



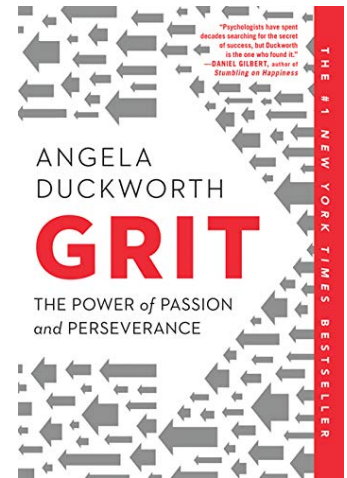
DODReads Executive Summary

Grit

The Power of Passion and Perseverance

Thesis: Grit, the combination of passion and perseverance, is the key to achieving long-term success in any field or endeavor.

- **Angela Duckworth:** Dr. Angela Duckworth is a 2013 MacArthur Fellow and an associate professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. She is an expert in non-IQ competencies, including grit and self-control. It was from these studies that she created her own Character Lab at the University of Pennsylvania. A highly sought-after international speaker, her TED talk on grit has been viewed by over 10 million people.
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[Grit](#)

Why this book is important for the Military Professional: Grit is cited as being the single best predictor of whether a Cadet at West Point will make it through their rigorous 4 years of training and education to commission. The importance of Grit cannot be understated, but it can be understood and cultivated. By emphasizing the significance of sustained effort and passion in the face of adversity, leaders can develop strategies to foster resilience, build cohesive teams, and navigate complex missions effectively. *Grit* offers actionable insights and practical guidance to cultivate this mindset necessary for enduring success.

Grit / (ˈgrɪt) noun. 4. Firmness of mind or spirit: unyielding courage in the face of hardship or danger: [fortitude](#)

Part One: What Grit Is and Why It Matters

Grit is the combination of **passion** and **perseverance** over the long term, characterized by the ability to maintain effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus.

- **Grit** predicts success across various domains, including academics, sports, business, and the military.
- Individuals with high levels of **grit** are more likely to overcome obstacles and achieve success compared to those who rely solely on talent. This challenges the belief that success is determined by innate ability.
- **Grit** is a critical factor in achieving excellence and mastery, allowing individuals to persevere through challenges and setbacks to reach their full potential.
- Those that display the highest levels of **grit**:
 - Are resilient and hard-working - they have **determination**.
 - Know in a deep way what it is that they want - they have **direction**.

Talent alone is not the sole predictor of success. Instead, **sustained effort** and **resilience** are critical factors in achieving one's goals.

- The secret to outstanding achievement is not talent but a special blend of **passion** and **persistence**.
- Your **potential** is one thing. What you do with it is quite another.
- Without **effort**, your **talent** is nothing more than your **unmet potential**.
- The focus on talent distracts us from something that is at least as important, and that is **effort**.

Talent is how quickly your skills improve when you invest effort. **Achievement** is what happens when you take your acquired skills and use them.

$$\text{Talent} \times \text{Effort} = \text{Skill}$$

$$\text{Skill} \times \text{Effort} = \text{Achievement}$$

When you consider individuals in identical circumstances, what each achieves depends on just two things, **talent** and **effort**. Talent matters, but effort factors into the calculations twice!

Effort builds skill. At the same time, **effort** makes skill **productive**.

- When you turn your back on a commitment, your effort plummets to zero. As a consequence, your skills stop improving, and at the same time, you stop producing anything with whatever skills you have.
- Someone twice as talented but half as hardworking as another person might reach the same level of skill but still produce dramatically less over time.
- Without effort, your talent is nothing more than your unmet potential. Without effort, your skill is nothing more than what you could have done but didn't.

Grit is about working on something you care about so much that you're willing to stay loyal to it. **Enthusiasm** is common, but **endurance** is rare.

How **gritty** you are at this point in your life might be different from how gritty you were when you were younger.

- **Grit** is not fixed and can be cultivated and developed over time through intentional **effort** and **practice**.
- Developing **grit** involves identifying and **pursuing** a clear, overarching goal or **purpose** that ignites **passion** and commitment.

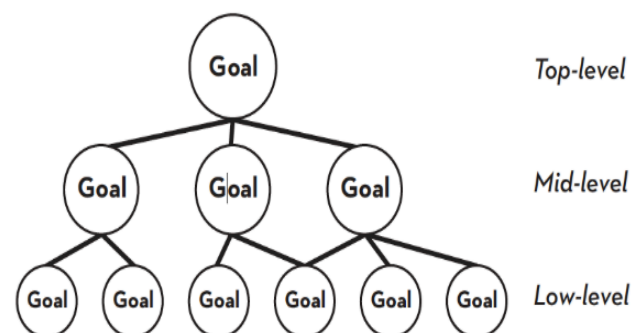
[Take the Grit Test now to get your results.](#)

Find your **top-level goal**. The top-level goal is not a means to any other end. It is, instead, an end in itself.

