Do you have problems finishing things? Do new ideas distract you from previous ones? Do you get derailed by setbacks more often than you would like?

Then you could use more grit. In *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* book, Angela Duckworth shows how grit – the combination of passion and perseverance – distinguishes high achievers, and why talent isn’t as important as most people think.

If you’re not as gritty as you like, don’t fret – this *Grit* summary teaches the 4 major components of grit, and how to develop grit in your kids and teammates.
1-Page Summary of Grit

Grit is the combination of passion and perseverance

**Passion** is the consistency of goals held over long periods of time. It is NOT intensity or enthusiasm held for a brief moment. It is endurance.

**Perseverance** is the ability to overcome setbacks, put in hard work, and finish things you’ve started.

Grit predicts success, even when controlling for talent or IQ. That is, between two people of the same talent level, a grittier person will enjoy more success.

Make no mistake: talent and IQ are still important and still correlate with success. However, they are not *sufficient* for high achievement. If you are talented, you get the most mileage by combining talent and hard work. And if you are less talented, you can make up for it with grit, exceeding someone with more talent who works less hard.

**We tend to fetishize talent because it protects our ego** – if other people’s successes are due to inborn talent, then we are at an inherent disadvantage, and thus we don’t have to feel bad about not measuring up. We look at Albert Einstein or Tom Brady and think, well they were born with it – there’s no way I could do what they do – thus I don’t need to work hard.

Effort counts twice: skill = talent x effort. Achievement = skill x effort. The more effort you apply, the more your skill rises, and the more you achieve.

Grit is changeable. It increases with age, and short-term experiments show that it can be influenced.

There are 4 components to grit:

**Interest:** enjoy what you’re doing

**Practice:** conduct deliberate practice to improve on your weaknesses and continuously improve

**Purpose:** believe that your work matters and improves the lives of others

**Hope:** believe in your capacity for achievement and ability to overcome difficulties. Growth mindset

The most successful parenting style is both supportive and demanding. The two do not need to trade off with each other. Listen to your kids, talk to them, respect their viewpoints. Also, set ambitious goals for them, punish them for breaking rules. This is also true of leadership and coaching.

To become more gritty, join a gritty culture. The social norms will force you to be gritty.
Criticisms of Grit

I like this Grit book. The concepts are powerful, and it provides useful frameworks for how to improve grit.

That said, it suffers from a few major problems that plague many nonfiction books based on early research:

The biggest problem is the unclear causality of grit. Famously, “correlation does not mean causation.” The book keeps repeating the idea that grittier people are more successful. Sure, but maybe it’s coincidental – some qualities made them gritty, but they also made them more successful. Or the causation is the reverse – being successful for some reason made them gritty. In other words, the book does not prove that 1) you can increase grit, 2) increasing grit increases outcomes.

The gold standard for proving causation is the double-blind, randomized control trial. Angela Duckworth says that these haven’t been done for ethical reasons (you can’t give a group of kids a gritty intervention and a control group nothing), but this is unsatisfying.

That said, the evidence is suggestive. And anecdotally, from my personal life, grit can be improved.

Like most self-help books written for the popular press, Grit usually doesn’t quantify the magnitude of the effects, or the predictive power of grit. This often makes the effects seem larger than actually reported in the research, and makes you think grit matters more than the science shows it does. I blame the editor for this one. For the pivotal studies, I go back to the original paper and show the original data, so you can make up your own mind.


But compare this to the original paper: physical fitness (1.72) and general intelligence (1.46) were better predictors than grit (1.32)

Example: in a spelling bee “grittier kids went further in competition. Verbal intelligence also predicted getting further in competition. But there was no relationship at all between verbal IQ and grit. What’s more, verbally talented spellers did not study any more than less able spellers, nor did they have a longer track record.”

In reality, the published research report shows that verbal IQ is MUCH more of a contributor to success than grit is (OR = 2.22 for verbal IQ compared to OR = 1.41 for grit, meaning someone with a 1-standard deviation higher verbal IQ has 122% better odds of advancing further in the spelling bee.) Furthermore, when grit and verbal IQ are put in the same model, grit is no longer a significant contributor.

Some of the seminal studies were done with elite populations (West Point cadets, spelling bee finalists). It’s unclear how it extends to the whole population.

Grit doesn’t apply to all pursuits. Duckworth found that grit was not a predictor of staying married in women. I wish every nonfiction book had an appendix chapter saying: “what is the evidence that this concept isn’t valid?”
Preface

Angela Lee Duckworth is the child of Chinese immigrants. Her father, Ying Kao Lee, was a chemist and research fellow at Dupont. Growing up, her dad was obsessed with how smart he and his family was, and he often told her, “you’re no genius!”

Later in life, Duckworth wins the MacArthur Fellowship, often called the “genius grant,” ironically for the theory that accomplishment may depend more on passion and perseverance than inborn talent (which is the subject of this Grit summary).

Part 1: What Grit Is and Why It Matters

Chapter 1: Showing Up

First, our Grit summary lays the groundwork: where has grit been researched to make a difference in success?

Angela Duckworth’s early research tried to predict success in a variety of fields, like the military, sales, business, and sports. She found that talent and luck were incomplete explanations for success. People who showed early potential sometimes dropped out before they showed signs of full potential. And some very successful people didn’t start off showing the most promise [like Tom Brady].

Instead of talent, Duckworth formulated the idea of grit: the combination of passion and perseverance. Passion means long-term adherence to a goal and consistency of interest, as opposed to being a dilettante and changing your goal mercurially. Perseverance means overcoming setbacks, hard work, and finishing things, rather than giving up.

[There is a similar trait called conscientiousness, one of the Big Five personality traits. Conscientiousness includes self-discipline and self-control. Grit improves on conscientiousness by including the retention of the same high-order goals over long stretches of times. This allows grit to have greater predictive validity over conscientiousness itself.]

For gritty people, “there was no realistic expectation of ever catching up to their ambitions. In their own eyes, they were never good enough. They were the opposite of complacent. And yet, in a very real sense, they were satisfied being unsatisfied. Each was chasing something of unparalleled interest and importance, and it was the chase— as much as the capture— that was gratifying. Even if some of the things they had to do were boring, or frustrating, or even painful, they wouldn’t dream of giving up. Their passion was enduring.”

As a researcher in psychology, Duckworth showed that grit predicts success in a variety of fields:

- West Point dropouts: New cadets endure an intense 7-week bootcamp called Beast Barracks. 1 in 20 drop out. The admissions criteria used for West Point, the Whole Candidate Score (which consists of

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SAT score, high school rank, and physical fitness), didn’t reliably predict who would drop out. In contrast, grit predicted completion better than any other predictor – candidates with 1 standard deviation higher grit were 60% more likely to finish summer training.

