

"Psychologists have spent decades searching for the secret of success, but Duckworth is the one who found it."  
—DANIEL GILBERT, author of *Stumbling on Happiness*

ANGELA  
DUCKWORTH

# GRIT

THE POWER *of* PASSION  
*and* PERSEVERANCE

THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

# Grit: The Power of Passion + Perseverance

7/14/22

## Part 1: What Grit is and Why it Matters

### Ch 1: Showing Up

- highly successful across any domain have
  - 1) determination - resilient + hardworking
  - 2) direction - very deep understanding of what they want
- Grit Scale
  - 1) perseverance: overcome setbacks, finish what begin
  - 2) passion - interest in certain ideas/projects over long time
- predicts West Point dropout better than IQ, fitness, leadership, etc
- our potential is one thing, what we do with it is quite another

### Ch 2: Distracted by Talent

- limits exist, but these boundaries where we eventually stop improving are simply irrelevant for vast majority of us
- "men possess amounts of resource, which only few exceptional individuals push to their extremes of use"
- "the human individual lives usually far w/in his limits, he possesses power which he habitually fails to use"
- naturalness bias: hidden prejudice against those who achieved because worked for it, preference for those because naturally talented
  - ↳ ex: companies hire McKinsey's "best and brightest" for exorbitant sums, when consultants lack domain knowledge/experience
- focus on talent distracts from factors at least as important, like effort/grit

### Ch 3: Effort Counts Twice

- Mundanity of Excellence: dazzling achievements are simply aggregate of countless ordinary, individual elements
- we can't easily see how training got someone to excellence ⇒
- we default to labelling person "natural"
- we prefer mystery to mundanity

- to call someone genius/magical  $\Rightarrow$  we don't have to compete, or compare ourselves and find lacking

Effort counts twice:

$$\text{talent} \times \text{effort} = \text{skill}$$

$$\text{skill} \times \text{effort} = \text{achievement}$$

- talent: how fast we improve in skill
- effort: both builds skill, and makes it productive
- strives: both improving skill, and employing it
- without effort, talent just unreal potential
- without effort, skill just what you could have produced

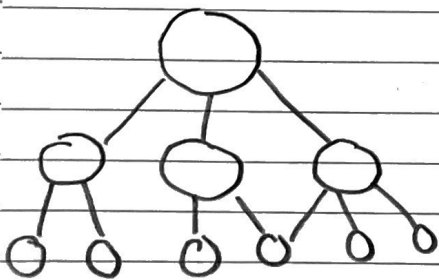
## Ch 4: How Gritty are You?

- Enthusiasm is common. Endurance is rare
- passion not simply infatuation, it is consistency over time
- high achievers steadily hold to goals over time

passion is a compass:

- takes time to build/tinker, eventually, guides you on long/winding road to where want to be

## The goal hierarchy



Top-level

- an end in itself, "life philosophy"

Mid-level

Low-level

- merely means to ends

Grit: holding same ultimate goal in abiding, loyal way

- ↳ most actions + mid- and low-level goals are related to ultimate goal

↳ so interesting/important that occupies most waking activity

## Example: pitcher Tom Seaver

- top-level goal: "pitch best. I possibly can day after day"
- this goal gives meaning / structure to all low level goals
  - ↳ determines what eats: cottage cheese > cookies for weight
  - ↳ determines what does: avoid shirtless in sun, burn could prevent practice
- rather than a grim life:
  - ↳ "pitching makes me happy, I've made up my mind what I want to do. I'm happy when I pitch well, so only do things that make me happy"

• lack of grit: having less coherent goal structures

## Warren Buffett Exercise

- 1) write 25 career goals
- 2) circle 5 highest priority
- 3) avoid other 20 at all costs.
  - ↳ These distract you from goals that matter more
  - ↳ Time and energy are limited

## Top- vs Low-level goals

- Top: written in ink (once you live / reflect enough to identify)
- Low: in pencil - (can get) revised or replaced
  - ↳ giving up is forgivable, for another more feasible / efficient / fun
- the higher-level a goal, the more important to be stubborn