- Use your **top-level goal** as a compass that gives direction and meaning to all the goals below it.
- The more your goals are part of the same goal hierarchy—important because they then serve the same ultimate concern—the more focused your **passion**.
- Grit is about holding the same **top-level goal** for a very long time.

The three-step process for prioritizing goals:

1. Write down a list of twenty-five career goals.
2. Do some soul-searching and circle the five highest-priority goals.
3. Look at the twenty goals you didn't circle and avoid at all costs.
 - These are what is distract you; they eat away time and energy, taking your eye off the goals that matter more.
 - Every successful person has to decide what to do in part by deciding what not to do.



Paragons of **grit** have four traits in common and they tend to develop, over the years, in a particular order.

1. **Interest. Passion** begins with intrinsically enjoying what you do.
2. **Practice. Perseverance** to do things better than you did yesterday. Practice that leads to mastery.
3. **Purpose.** What ripens **passion** is the conviction that your work matters. You must identify your work as both personally interesting and, at the same time, integrally connected to the well-being of others.
4. **Hope.** Hope is a rising-to-the-occasion kind of **perseverance**. From the very beginning to the very end, it is inestimably important to learn to keep going even when things are difficult, even when we have doubts.

Part Two: Growing Grit from the Inside Out

Interest

- **Passion** for your work is a little bit of **discovery**, followed by a lot of **development**, and then a lifetime of **deepening**.
- The initial discovery of interest often goes unnoticed by the discoverer.
- Our early interests are fragile, vaguely defined, and in need of energetic, years-long cultivation and refinement.
- Even the most accomplished of experts start out as unserious beginners.
 - Experts and beginners have different motivational needs. At the start of an endeavor, you need encouragement and freedom to figure out what you enjoy. You need small wins.
 - Rush a beginner and you'll bludgeon their budding interest.
- **Interests** must be triggered again and again. Find ways to make that happen and have **patience**.
- Seek out other people who share your interests. Find an **encouraging mentor**.

Practice

- **Grit** is not just about the quantity of time devoted to interests, but also the quality of time. Not just more time on task, but also better time on task.
- There are different kinds of positive experiences:
 - The thrill of getting better
 - The ecstasy of performing at your best
- **Flow** is a state of deep immersion and absorption in an activity, characterized by intense focus, heightened awareness, and a sense of effortless action.
 - It occurs when the challenges of a task match an individual's skills, resulting in a state of optimal performance and engagement.
 - It causes a distortion of time, with individuals feeling completely absorbed in the present moment.
 - Cultivating **flow** involves creating conditions that support deep engagement and focus, such as minimizing distractions and optimizing the environment for concentration.
- **Deliberate Practice** is an intense focused effort at improving specific performance. Its basic parts are:
 - A clearly defined stretch goal.
 - Full concentration and effort.
 - Immediate and informative feedback.
 - Repetition with reflection and refinement.
- When you have a habit of practicing at the same time and in the same place every day, you just do.
- **Change** the way you experience practice, **embrace** the challenge rather than **dreading** it.

Purpose

- **Purpose** is a tremendous source of **motivation**.
 - Most gritty people see their ultimate aims as deeply connected to the world beyond themselves.

- The goals you achieve are likely connected in some way, shape, or form to the **benefit of other people**.
- People who claim “my work makes the world a better place” are overwhelmingly more satisfied with their jobs and their lives overall.
- Everyone has a spark that’s the very beginning of **purpose**. That spark is something you’re interested in.
- Seeing that someone needs our help isn’t enough; purpose requires a second revelation: “I personally can make a difference.” This **inspires** people to **take action**.
- Think about how, even in small ways, you can change your current work to enhance its connection to your **core values**.

Hope

- **Grit** rests on the expectation that our efforts can improve our future.
- When you keep searching for ways to change your situation for the better, you stand a chance of finding them. When you stop searching, assuming they can’t be found, you guarantee they won’t.
- With a **fixed mindset**, you’re likely to interpret setbacks as evidence that you don’t have “the right stuff”—you’re not good enough. With a **growth mindset**, you believe you can learn to do better.
- Developing **grit** requires developing a **growth mindset**, believing that abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. Words can reinforce this in yourself and others:

Undermines Growth Mindset and Grit

“You’re a natural! I love that!”