- Grit also did not correlate with Whole Candidate Score.
- [However, grit was not the best predictor of 1st-year GPA – the Whole Candidate Score was, at r = .64 compared to r = .06 for grit. And when Whole Candidate Score and grit were put in the same model, grit was no longer predictive (r=-.01)]

- Army Special Operations Forces: 42% of candidates withdrew during the Selection Course. Grit predicted retention (OR = 1.32).
  - [However, physical fitness (OR = 1.72) and intelligence (OR = 1.46) predicted retention even better.]
- Sales: Grit predicted salespeople retention better than other personality traits – extroversion, emotional stability, conscientiousness. Someone with 1 standard deviation higher grit showed 40% greater retention at the end of 6 months.
- College GPA: Among U Penn undergrad psych majors, Grit was associated with higher GPAs \( (r = .25) \), and had a stronger effect when controlling for SAT scores \( (r = .34) \).
  - Grit was associated with lower SAT scores \( (r = -.20) \). Possibly because the lower IQ students (assuming SAT and IQ are correlated) had to have higher grit to get into U Penn.
  - [Unsurprisingly, SAT score itself also predicted GPA \( (r = .30) \)]
- Graduate degrees: adults who completed a graduate degree were grittier than those who’d only graduated from 4-year colleges
  - Adults who completed 2-year colleges showed higher grit than 4-year colleges too. Possibly because the dropout rate at 2-year colleges is very high, so those who make it through are especially gritty.
- Spelling bees: grittier kids went further in the Scripps spelling bee, mediated by studying more hours and competing in more study bees. From the result of OR = 1.41, a finalist with grit score a standard deviation higher grit was 41% more likely to advance to further rounds.
  - [However, verbal IQ was even more predictive, with OR = 2.22 – finalist with 1 standard deviation higher grit was 122% more likely to advance.]

In all these studies, grit had little relationship to IQ score, suggesting it is an independent character trait. And typically grit was able to predict success even after accounting for IQ, meaning it contributes to success above and beyond IQ.

[the below notes are taken from other chapters and put here for organization in this Grit summary]

Grit is important. Historically, high-achieving people have been known to be dogged in their pursuit of achievement. Darwin wrote that “men did not differ much in intellect, only in zeal and hard work” and was
considered as someone not of superhuman intelligence but one who “kept thinking about the same questions long after others would move on to different problems.”

In a 1926 study of accomplished figures from history, Catharine Cox inferred their IQs from their accomplishments and categorized the most eminent geniuses and the least eminent geniuses. The “most eminent geniuses” (Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton) had an average IQ of 146, and the “least eminent geniuses” (Giuseppe Mazzini, Joachim Murat) had an average IQ of 143. IQ didn’t distinguish these two groups, but “persistence of motive” did. Cox found that “high but not the highest intelligence, combined with the greatest degree of persistence, will achieve greater eminence than the highest degree of intelligence with somewhat less persistence.” [This study is old and questionable for its estimation of IQ, but I’ll take it at face value.]

Chapter 2: Distracted by Talent

If grit is so important, why do we collectively obsess so much over talent?

When surveyed directly, Americans are more likely to point to hard work as the key to success, rather than talent. But when asked indirectly, we tend to show a “naturalness bias.” Two research studies:

- **Professional musicians were given profiles of two pianists.** One profile described talent-based achievement, and the other effort-based achievement. The musicians then listened to recordings for each pianist (even though the recordings were actually different parts of the same pianist playing the same piece), then rated the two pianists on a few factors.
  - The talent-based pianist received significantly higher ratings for “talent compared to other professionals,” “likelihood of success in the future,” and “value as an employee” (the mean rating for the talent pianist was 7.06, the mean for the effort pianist was 6.73). The effort-based pianist won only on one factor: “ability to overcome obstacles to career” (5.50 for talent, 6.02 for effort).

- **Study participants were given one of two profiles of entrepreneurs.** One emphasized natural talent, and the other emphasized dedicated effort. The profile was identical, save for this sentence: “From the very beginning, Charles was able to demonstrate a keen sense of the market.” vs “From this experience, Charles was able to gain a keen sense of the market.” Study participants then heard the same recording of a business pitch.
  - The talent-based entrepreneur was given higher scores for achievement potential (7.36 vs 6.82, talent vs effort) and business pitch (5.48 vs 4.81, talent vs effort).

- In a conjoint analysis, participants were given randomized profiles of entrepreneurs that varied in five dimensions (e.g. an IQ of 160, 130, or 100; leadership experience of 8, 5, or 2 years; source of achievement as “natural” or “striver”).
Participants rated these in declining order of importance: investor capital raised (30.5% importance), IQ (20.9%), management skills by percentile (24.6%), leadership experience (13.7%), source of achievement (10.3%).

Even though natural vs striver had the lowest importance, it still had a large effect: seasoned entrepreneur subjects were willing to give up 4.52 years of leadership experience, 8.95% in management skills, 28.30 points in IQ, and $39,143 in invested capital to invest in a “natural” entrepreneur.

Thus, even though the differences are small (within 15% of rating), they still show a significant bias that can tip the scale in a decision. Duckworth also gives the example of comparing Hillary vs Bill Clinton. Bill seems to be a gifted politician, while Hillary is competent but has to work hard to fit the role. The implication is that she’ll never be his equal.

So why do we obsess so much over talent?

Nietzsche argues, “our vanity promotes the cult of the genius. For if we think of genius as something magical, we are not obliged to compare ourselves and find ourselves lacking. To call someone ‘divine’ means: ‘here there is no need to compete.’”

In other words, **if talent is the major contributor to success, we shouldn’t feel worse about ourselves when seeing high achievers.** “No matter how hard I worked, I wouldn’t be able to do what [X] does, so there’s really no point in trying” we think, and thus we are excused from effort. This is a fatalistic view, as though results were granted to us by fate, based on what we’re born with.

This is a warped view of reality, however. Focusing on talent can be destructive. Malcolm Gladwell critiques the talent mindset in employment as contributing to a narcissistic culture where people are pushed to prove they’re smarter than everyone else. At Enron, this encouraged short-term performance and showing off but discouraged long-term growth. Similarly, Enron had a practice of firing the bottom 15% of performers annually, which rewarded deception and discouraged integrity.

Angela Duckworth adds that obsessing over talent implicitly sends the message that other factors like grit don’t matter as much as they really do. This can bias us against hard-working but less talented people who could end up achieving even more.

