chess player.

Articles and interviews available

Barry and Peter are available for interview, expert comment or by-lined articles on a range of topics, such as:

- Mindset and chess
- Motivation: the gift that keeps on giving
- The role of challenge and feedback
- The right kind of effort: making practice purposeful
- Failure: why it's needed and how to deal with it
- Metacognition: there's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so
- Cooperation: the social reality of chess improvement



*Chess Improvement:
It's all in the mindset*
by Barry Hymer and Peter Wells

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Barry Hymer is Emeritus Professor of Psychology in Education at the University of Cumbria and has written numerous books and papers on the subject of teaching and learning. He is one of the UK's foremost authorities on the educational applications of mindset theory.

Grandmaster and FIDE Senior Trainer **Peter Wells** has over 30 years' professional experience in the chess world and has authored or co-authored nine well-received chess books. He has extensive coaching experience. As a player Peter has won three British Rapidplay titles.

For a review copy, a by-lined article or an interview with the authors, please contact:

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