High but not highest intelligence + greatest persistence achieves more than

Highest intelligence + somewhat less persistence

## Ch 5: Grit Grows

Grit only somewhat genetic

• study of 2000 UK twins

↳ perseverance 37% heritable

↳ passion 20% heritable

• remaining variation in grit in population from non-genetic factors

Grit scores increase w/ age :

- partly cultural forces (ex: Greatest Generations challenges)
- partly maturation over time

↳ thrust into new situations, we change / adapt out of necessity

↳ learn life lessons we don't forget

How Grit grows:

1) interest - intrinsically enjoying what you do

- captivated by endeavor as a whole (despite 1 or 2 aspects that are there)

2) practice : perseverance in daily discipline

- focused, challenge-exceeding-skill practice → mastery
- zeroing in on weaknesses, over and over
- resisting complacency regardless of current excellence
- "whatever it takes, I want to improve"

3) purpose : conviction that the work matters

- interest w/o purpose impossible to sustain over lifetime
- both personally interesting, + betterment of others

4) hope : defines every stage of grit

- keep going, even when there are doubts

## Part II: Growing Grit from the Inside Out

### Ch 6: Interest

- people more satisfied, perform better when jobs match personal interests
- most grit paragons spent years exploring different interests, despite career obsession w/ vocation
- falling in love w/ career isn't sudden epiphany
- interests are fragile, vague, need years <sup>refinement</sup> cultivation

#### How to find passion

- 1) interests not discovered thru introspection, but interactions w/ outside world
  - ↳ before hard work, career play
- 2) after interest discovery, lengthy period of interest development
  - ↳ subtleties + exhilarations realized over time
- 3) interests thrive w/ crew of supporters (parents, coaches, peers)

#### Steps to find passion

- ask: "where does mind wander?" "How do I enjoy spending time?"  
"what do I find unbearable?"
- then, trigger interests by going into world + doing something
  - ↳ don't be afraid to guess
  - ↳ don't be afraid to erase answer that isn't working

#### Early breadth of experience

- sampling  $\Rightarrow$  cross-train muscles + skills that eventually complement focused training
- in young athletes, sampling  $\Rightarrow$  early disadvantage, but long-term less injury + burnout

#### Fostering passion in kids

- overbearing parents erode intrinsic motivation
- rushing a beginner  $\Rightarrow$  bludgeon budding interest
- nobody works doggedly unless intrinsically interested
- kids that make own choice, more likely to develop passion
- all experts start as unsmiling beginners

## Ch 7: Practice

Kaizen: "continuous improvement" in Japanese

↳ resisting plateau of arrested development

Skill development requires both quantity and quality of practice

• World class expertise: ~10K hours over 10 years

### Deliberate Practice (basic requirements)

1) clearly defined stretch goal

↳ improve specific weakness

↳ narrow aspect of overall performance

2) full concentration + effort

• often when nobody's watching

3) immediate, informative feedback

• most interested in mistakes, so can fix

4) repetition w/ reflection/refinement

Deliberate practice is effortful

• working at edge of skills w/ full concentration exhausting

• world-class can only handle 3-5 hrs/day

• many take naps after training

↳ both athletes (physical stressors) + non-athletes (mental work)

• not intrinsically pleasurable

↳ performers reduce deliberate practice schedule on retirement

### Flow

• state of complete concentration at high challenge level yet effortless

Gritty people do more DP, and experience more flow

• DP: a behavior for preparation

• flow: experience for performance

Establish a routine for daily DP

• habit of practice at same time/place → easy to get started

• all experts: daily routine of solitary DP

• "there is no more miserable being, than one for whom 'beginning of every bit of work' must be decided anew each day"

## Ch 8: Purpose

purpose: "intention to contribute to well-being of others"

### Self-oriented vs other-oriented motivations

- Gritty people - as hedonistic / pleasure-seeking as any  
↳ yet dramatically more motivated to other-centered life
- self- and other- motivations not opposite ends continuum  
↳ completely independent, can have und, both, none

### Common sequence

- 1) a spark - something interested in
  - relatively self-oriented
- 2) learn self-disciplined practices
- 3) a revelation
  - discover problem in world that needs solving
  - often from personal loss/adversity
  - => an other-centered purpose