“The human individual lives far within his limits; he possess powers of various sorts which he habitually fails to use. Men the world over possess amounts of resource, which only very exceptional individuals push to their extremes of use.” – William James

[Part of the reason we obsess about talent too is that it actually does produce results – in the Chapter 1 summary, I share studies showing that intelligence correlates well with overall success. However, Duckworth is saying more that we tend to discount grit more than we should.]
Chapter 3: Effort Counts Twice

Here is Angela Duckworth’s central model on why effort matters so much:

\[
\text{talent} \times \text{effort} = \text{skill}
\]

\[
\text{skill} \times \text{effort} = \text{achievement}
\]

Talent equates to how quickly your skills improve when you apply effort.

Achievement is the result of using your skill and applying effort.

In other words:

- Someone of lower talent can catch up in skill level by applying effort
- Someone of lower talent can reach the same skill level, but achieve more over time by applying the skill with more effort
- Someone of higher talent achieves less by putting in less effort

Here’s a simplistic model of what total achievement looks like, for a natural vs striver:

![Graph showing achievement vs effort]

(This shows achievement = talent x effort\(^2\). In reality skill likely follows a logistic S-curve that does not respond linearly to effort at later points.)

The higher talent person expends some amount of effort and stops.

**It takes longer for the lower talent, higher grit person to rev up, but once she does, she catches up in achievement and exceeds the higher talent person.**

For example, a potter improves her skill by applying effort and trying to make pots. While she’s improving the skill, she continues making a lot of pots, thus increasing output or achievement. A higher talent potter may start off making better pots, but with lower effort, she will create fewer pots over time.

The same concept may apply to academics, athletics, career, even social relationships.
A 1940 study had a Treadmill Test where college-aged subjects tried to run on a sloped treadmill until they gave up. Even after controlling for baseline fitness, run time was a predictor of psychological adjustment through adulthood.

And grit isn’t just about staying on the treadmill – it’s about getting back on the treadmill, day after day. If you stop jumping on the treadmill, your effort drops to zero, your skills stop improving, and you stop achieving output.

**Grit Summary Quotes:**

“Superlative performance is really a confluence of dozens of small skills or activities, each one learned or stumbled upon, which have been carefully drilled into habit and then are fitted together in a synthesized whole. There is nothing extraordinary or superhuman in any one of those actions; only the fact that they are done consistently and correctly, and all together, produce excellence.” – Dan Chambliss, sociologist.

“Of course, your opportunities— for example, having a great coach or teacher— matter tremendously, too, and maybe more than anything about the individual. My theory doesn’t address these outside forces, nor does it include luck. It’s about the psychology of achievement, but because psychology isn’t all that matters, it’s incomplete.” – Angela Duckworth

“The only thing that I see that is distinctly different about me is: I’m not afraid to die on a treadmill. I will not be outworked, period. You might have more talent than me, you might be smarter than me, you might be sexier than me. You might be all of those things. You got it on me in nine categories. But if we get on the treadmill together, there’s two things: You’re getting off first, or I’m going to die. It’s really that simple.” – Will Smith
Chapter 4: How Gritty Are You?

This is the Grit Scale questionnaire. For each statement below, note whether it sounds very much like you, or not at all like you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Not at all like me</th>
<th>Not much like me</th>
<th>Somewhat like me</th>
<th>Mostly like me</th>
<th>Very much like me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Setbacks don’t discourage me. I don’t give up easily.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I am a hard worker.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I finish whatever I begin.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My interests change from year to year.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I am diligent. I never give up.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(In her real questionnaire, Duckworth has two more questions: “I have achieved a goal that took years of work” and “I become interested in new pursuits every few months.” But she omitted these because she didn’t want her audience to need to divide by 12.)
Add up your score and divide by 10. Here is the population distribution by grit:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentile</th>
<th>Grit Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95%</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99%</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grit has two components: passion and perseverance. For your passion score, add up the odd-numbered items above. For your perseverance score, add up the even-numbered items.

Chances are, your perseverance score is higher than your passion score. **People tend to be better at working hard than at maintaining a consistent focus.** Duckworth claims this suggests passion and perseverance are different things.

“Enthusiasm is common. Endurance is rare.” Rather than letting your interest be an intense burst of firecrackers, let it be a compass instead, guiding you on a long winding route to your ultimate goal.

**The Goal Hierarchy**

Visualize your goal setting as a hierarchy, with multiple levels:

The low-level goals are your day to day actions – writing emails, going to meetings, jogging for an hour, reading this *Grit* summary. We do these goals as means to an end of a higher-level goal – such as executing a project or looking good to your boss.

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If you continue asking yourself why you do things, these form progressively higher level goals, until you ultimately have no answer – you simply want to do something just because. This is your highest-level goal that is an end in itself. You can also consider it your “ultimate concern” or your compass.

This ultimate goal is what should drive every action at lower levels. If an activity doesn’t fit strongly within your goal hierarchy, then it likely isn’t moving you closer to your goal – and maybe you should stop. (For example, you might find that answering emails and hanging out on Slack all day isn’t actually helping you make real progress on your project, which then isn’t driving you toward a promotion.)

Furthermore, the low-level goals are not to be held sacred. If you fail on a low-level goal, another can take its place. If you find a new low-level goal that is more effective or feasible or fun, you can swap it out for another. (If you find reading management books or this Grit summary to be more effective than chatting on Slack, then you can swap the two as a low-level goal).

When well-constructed, a goal hierarchy promotes grit – if all your activities are in pursuit of your highest-level goal, then your everyday activities apply effort toward your goal.

[Other ways I think a good goal hierarchy improves grit: you focus more of your time on activities consistent with your ultimate concern, meaning more effort that improves skill and achievement. Also, low-level goals may be mutually reinforcing, which makes it harder to fall off the wagon (for example, waking up early and going to the gym may reinforce each other, because if you wake up late you won’t have time to go to the gym).

I think this also suggests that deliberate design of a goal hierarchy can reduce the willpower needed to persevere – if you make it a habit, then you execute it without internal friction.]

Here are common failings of goal hierarchies that lead to lower grit:

No lower-level goals
This person has a dream goal, like playing in the NBA or becoming a billionaire. But she hasn’t mapped out the lower level goals that will get her there. This is “positive fantasizing” and makes it very difficult to achieve the goal.

**Mid-level goals without a top-level goal**

![Diagram of interrelated goals](image)

This person has frictions between multiple goals, without a unifying theme. This makes it difficult to tell when goals are in direct conflict with each other, so some goals actually negate others. The absence of an ultimate goal may also make your energy feel purposeless. It may feel like spinning your wheels – applying a lot of effort without going in any particular direction.

[This also suggests why I have no interest in pursuing hobbies – the high level goal for hobbies just isn’t there.]

If you feel pulled in too many directions, how do you prune your goal list? Warren Buffett suggests this exercise for prioritization:

- Write a list of 25 career goals.
- Circle the 5 highest priority goals for you. Only 5.
- You must avoid the 20 goals you didn’t circle. These are your distractions.