“Well, at least you tried”

“Great job! You are so talented”

“This is hard, don’t feel bad if you can’t do it”

Promotes Growth Mindset and Grit

“You’re a *learner*! I love that!”

“That didn’t work. *Let’s talk about how you approached it and what might work better*”

“Great job! *What’s one thing you could improve on*”

“This is hard. Don’t feel bad if you can’t do it *yet*”

- Adopting a **gritty perspective** involves recognizing that people get better at things—they **grow**.
- **Optimism** is associated with resilience, as it enables individuals to bounce back from setbacks and **persevere** in the pursuit of their **goals**.
 - Research suggests that optimistic individuals are more likely to experience better physical health, psychological well-being, and overall life satisfaction.
 - **Optimistic self-talk** focuses on highlighting strengths, acknowledging progress, and reframing challenges as opportunities for **growth**.

Growth Mindset ⇨ **Optimistic Self-talk** ⇨ **Perseverance Over Adversity**

- **Gritty** individuals possess a sense of **resilience**, bouncing back from failures and setbacks with renewed determination and resolve.

Part Three: Growing Grit from the Outside In

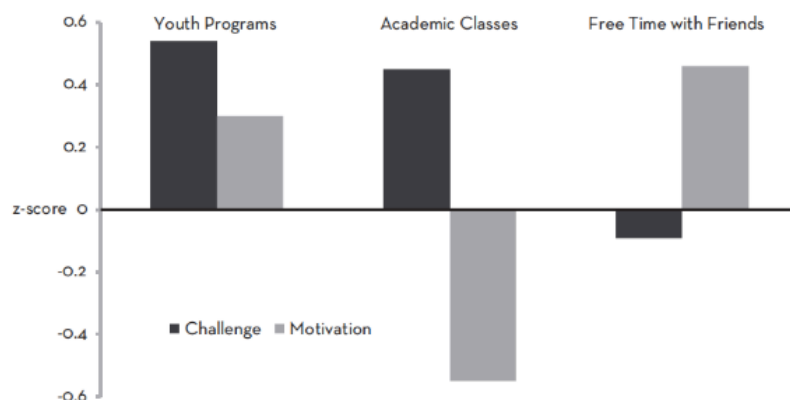
Parenting For Grit

- **Parents, coaches, and mentors** play critical roles in shaping **grit** in others by providing **support, encouragement, and opportunities for growth**.
- Nurturing **grit** in others involves fostering a sense of **autonomy** and **agency**, allowing individuals to take **ownership** of their goals and actions.
- Providing **constructive feedback** and guidance is essential for fostering **grit** in others, and helping individuals recognize their strengths and areas for improvement.

- As much as children need **freedom**, they also need **limits**.
- Regardless of the messages parents aim to deliver, the message their children **receive** is what **matters**.
- If you want to bring forth grit in your child:
 - Ask how much **passion** and **perseverance** you have for your **own life goals**.
 - Then ask yourself how likely it is that your approach to parenting encourages your child to **emulate you**.
 - If the answer to the first question is “a great deal,” and your answer to the second is “very likely,” you’re already **parenting for grit**.

The Playing Fields of Grit

- Children thrive when they spend at least some part of their week doing **hard things that interest them**.
- When kids are playing sports or music or rehearsing for the school play, they’re both **challenged** and having **fun**. There’s no other experience in the lives of young people that reliably provides this combination of **challenge** and **intrinsic motivation**.
- **Gritty** leaders lead by example, demonstrating **resilience**, **perseverance**, and **commitment** in their own pursuits.



The HARD THING rule:

- Everyone must have a hard thing.
- You cannot quit until it is over.
- You choose your own hard thing.

A Culture of Grit

- Creating a **gritty culture** and environment that supports individuals in their pursuit of long-term goals.
- Organizations, schools, and communities can **cultivate grit** through shared **values**, **norms**, and **practices** that promote **perseverance** and **resilience**.
- If you want to be grittier, **find a gritty culture and join it**.
- Gritty cultures prioritize **effort**, **resilience**, and **growth**, fostering an environment where individuals feel empowered to pursue their passions and overcome challenges.
- Two key factors promote excellence in individuals and in teams:
 - Deep and rich support
 - Relentless challenge to improve

*This executive summary is composed of both verbatim excerpts and summarizations from **Grit** by Angela Duckworth.*

Resources and Additional Reading

1. Mindset: The New Psychology of Success
2. Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us
3. Hidden Potential: The Science of Achieving Greater Things
4. Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise

Thanks to Adam Smith for writing this Executive Summary. Adam is a United States Air Force Pilot and former Headquarters Air Force Staff officer.

If your office or command is in need of one book or a hundred we would be honored to [source them](#)