

Increasing Grit

Developing inner strength is important to achieving our long-term goals. Grit - the perseverance that keeps us going - is a high predictor of success.

According to Prof Angela Duckworth of the University of Pennsylvania and author of the book, "*Grit: the Power of Passion and Perseverance*" there are four things that lead to the development of grit.

Pursue what interests you

It's hard to stick with something over the long haul if you don't care. The first step to grittiness is finding something that deeply interests you.

Practice, practice, practice

Hard work develops skill and we are more likely to stick with things we're good at. Scientists highlight the importance of what they call "*deliberate practice*". With persistent, focused and very diligent work on our weaknesses, we improve.

Find purpose

The difference between someone who is a hard worker and somebody who has real grit is that the person with real grit finds meaning in what they do. Often that meaning involves serving others. This is obviously particularly relevant to our work in schools. Duckworth's research found that "grittier people are dramatically more motivated than others to seek a meaningful, other – centred life".

According to Duckworth, "What ripens passion is the conviction that your work matters. For most people, interest without purpose is nearly impossible to sustain for a lifetime. It is imperative that you identify your work as both personally interesting and, at the same time, integrally connected to the well-being of others."

In her book she describes the responses of three bricklayers to the question, "What are you doing?" The first says, "I'm laying bricks." The second says, "I'm building a church." The third says, "I'm building the house of God."

The first bricklayer has a job. The second has a career. The third has a calling.

Helping others through your work doesn't just make you gritty - it also makes you more likely to love what you do. People who perform work that benefits society show higher levels of job satisfaction.

Have hope

Duckworth reports that to develop grit you need an *active* type of hope. You must believe things will improve because you're going to improve them. The optimism and confidence that we can make a difference and that things will be better, is important in the development of grit. It rests on the expectation that our own efforts can improve our future. "I have a feeling tomorrow will be better", is different from, "I resolved to make tomorrow better."

Research shows people without hope avoid bigger challenges, quit earlier and act helpless, the complete opposite traits of people with grit.

Two key factors in increasing grit are adopting a **growth mindset** and using **optimistic self-talk**. These two traits are the key to perseverance over adversity.

Key points

Grit and inner strength are important to achieving long-term goals

It's hard to stick with something over the long haul if you don't care

Persistent, focused and diligent work on our weaknesses will lead to improvement

Find meaning in what you do

Helping others through your work is likely to lead to higher levels of job satisfaction

Growth mindset and optimistic self-talk are keys

Try and fail, but don't fail to try.

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