If you can’t decide on 5, then consider quantifying your goals on two scales: interest and importance. Also, consider whether some of them contribute more to your ultimate concern than others.

**Grit Summary Quotes:**

“High but not the highest intelligence, combined with the greatest degree of persistence, will achieve greater eminence than the highest degree of intelligence with somewhat less persistence.” – Catharine Cox in 1926, studying historical geniuses.
Chapter 5: Grit Grows

All behavioral traits have contribution from genetics and from the environment. When a trait changes rapidly in a population over time, this suggests environment is the major cause. For instance, the average male height increased from 5 feet 5 inches in 1850 to 5 feet 10 inches today. Similarly, the Flynn effect finds that the average IQ today, calibrated to 1900 standards, would be somewhere around 130. As very few human reproductive generations have passed since these times, there hasn’t been much change in our genetics. Instead, the environment (better nutrition for height, and more abstract reasoning work for IQ) is the major contributor.

Duckworth tries to apply this logic to show that grit has some portion due to environment and is malleable. [Because if grit were purely genetic, the book would be self-defeating – you either have grit or you don’t! Time to go home.]

In unpublished twin studies, the heritability of perseverance is estimated to be 37%, and passion 20%. Supposedly, the rest of the contribution is from the environment.

Also, in a survey of US adults, grit rises steadily over age:

![Graph showing grit controlling for education by age](image)

Here are possible explanations for this:

- Maturation could be genetically programmed – evolutionarily, grit may not be as beneficial in early years when seeking mates, and may be more helpful later when caring for a family.
- Older people could have endured more hardship throughout their lives (e.g. by surviving through World War 2 and the Cold War) and thus trained grit.

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• **Maturation happens naturally over time as people learn that grit is a successful strategy for accomplishing goals**, and that the opposite – quitting plans, shifting goals, starting over – leads to failure and is unsatisfying. Furthermore, life experiences – like getting a job, having children, caring for parents – require us to mature and adopt more grit.

Because we don’t have longitudinal studies of grit, where we track the same population over decades, we can’t distinguish between these explanations, but the third is Duckworth’s favorite. Anecdotally, people change when new expectations are thrust upon them – imagine the teen who sleeps in daily, but then enlists in the military and is punished for waking up past 6AM. Grit can be grown.
Part 2: Growing Grit from the Inside Out

So far, we’ve covered why grit leads to success, and why talent is overrated. Part 2 of this Grit summary dives into the components of grit – what it consists of, and how to make them stronger.

If you’re not as gritty as you want to be, ask yourself why. Common reasons:

- I’m bored.
- The effort isn’t worth it.
- This isn’t important to me.
- I can’t do this, so I might as well give up.

The very gritty tend to give up for the above reasons less. Angela Duckworth argues that there are four psychological assets that paragons of grit have in common:

- Interest: enjoy what you’re doing
- Practice: conduct deliberate practice to improve on your weaknesses and continuously improve
- Purpose: believe that your work matters and improves the lives of others
- Hope: believe in your capacity for achievement and ability to overcome difficulties

Part 2 of Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance dives into each of these aspects.

**Chapter 6: Interest**

Being interested by your pursuit is the beginning of developing grit. Paragons of grit say, “I love what I do. I can’t wait to get on with the next project.” They’re doing things not because they’re forced to.

Duckworth argues that grit cannot truly exist without interest, and thus that people who are not intrinsically interested in an activity will not work as hard or achieve as much as people who are.

Research suggests that people are more satisfied and more effective at their jobs when they do something that fits their personal interests. For instance, if you prefer interacting with people, you’ll perform better as a salesperson than as a data entry clerk. Unfortunately, only 13% of adults consider themselves engaged at work.

This reflects the likelihood that most people are not working in the place of their greatest interest. Of course, not every interest can lead to a sustainable career for most people (like playing videogames or reading books), but people can try to match their career and their interests better.

Part of the problem is an unrealistic expectation around how interests are discovered. People expect to find something that just clicks and fall head-over-heels in love with “their passion,” just as in romance.
Instead, Duckworth argues that passion needs to be developed. It starts with discovery, followed by development, then a lifetime of deepening.

**You shouldn’t expect to discover your interest early in life or right out of college** – many people find their life’s work after trying lots of different things. Furthermore, “interests are triggered by interactions with the outside world” – not arrived at solely by introspection. You can’t simply will yourself to like things. It’s also ironically harder to feel when you’re interested, since when you’re excited you’re distracted, whereas boredom causes painful recognition of your boredom.

Next, **interest deepens after engaging with an activity over time.** Through repeated exposures to your interest, you discover fascinating subtleties and facets that you would never find if you didn’t stick with it. [This may be related to the Dunning-Kruger effect – when you know nothing, you think you know everything, which makes the task seem boring.] Eventually, the desire for mastery and continuous improvement becomes the driving force. “For the expert, novelty is nuance.”

[This also overlaps with the Tiger Mom philosophy of needing to work at something, and be minimally good at something, to understand whether you enjoy it or not.]

Interests thrive when supporters, like parents and coaches, provide positive feedback and ongoing stimulation to nurture the interest.

For parents, Angela Duckworth argues that childhood is too early to detect interests. People only start to gravitate to general interests in middle school age. Also, forcing a passion doesn’t work. Allow open play to discover and retrigger interests, before enforcing discipline. This will develop intrinsic motivation. [Consider this like starting a fire with an ember – blow it gently to get hotter and light the kindling, don’t smother it.]

**How do you discover an interest if you haven’t found one?**

- Ask yourself questions: What do you like to think about? Where does your mind wander? What matters most to you? How do you enjoy spending your time? What did you dislike most about your last job or project?

- Armed with a general direction, go out and try things. Trigger your interests with related activities. Don’t be afraid to guess.

- Don’t be afraid to change direction based on more data.

- Once you find an interest, keep digging. Keep asking questions about the craft. Seek out other people with the same interest. Find a supportive mentor. Combat novelty by appreciating the nuance.

[Duckworth argues that high-achieving gritty people stick with an interest and have fewer career changes. There are a few explanations here:]

- Grit is a personal innate characteristic. They happen to find an interest they like and stick to it. But if they were to switch to another interest, they’d do just as well.

- Grit is developed by finding an interest. As you work deeper on the interest, you develop grit, and as you develop grit, your interest deepens. This then spills over into the rest of life, so you generally become grittier.
Survivorship bias – the people who stick with an interest are the ones who are naturally more successful at it, and thus have less reason to change. Other people who tried it and worked hard have long since failed and given up, making it more about talent than grit. The reality may be a mix of both.

