



Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance

Angela Lee Duckworth
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Rating

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9 Innovation
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Take-Aways

- “Grit,” or diligence in pursuing far-off goals, is the best predictor of success in school and other endeavors.
- A better understanding of grit may strengthen efforts to decrease dropout rates and improve education.
- Talent doesn’t make people gritty. In fact, some of the most gifted individuals lack commitment and drive.
- Experts know very little about how to develop or foster grit. This socially important topic deserves further study.
- A concept called the “growth mind-set” may provide clues to building grit. This idea states that learning ability is fluid, not fixed, and can improve with effort.

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Review

In this pithy TED Talk, management consultant turned schoolteacher turned psychologist Angela Lee Duckworth explores the value of diligence. She asks, “What if doing well in school and in life depends on much more than your ability to learn quickly and easily?” Indeed, “grit,” and not IQ or talent, is the best predictor of success, says Duckworth. Science offers few ideas for how to develop or foster this quality, so she makes a compelling case for further research. Whatever your personal or professional goals, grit will propel you toward, and across, the finish line, so *getAbstract* recommends devoting a few minutes of your time to this essential lesson on staying power.

Summary

“Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit is having stamina.”

“The most shocking thing about grit is how little we know, how little science knows, about building it.”

“We need to take our best ideas, our strongest intuitions, and we need to test them. We need to measure whether we’ve been successful, and we have to be willing to fail, to be wrong, to start over again with lessons learned.”

Educators often rely on IQ to predict success among students, but what if that’s the wrong metric? Seventh-grade math teacher Angela Lee Duckworth observed that her high achievers did not always have stellar IQs. Moreover, some of her smartest pupils lagged behind their classmates. She knew the math lessons were not beyond any child’s grasp, so some other factor was influencing learning. Duckworth concluded that schools should better understand the psychology of learning. She became a psychologist and researched what types of people overcome great challenges and why. Across studies that involved West Point cadets, National Spelling Bee contestants, novice teachers and corporate salespeople, one factor linked the successful. That factor wasn’t attractiveness, IQ, social intelligence or robust health. Rather, “grit” was the common denominator. People with this quality devotedly pursue far-off goals and approach life as a “marathon, not a sprint.”

Grit plays a role in education, too. In Chicago’s public high schools, thousands of juniors completed questionnaires assessing their grit. More than a year later, the grittier students were more likely to graduate. Grit proved more influential than “family income, standardized achievement test scores” and even impressions of school safety. Though grit may be significant in reducing dropout rates, experts know very little about how to develop or increase it. Talent doesn’t make people gritty. In fact, some of the most gifted individuals lack commitment and drive. But Stanford University’s Dr. Carol Dweck has identified a path forward in grit research. She conceived the idea of a “growth mind-set,” the notion that learning ability is fluid, not fixed, and can improve with effort. Her research demonstrates that children are more likely to push through their individual failures if they learn about the brain and how it grows with each challenge. They persevere because they understand that failure is temporary.

The growth mind-set is merely the start of necessary research into grit. Society must “be gritty about getting our kids grittier.” That means diligently testing the most promising theories about how to develop and foster grit. It requires continually being willing to fail – and also to begin afresh.

About the Speaker

Formerly a seventh-grade teacher, **Angela Lee Duckworth** is an assistant professor in the psychology department at the University of Pennsylvania.