Work can be defined as a job, career, or calling

- job: necessity of life
- career: stepping stone
- calling: most important aspect of life

"Calling" is not associated w/ particular types of jobs

- rather, dependent on individual's connection to something > self
- => can go job → career → calling w/o changing occupation
- calling isn't fully formed thing you find  
↳ dynamic, continually ask how work connects to big picture

### How to cultivate purpose

- 1) reflect on how current work can positively impact society
- 2) consider small/meaningful ways you can change current work to enhance connection to core values
- 3) find inspiration in role model

## Ch 9: Hope

### Two kinds of hope

1) "I have a feeling tomorrow will be better"

- comes w/o burden of responsibility
- onus on universe to make things better

2) "I resolve to make tomorrow better"

← gritty hope

- our own efforts can improve our future
- nothing to do w/ luck
- everything to do w/ getting back up again

### 1964 Dog Shock Experiment

- 2 groups of dogs getting shock, only 1 group can turn it off
- next day, each dog in cage w/ shocks, w/ jumpable escape
- nearly all dogs from group w/ control learn to jump
- 2/3 of non-in-control dogs whimper / passively wait

- it isn't suffering that leads to helplessness
- it is suffering you don't think you can control

### Optimists vs Pessimists

• optimists - "I won't quit" response to adversity

• optimists just as likely to encounter bad events

↳ but diverge in their explanations

• optimists find causes of suffering that are:

↳ temporary

↳ specific

} "fixability" motivates to find solution

• pessimists:

↳ permanent - can't change

↳ pervasive - will influence lots of life situations

} turns minor complication

⇒ major catastrophe

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

- Henry Ford

• when you keep searching for ways to change situation, you stand chance of finding them

• when you stop searching, you guarantee you won't

## Growth vs Fixed Mindset

- growth: people can change, get smarter w/ opportunity, work, belief
- fixed: can learn new skills, but capacity to learn is fixed
  - ↳ no road is w/o bumps
  - ↳ eventually encounter setback → fixed mindset huge liability
  - ↳ will interpret as "I'm not good enough" instead of belief can learn to do better

## Growth or Fixed Mindset results in Feedback loop:

- fixed: pessimistic explanation of adversity
  - giving up on challenges + avoiding future ones
- growth: optimistic explanations
  - perseverance + seeking new challenges → even stronger

## Brain is adaptive

- like muscle gets stronger w/ use
- brain changes when struggle to master new challenge
- no time in life is brain fixed
- we maintain ability to grow myelin (insulating nerve sheath) thru adulthood

## Cruising thru life is dangerous

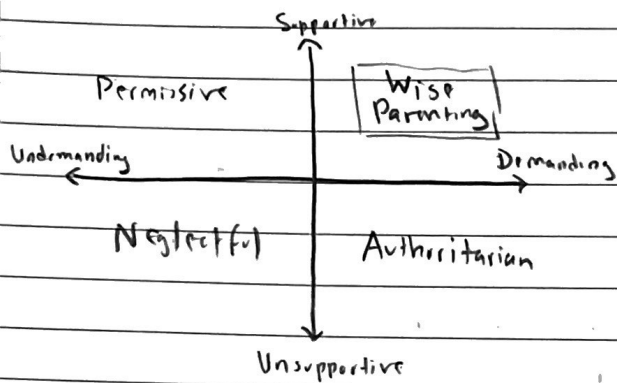
- long time, friction-free w/o failure
- no practice falling + getting back up again
- have many reasons to stick w/ fixed mindset
- as dangerous as experiencing trauma w/o control

## Steve Maller young rat experiments

- plasticity in brain circuitry
- if experience adversity (must be p.tent) in youth you develop different way of dealing w/ adversity
- brain areas have to rewire, doesn't happen w/ minor inconveniences

# Part III: Growing Grit from the Outside In

## Ch 10: Parenting for Grit



"child-centered"

- put children's interests first
- but don't feel child is always best judge of what to do / when to quit

Tough love must be selfless

- if parent just trying to control child, kid smells it out
- parent must leave themselves behind, look to see child's success