Chapter 7: Practice

Deliberate practice is the best way to improve. It consists of:

- **Setting a stretch goal.** Focus on a narrow aspect that you want to improve. Set a reach goal that you can’t meet yet.

- **Apply full concentration and effort.** Many greats do this in isolation, by themselves.

- **Receive immediate and informative feedback.** Focus on what you can improve.

- **Repeat with reflection and refinement.** Keep working until you meet that stretch goal. And when you meet it, choose a new stretch goal.

Much of this concept comes from Anders Ericsson, who popularized the well-known idea that to become an expert, you need to invest roughly 10 years of hard work or 10,000 hours. Other evidence cited to support deliberate practice:

- Amount of time musicians spent practicing alone is a better predictor of how quickly they develop than time practicing with other musicians.

- In spelling bees, deliberate practice was a better predictor of final round performance (OR = 2.64) than being quizzes (OR = 1.61) and leisure reading time (OR = 0.99). Deliberate practice was also highly correlated with grit. [Caution: they defined deliberate practice for study subjects as studying and memorizing words alone, not as the 4-component definition above.]

This requires deliberate effort to do every time you practice.

Deliberate practice is more effortful and less enjoyable than other forms of practice. Even world-class performers handle a maximum of one hour of deliberate practice before needing a break, and can only do 3-5 hours of deliberate practice per day. Dancer Martha Graham described the path to achievement as “daily small deaths.”

Even very motivated people don’t necessarily practice deliberately. [This could be part of the reason people complain that a person can work very hard but not succeed – they’re not setting ambitious goals that they fail on, and they’re spinning their wheels in the same place. It seems grit, as defined by the scale, does not necessitate deliberate practice, though it correlates with success.]

However, grittier people tend to find deliberate practice more enjoyable than less gritty people, and they also do more of it. It’s unclear what direction the causality is – grittier people could spend more time in practice and develop a taste for it, or that grittier kids innately enjoy hard work and that pushes them to do more of it.
To increase deliberate practice, **make it a habit.** Figure out when and where you’re best at doing deliberate practice. Then commit to doing it then and there every day. This makes you get into deliberate practice automatically without thinking about it. “There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual, for whom the beginning of every bit of work are subjects of express volitional deliberation.” – William James. [See my summary on *The Power of Habit* for more strategies on developing a habit.]

Furthermore, change how you feel about deliberate practice. Embrace the challenge and feel great at your improvement. Toddlers repeatedly try to learn to walk without getting anxious or embarrassed. Then they start getting cues that failure is bad from adults. Embrace it as “that was hard! It was great!”

For instance, reading this *Grit* summary is just the first step. Now you actually need to plan out how this book is going to change your life habits. Set a stretch goal for yourself, apply full concentration, and get feedback on how you did.

**Deliberate Practice vs Flow**

How does this painful deliberate practice idea fit in with the idea of flow, described as “performing at high levels of challenge and yet feeling effortless,” a pleasurable state often reached by top performers? Athletes and performers describe it as an automatic performance at a very high quality, done without thinking. Deliberate practice is effortful and painful, flow is effortless and enjoyable.

There may be no conflict. Deliberate practice is a behavior or a habit, and flow is an experience. Gritty people do more deliberate practice and experience more flow than non-gritty people. The two aren’t experienced at the same time.

In other words, deliberate practice improves your skill, and the challenge level exceeds your current skill. This practice allows you to achieve flow, when the level of challenge meets your level of skill, and you’re not analyzing your mistakes, you’re just doing. Analogously, a figure skater toils through deliberate practice to perfect her jumps and spins. Then, on performance day, she allows her skill to engage automatically – she’s already trained for that moment. [This is similar to what Floyd Mayweather and Shaun White say about their performance days.]

**Chapter 8: Purpose**

Purpose, as defined here, is “the intention to contribute to the well-being of others.”

Duckworth found that universally, **grit paragons extend the benefits of their achievement to a level beyond themselves** – other people (like their children or clients) or an abstract concept (society, this country, science). Evolutionarily, we may have developed a drive for altruism, because a cooperative species thrives more than the individual. This improves grit by both sustaining passion (because your goals are more important) and perseverance (because you fight harder for goals that you care more about).
There are at least two large ways of achieving happiness, and that can be divided roughly into pleasure (self-centered enjoyment) and purpose (outward-benefiting). Pleasure tends to be stable across grit levels, but grittier people tend to feel a greater sense of purpose.

There is a possible confound here where grittier people may take on jobs that are generally accepted to have more purpose (like being a doctor), making the purpose questions easier to answer. However, across a range of careers, Amy Wrzesniewski has found similar proportions of people who consider their occupations a job, a career, or a calling. “Even” secretaries or garbage collectors can find their work purposeful.

It may seem that self-oriented and other-oriented motivations are on opposite sides of the spectrum, but research has found that they’re independent. You can have neither, and you can have both. You can at once want to be the most successful person, while at the same time helping others. People who have both self-oriented and other-oriented motives tend to be the most productive.

The parable of the bricklayers: Three bricklayers are asked, “what are you doing?” The first says, “I am laying bricks.” The second says, “I am building a church.” The third says, “I am building the house of God.”

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

Defined further, people who have jobs are interested only in the material benefits from work, and don’t receive other rewards from it. The work is not an end in itself. People who have careers have deeper personal investment and enjoy advancement within the organizational structure. People who have callings find their work inseparable from their life – the work is personally fulfilling.

[This recalls a story from someone who visited the SpaceX factory floor and asked someone what he was working on. The SpaceX worker replied, “the mission of SpaceX is to make humans a multiplanetary species. To accomplish this, we need to lower the cost of rockets by making them reusable. I work on the guidance system that helps the rocket be reusable.” The point is that the employees see their work as closely aligned to the company’s mission, which has a broad humanity-wide purpose.

This also suggests that companies that donate to charity or have altruistic projects can motivate the workforce who don’t directly work on those projects. For instance, working on Google’s ad technology might be demoralizing if you believe it exists only to extract more value from advertisers; if you connect it to Google’s moonshot projects in self-driving cars and curing aging, then your satisfaction may increase.]

People who feel purpose in their work show meaningful benefits:

- They feel more satisfied with their jobs and lives overall.
- They miss fewer days of work.
- They’re more willing to work unpaid after hours.
- They work more overtime per week.
- They improve performance metrics, like number of calls made or dollars raised, for fundraising callers.
- Anecdotally, having purpose pushes you beyond normal obstacles. Because you’re working for a greater cause and are backed by all the people you want to help, you’re not afraid to pound on doors
and doggedly pursue your goal. Whereas when you’re acting selfishly, you become self-conscious about barriers.

Purpose takes time to develop – thus it tends to follow interest and practice, from the previous chapters. You don’t have to feel purpose right away. In fact, some students may be giving up too early if they skip from job to job every couple of years. Duckworth gives several anecdotes of a subway engineer and a physician who spent over a decade learning the intricacies of their craft and deepening their interest before broadening their purpose to a broader impact (they weren’t notable enough to include in this summary of the Grit book).

How do you cultivate a sense of purpose?

- Reflect on how the work you’re doing can positively contribute to society.
  - Researchers asked students to connect what they were learning with how the world could be a better place. The one-time intervention took just one class period. Compared to control, students increased their GPA (from 1.9 to 2.1), doubled their time studying on practice questions, and completed more math questions. Results were stronger for students who were at greater academic risk.

- Think about how you can change your current work to connect to your core values, even if just in small ways.
  - An experimental group of employees was assigned to a job-crafting workshop, where they came up with their own ideas for changing their routines and building a map for what would constitute more meaningful work. Six weeks later, coworkers rated the employees as happier and more effective.

- Find a purposeful role model.
  - Identify someone who inspires you to be a better person, and who acts on behalf of other people. This exemplar proves to you that it’s possible to be successful carrying a mission greater than yourself. This in turn inspires your own belief that you can personally make a difference.

[As before, there is unclear causation – do gritty people naturally empathize with people and want to be altruistic? Or can you develop purpose, which in turn makes you grittier? Is this malleable?]

Grit Summary Quotes

“I was very good at going into new environments and helping people realize they’re capable of more than they know. I started to realize that if I could help people— individuals— do that, then I could help teams. If I could help teams, I could help companies. If I could help companies, I could help brands. If I could help brands, I could help communities and countries.”— Kat Cole, from Hooters waitress to Cinnabon President
Grit depends on a hope that you have the power to improve things. **Hope sustains passion by giving optimism that one day you can achieve your goals, and thus they’re worth holding for long periods of time. Hope sustains perseverance by encouraging thinking about how to overcome setbacks, rather than just accepting them as permanent.**

Seligman and Maier split dogs into two groups. In one group, the dog is put in a cage and is shocked at random times. If the dog pushes against a panel at the front of the cage, the shock ends early. After 64 shocks, the pain ends. In the other group, there is no panel that ceases the shocks.

The next day, the dog is put into a box with a divider leading to another box partition. The shock is now announced with a warning tone, so the dog has a chance to react. There is not a difference in behavior. Nearly all the dogs who had control over the shocks learn to jump over the wall and escape the shocks. Only 1/3 of the dogs who had no control escape – the other 2/3 simply lay down and wait for the shocks to end.

This concept is called **learned helplessness.** Suffering without the belief of control habitually leads to depression symptoms, lack of concentration, and mood disorders. It can feel like all is lost, and there is no solution to your problems.

The antithesis to learned helplessness is **learned optimism.** Optimists tend to explain their suffering with temporary and specific causes, while pessimists seek permanent and broad causes.

For example, consider the prompt of “you can’t get all the work done that others expect of you. Imagine one major cause for this event.” Pessimists are more likely to say a permanent, broad cause like “I screw up everything. I’m a loser.” This attitude is broad and pervades nearly everything you do in life.

In contrast, optimists are likely to say “I mismanaged my time” or “I didn’t communicate my expectations well enough.” This leads to specific actionables to address next time. Addressing specific and temporary causes is a part of cognitive behavioral therapy. **If you keep searching for solutions to your problems, you at least have a chance of solving them. If you stop looking, you have zero chance.** “Whether you think you can, or think you can’t, you’re right.” – Henry Ford

A similar concept is the **growth mindset,** that intelligence can be trained and is not innate. It considers responses to these statements:

- Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can’t change very much.
- You can learn new things, but you can’t really change how intelligent you are.
- No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it quite a bit.
- You can always substantially change how intelligent you are.

A growth mindset increases grit and perseverance – if you hit an obstacle, you don’t attribute it to permanent personal traits. You instead believe you have the capacity to improve, no matter what you do. In contrast, with
a fixed mindset, you think that you failed at something because you simply don’t have it in you and you’ll never have it – so why keep trying?

A surprising finding: adolescents change their IQs from adolescence to adulthood. This may be a special event in puberty, but suggests that our brains are plastic and can be rewired.

What evidence shows the benefits of optimism and growth mindset?

- Optimists are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety, tend to earn higher grades, stay healthier, are twice as likely to stay in their jobs, and sell 25% more than pessimists.

- In a study of Teach for America teachers, optimistic teachers were grittier and happier, and they led to higher achievements for their students.

- Growth mindset students are grittier, earn higher grades, and are more likely to persist through college.

- Employees in growth-mindset cultures (where employees were developed, rather than focusing on the top performers) were 47% more likely to say colleagues are trustworthy, 49% more likely to say their company fosters innovation, and 65% to say their company supports risk taking.

Both poles of optimism/pessimism and growth/fixed mindset can be self-reinforcing. Negatively, if you believe your skills have hit their permanent limits, and you believe life’s problems are caused by those limits, you are less likely to overcome roadblocks – after all, it’s logical to give up if there’s no way out. Your recurrent failures then perpetuate your negative feelings, which further reduce your likelihood of success and cause you to avoid challenges that would have led to growth.

In contrast, if you believe your skills can perpetually grow, and that misfortune is temporary and can be fixed, you keep trying to solve problems. When you break through and improve, you further reinforce your positive beliefs, which makes you try even harder next time. Importantly, you actively seek challenges beyond your ability that lead to growth (recall deliberate practice).

Suggestive evidence of long-term effects comes from variations of the original Seligman/Maier shocking experiments. They performed the same experiment on adolescent rats, and assessed them five weeks later as adults. The rats without control over shocks grew up timid and less adventurous. In contrast, the rats with control over their shocks seemed resilient to learned helplessness.

Maier argues that neural rewiring is strengthened by success. “Just telling somebody they can overcome adversity isn’t enough” – you have to pair the low-level feeling of progress with high-level mindset changes to strengthen the connection between cause and effect.

The duration of learned helplessness is troubling for kids in poverty, who receive a lot of helplessness experiences and not enough mastery experiences. For kids at the more impressionable age, the wiring between failure and mindset can be strengthened considerably. Similarly, kids who coast through life without having to overcome adversity can have low grit that makes them crumble under pressure. Both situations can be reinforced by fixed mindset attitudes from parents or teachers – “you’re just no good at this, and you’ll never amount to anything.”
How do you increase optimism and growth mindset?

- Update your beliefs about intelligence and talent. Believe that your brain is plastic, and you have the ability to grow.