What matters most is messages child receives

- what could appear authoritarian (ex: no TV)
  - may not be coercive
- what may appear permissive (allowing his dropout)
  - may reflect different rules parents value as important

Not all children w/ psychologically wise parents end up gritty

- be not all wise parents model grittiness
  - ↳ need to drive passion / perseverance for long-term goal
- corollary: not all grit paragons had wise parents
  - ↳ but had someone provide confidence + support

Wise parent assessment Q's:

- supportive (warm)
  - ↳ parents and I do fun things
  - ↳ parents like me to tell them my troubles
- supportive (respectful)
  - ↳ child has right to own POV
  - ↳ child has privacy / freedom
- demanding
  - ↳ parents expect follow rules
  - ↳ parents expect child to do best can

Cody Coleman story

- switch flipped: "why bother?" → "why not?"
  - ↳ if I try I have a chance, if not I have no chance at all

## Ch 11: Playing Fields of Grit

### Extracurriculars for children

- Find something child enjoys outside of class
- in HS, require child stick w/ at least one activity for  $> 2$  yr
- ~~the~~ child's day is scripted
- Long-term benefits found:
  - ↳ ↑ chance graduates college, employed, make more money
  - ↳ even after controlling for SAT + grades
  - ↳ particular pursuit didn't matter, what mattered was commitment (2+ yrs) and progress (MVP, prize, leader)

### "Corresponsive principle"

- Situations enhance the characteristics that brought people there in first place
- Ex: hostile adolescents
  - → low prestige jobs → trouble paying bills → increases hostility → ↓ employment prospects
  - vs social kids → good jobs / financial security → more sociable

### "Learned Industriousness"

- flipside of learned helplessness
- association b/w hard work + reward can be learned
- kids trained on hard tasks, work harder on unrelated tasks

### "Hard Thing" rule in Angelas family

- each member must do hard thing
- must require deliberate practice
- can quit, but only at natural stopping pt
- you pick it yourself
  - ↳ make no sense to do hard thing not interested in

## Ch 12: A Culture of Grit

★ If you want to be grittier, find gritty culture and join it

### Culture

- defined by shared norms/values of group of people
- categorical allegiance: you either in group or out
  - ↳ Ex: to be a "Seahawk"
- Culture in which we live powerfully shapes identity

★ "The real way to become great swimmer is to join a great team"

- getting up at 4am everyday for swim practice seems extraordinary
- but, when everybody you know is getting up at 4am... it's nbd. It becomes habit

### Conformity ⇒ Grit

- you may not have much discipline, but if you see in a crowd doing certain things, you follow along
- hard way to find grit: by yourself
  - ↳ easy way: use conformity - basic human drive to fit in
- social multiplier effect
  - ↳ each person's grit enhances another's

### Long term, culture shapes identity

- "the way we do things" → "the way I do things"

### Our actions determined by our identity

- logic of anticipated cost/benefits doesn't explain our choices, logic of identity does
- don't ask "what are benefits/risks" of this
- we ask "who am I" "what does person like me do in situation"

Thinking of yourself as someone able to overcome tremendous adversity  
↳ leads to behavior that confirms that self-conception

Failures happen, how you respond determines whether you succeed

## UNC Soccer Team

- players must memorize 3 literary quotes
- not only memorize them, but understand + reflect
- this rescues core values (ex: our team works hard) from becoming banal

Individuals / teams need supportive, demanding leaders

- need coaching - to determine plan, next steps, goals

## Ch 13: Conclusion

What we accomplish in marathon of life depends largely on grit

- passion + perseverance for long term goals
- obsession  $\checkmark$  talent distract us from this

Two ways to grow grit

- inside-out
  - ↳ cultivate interests, daily deliberate practice, connect work to other-centric purpose, learn to maintain hope
- outside-in
  - ↳ through parents, coaches, friends

Gritty work/success does not compromise happiness

- grit linearly associated  $\checkmark$  increased life satisfaction

Complacency has it's charms

- but none worth trading for fulfillment of reaching potential

We all face limits (in talent, opportunity)

- but most often, these limits are self-imposed
- we fail and conclude we've hit ceiling of possibility

To be gritty is to:

- hold fast to interesting, purposeful goal
- invest day after week after year in challenging practice