- Practice optimistic self-talk. [Angela Duckworth says to see a therapist and doesn’t give many examples.]
  - Say/Don’t Says from KIPP schools:

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<th>Fixed Mindset</th>
<th>Growth Mindset and Grit</th>
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<td>“You’re a natural!”</td>
<td>“You’re a learner!”</td>
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<td>“Well, at least you tried.”</td>
<td>“That didn’t work. Let’s talk about how you approached it and what might work better.”</td>
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<td>“Great job! You’re so talented.”</td>
<td>“Great job! What’s one thing that could have been even better?”</td>
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<td>“This is hard. Don’t feel bad if you can’t do it.”</td>
<td>“This is hard. Don’t feel bad if you can’t do it yet.”</td>
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<td>“Maybe this just isn’t your strength. Don’t worry – you have other things to contribute.”</td>
<td>“I have high standards. I’m holding you to them because I know we can reach them together.”</td>
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- Ask for help. Mentors with growth mindsets can coach you through introspection and set goals to push you on the virtuous cycle.

- When you default to fixed mindset, recognize it, and put a label to it. Call yourself “Pessimistic Pete” or “Abdicating Allen”

[Once again, the confound – that people who don’t have major life problems like health conditions become more optimistic and achieve more. Needs more interventional studies]
Part 3: Growing Grit from the Outside In

Now that our Grit book summary has covered the major internal components of grit, we move on to external components: parenting, coaches, and culture. Part 3 of Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance teaches you how to create situations and environments that improve grit.

Chapter 10: Parenting for Grit

Parenting styles are split on two axes: Demanding <-> Undemanding, and Supportive <-> Unsupportive.

(&Wise parenting is also known as authoritative parenting.)

Thus, it's a myth that demanding high standards and loving support are on the same spectrum, and necessarily trade off with each other. This myth causes parents who fear being oppressive to swing too hard in the other direction, giving unconditional support and open latitude.

Wise parenting presupposes that children are not always the better judge of what to do, how hard to work, and when to give up.

Wise parenting produces kids who get higher grades, are more self-reliant, and experience less anxiety and depression. This is generally true across ethnicity, social class, and marital status. For instance, white children of middle class, non-intact families showed a GPA difference of 3.14 vs 2.73 for authoritative vs nonauthoritative parenting. Black children of working class, non-intact families showed GPA differences of 2.78 vs 2.42.

Here is the key table from the paper:
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As children age, wise parenting leads to healthier behavior. Children of neglectful parents performed worst, drinking alcohol and smoking at a rate twice as much as their wise-parented peers. They also showed multiples more rates of antisocial behavior and internalizing symptoms (depression). Indulgent parenting produced children slightly better than neglectful parenting, but noticeably worse than the other two styles. Finally, compared to wise parenting, authoritarian parenting produced children with similar alcohol and smoking use, but slightly more antisocial behavior and noticeably more internalizing symptoms.
How do you distinguish parenting styles? Here are statements posed to children.

**Supportive: Warm**

- I can count on my parents to help me out if I have a problem.
- My parents spend time just talking to me.
- My parents and I do things that are fun together.
- *My parents don’t really like me to tell them my troubles.*
- *My parents hardly ever praise me for doing well.*
Supportive: Respectful

- My parents believe I have a right to my own point of view.
- *My parents tell me that their ideas are correct and that I shouldn’t question them.*
- My parents respect my privacy.
- My parents give me a lot of freedom.
- *My parents make most of the decisions about what I can do.*

Demanding

- My parents really expect me to follow family rules.
- *My parents really let me get away with things.*
- My parents point out ways I could do better.
- *When I do something wrong, my parents don’t punish me.*
- My parents expect me to do my best even when it’s hard.

Similar statements apply to teachers:

Demanding (produces better academic results)

- My teacher accepts nothing less than our best effort.
- Students in this class behave the way my teacher wants them to.

Supportive (improves student happiness)

- My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me.
- My teacher wants us to share our thoughts.

In an interesting experiment, graded student essays were sorted into two piles. The experimental group had a note that read: “I’m giving you these comments because I have every high expectations and I know that you can reach them.” The control read, “I’m giving you these comments so that you’ll have feedback on your paper.” Students were then given the option of revising their essays. 80% of the students with the wise feedback turned in a revised paper, compare to 40% control!

Duckworth posits that supportive and demanding parenting may be more likely to lead to grit, but requires that parents model grit for their children. Not all children under wise parenting will grow up gritty, and not all gritty parents will practice wise parenting.

Therefore, in her family, Duckworth applies the Hard Thing Rule:

1. Everyone in the family has to do a hard thing. A hard thing requires daily deliberate practice (such as getting better at your job, yoga, violin).
2. You can’t quit until a natural stopping point. Examples: tuition payment is up, season is over. You can’t quit on a bad day.

3. You get to pick your own hard thing. This develops interest.

4. (In high school) Each child must commit to an activity for at least two years.

**Grit Summary Quotes**

“You can quit. . . . But you can’t come home because I’m not going to live with a quitter. You’ve known that since you were a kid. You’re not coming back here.” – Steve Young’s father, when Steve wanted to quit college football.

**Chapter 11: The Playing Fields of Grit**

Outside of the home, *extracurriculars have been found to correlate well with student outcomes like better grades, higher self-esteem, and lower delinquency*. In particular, the longer you engage in an extracurricular, and the more hours per week you spend, the better the outcomes.

The cited studies:

- Spending more than a year in extracurriculars *increases graduation rate and adult volunteering*. Spending more than 2 years in extracurriculars predicts having a job and earning more money [modestly; regression coefficient between intensity and log income was 0.04].

- Personal Qualities Project: After controlling for grades and SAT scores, follow-through was the best predictor of career accomplishments, graduating from college with honors, holding leadership positions. [but grades and SAT scores were still the best predictors]

- Extracurricular follow-through correlates with higher grit scores and lowers dropout rates.

- In teachers, extracurricular follow-through correlates with longer retention and more effective academic gains. Retained teachers had grit grid ratings of 3.98 vs 2.79 in unretained teachers. Effective teachers had grit ratings of 3.88 vs 3.20 in less effective teachers. In contrast, GPA, SAT scores, and interviewer ratings did not correlate with retention or effectiveness.

- **Learned industriousness**: A *training period that is more difficult increases endurance on a next set of exercises*. Also, increasing the ratio of tasks completed to positive feedback (e.g. giving approval after student has gotten 5 questions right, vs approval after 1 question right) increases the number of tasks completed – in one experiment by over 100%.

  - [This matches deliberate practice – the second phase of hard solo work comes before the third phase of feedback. If you spoil someone too much with positive feedback at regular intervals, they have to work less hard to get it.]

**Why are extracurriculars so helpful?**
• There’s an adult who can practice supportive and demanding guidance. This allows a complementary role model to parents (whom kids probably get sick of listening to).

• Extracurriculars are designed to cultivate grit – interest, practice, purpose, hope.

• Kids feel challenged and have fun in extracurriculars. Other activities are lacking – in class, they feel challenged but unmotivated, and hanging out with friends is fun but not challenging.

But where is the causation? Do extracurriculars train grit, or do more gritty people happen to just participate in more extracurriculars?

Duckworth argues it’s both – **follow-through requires a baseline of grit, then builds it at the same time.** This is the “correspondence principle” – the traits that steer us toward certain life situations are the same traits that those situations reinforce.

**This can lead to both virtuous and vicious cycles.** Someone who is encouraged to try and try again, against her comfort, may experience the satisfaction of a breakthrough. This may then encourage the child to try even more difficult things, then to welcome challenge.

[Despite my insistence on proving causation, I can anecdotally attest to the power of mindset shifts. From an ego centered around being correct to an ego around finding the truth; from pursuing safe prestige to embracing failed experiments. I have a high baseline of willpower that gets me to start things, but the mindset shift ups the intensity and develops a habit. The bizarro Allen who had the same baseline of willpower but didn’t adopt the same mindsets might be a slovenly degenerate.]

Likely the earlier you intervene, the more plastic the child is, and the easier time you can build virtuous cycles before vicious cycles take root. Unfortunately there is a correlation between family income and Grit Grid scores – 1 full point for students who qualify for free meals.]

Dean of Harvard College admissions Bill Fitzsimmons says these students stand out: students who “have made a commitment to pursue something they love, believe in, and value – and have done so with **singular energy, discipline, and plain old hard work.**” He argues that “all that grit that was developed can almost always be transferred to something else.”

**Chapter 12: A Culture of Grit**

A culture exists when a group of people agree on how to do things and why. The sharper the difference between this group and the rest of the world, the stronger the bonds.

**To be grittier, find a gritty culture and join it. You will conform to the group and adopt their gritty habits.** When it’s socially expected to wake up at 4AM to practice, it becomes what you do.

The causation is bidirectional between the people and the culture. People need to be gritty to join a culture that selects for grit (like a top sports team). Then, because gritty people will reinforce each other, the culture gets grittier, which raises the bar for people who join. This is the correspondence principle at work.
Eventually, the values of the culture we belong to become part of our identity. **When values like grit become part of our identity, decisions depending on those values become habit and automatic.** If it’s part of your identity to finish what you complete, you don’t constantly stop and ask, “what is the cost-benefit tradeoff of continuing? What are the risks?” You ask: “Who am I? What is this situation? What does someone like me do in a situation like this?” Often grit will take you past the point when it’s seemingly rational to give up – if grit is part of your identity, persevering and keeping passion is just something you do.

Thus, **think of yourself as someone who can overcome adversity**, as someone who can get the better of bad fortune by proving you can stand worse. You will tend to act in a way that is consistent with your self-belief.

As a leader, create a gritty culture:

- Repeat the value of grit repeatedly in your communication. Make it a tagline you can refer to easily, and that people will repeat to each other and themselves.
  - Jamie Dimon wrote: “Have a fierce resolve in everything you do.” “Demonstrate determination, resiliency, and tenacity.” “Do not let temporary setbacks become permanent excuses.” “Use mistakes and problems as opportunities to get better – not reasons to quit.”
- Give the Grit Scale questionnaire and let them see their results.
- Give a test of grit (like the treadmill test) and make the results publicly known.
- Test your teammates on memorizing your cultural values and articulating what it means.
- Lead by example. Built an improvement plan for someone who is struggling, and execute it alongside them. They will soon bootstrap themselves to improve independently.
- Recruit people who are demonstrably grittier than the average in your team.
- Praise behavior that is gritty.
- Be a supportive and demanding mentor. Think about how you would treat your own children.

**Grit Summary Quotes**

“Do not let temporary setbacks become permanent excuses.” – Jamie Dimon, JPMorgan Chase CEO

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who err, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly,
so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.” – Teddy Roosevelt

“if you create a vision for yourself and stick with it, you can make amazing things happen in your life. My experience is that once you have done the work to create the clear vision, it is the discipline and effort to maintain that vision that can make it all come true. The two go hand in hand. The moment you’ve created that vision, you’re on your way, but it’s the diligence with which you stick to that vision that allows you to get there. Getting that across to players is a constant occupation.” – Pete Carroll, Seattle Seahawks coach

Chapter 13: Conclusion

Angela Duckworth ends Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance with a series of rebuttals to common counterarguments.

Does grit conflict with happiness? No – actually, life satisfaction and grit correlate strongly. Angela Duckworth hasn’t yet studied the happiness of people around gritty people – partners, children, parents. However, she believes her kids appreciate her grittiness and know achieving their goals is better than complacency.

Can you have too much grit, just like you can have too courageous or too honest? Angela Duckworth admits that persevering blindly and without exception isn’t the best default – this can cause you to miss opportunities. Ideally, you swap the activity with something else that is consistent with your ultimate concern. She also argues that by far, most of us need more grit, not less.

Is grit the only thing that matters? No. In appraising, morality is the most important character trait. Angela Duckworth defines three clusters of character

- intrapersonal (grit, self-control) – the resume virtues
- interpersonal (gratitude, social intelligence) – the eulogy virtues
- intellectual (curiosity, zest)

Each of these clusters predicts different outcomes.

Does encouraging grit set expectations unrealistically high for children? Will they grow up thinking they can be Mozart or Einstein? If they realize they can’t get there, will they give up? The point of growth is not to become Einstein – it’s to be the best you can, and to break past your self-imposed limits. To be gritty is to put one foot in front of the other, day after week after year, to fall down and rise again.

Open Questions

I hope you’ve learned from this Grit summary. Here are some open questions that the book doesn’t directly answer that you might enjoy musing on.
How do you escape out of a local maxima of interest? What if the pursuit of grit makes you miss the forest for the trees by continuing something you shouldn’t be? Are there suggestions for when to re-initialize and explore more, rather than being confined to a fate?

Talent is still a multiplier on effort, and between two people working hard, the more talented person will achieve more. How do you identify and measure talent? Perhaps as defined as rate of skill growth with effort?

Can you learn grit by training a skill that is not an interest, and then transfer that grit to a later developed interest? More Tiger Mom style – if you train really hard at piano even though you dislike it, do you build a grit muscle that you can then transfer to something you really love, like dance? Or is it always more effective to spend time finding an interest, then developing that?

To develop purpose, can you motivate people who aren’t altruistic or empathetic to care about other people? This seems difficult, knowing the selfish people I know.