

Grit

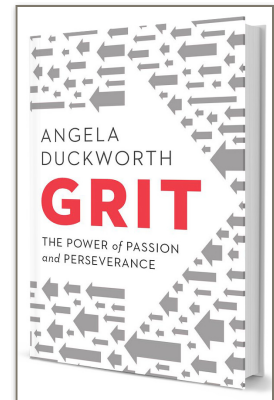
by Angela Duckworth

Part I: What Grit Is And Why It Matters

Showing Up

Angela Duckworth opens her first chapter by looking into a variety of tests considered on the campus of the United States Military Academy at West Point to determine whether a cadet will drop out or make it through the seven week training program (Beast).

“Winners hate losing.” (page 7)



Duckworth starts discussing “highly accomplished people” she refers to as “paragons of perseverance.” She combines “passion” and “perseverance” into the foundation of the book, “grit.” Her “Grit Scale” is a combination of five questions addressing passion, and five questions addressing perseverance.

The chapter ends with Duckworth’s first discussion of students participating in the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Distracted by Talent

The author begins this chapter by detailing her early career in teaching comparing the lower east side of New York (students from housing projects) versus her experience in San Francisco (Lowell H.S., . . . a school that admits students based on academic merit). During this experience she learned a lot about the accuracy of aptitude tests and the idea that “talent for math was different from excelling in math class.”

Francis Galton (Psychologist) concluded outliers are remarkable in three ways: “ability, zeal and the capacity for hard labor.” His cousin, Charles Darwin believed “zeal and hard work are ultimately more important than intellectual ability.”

William James (Harvard Psychologist) through his early 1900s studies in how people differ in their pursuit of goals, concluded: “The plain fact remains that men the world over possess amounts of resource, which only the very exceptional individuals push to their extremes of use.”

Psychologist Chia-Jung Tsay’s studies prove people tend to favor “naturals” despite claiming we promote hard work. She herself was a Juilliard trained pianist who’s passion was shown in her visualization (seeing herself on stage in front of large crowds applauding her) each time she practiced.

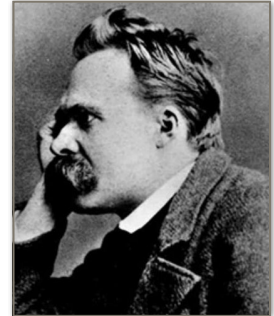
Malcolm Gladwell comments on the events within Enron, recognizing the narcissistic culture that focused on short-term performance and failed to support growth and long-term learning.

Duckworth profiles Scott Barry Kauffman, a colleague of hers at the end of this chapter. Kauffman was considered a slow learner, repeated the third grade, etc., but after being challenged by a teacher, set off on a new path leading to degrees from Carnegie Mellon, Cambridge and Yale. Duckworth even shares her early aptitude test results that stated she was not bright enough to benefit from gifted services.

Effort Counts Twice

Dan Chambliss (Sociologist): “Superlative performance is really a confluence of dozens of small skills or activities.”

Friedrich Nietzsche (German Philosopher) claimed we prefer to view successful people as naturals. “For if we think of genius as something magical, we are not obliged to compare ourselves and find ourselves lacking.” In regard to the effort needed to become a genius, Nietzsche claims: “They allowed themselves time for it, because they took more pleasure in making the little, secondary things well than in the effect of a dazzling whole.”



Warren MacKenzie (Potter): “The first 10,000 pots are difficult, . . . and then it gets a little bit easier.”

John Irving (Author): “To do anything really well, you have to overextend yourself.” This thought prompted the following response from Duckworth in regard to “talented” people: “Do they discover that the capacity to do something over and over again, to struggle, to have patience, can be mastered - but not overnight?”

Will Smith (Actor, Musician): “I’ve never really viewed myself as particularly talented. Where I excel is ridiculous, sickening work ethic.”

Woody Allen (Director): “Eighty percent of success in life is showing up.”

How Gritty Are You?

Before revealing her ten-question Grit Scale, Duckworth re-visits a conversation she had a student after a speaking engagement where she argued: “. . . there are not shortcuts to excellence. Developing real expertise, figuring out really hard problems, it all takes time - longer than most people imagine.”

Duckworth reminds the reader of the two components of her Grit Scale, passion and perseverance.”

Jeff Gettleman (New York Times Reporter): “It was a really winding road that took me all kinds of places. And it was difficult, and discouraging, and demoralizing, and scary, and all the rest. But eventually, I got here. I got exactly where I wanted to be.”

Duckworth summarizes John Wooden (Coach): “. . . though a team has to do a million things well, figuring out the overarching vision is of utmost importance.”

Duckworth explains her concept of Goal Hierarchies and ways to prioritize life goals, professional goals, family goals, etc.

Warren Buffet’s (Billionaire) plan to prioritize goals includes three steps: (1) Make a list of 25 career goals, . . . (2) Circle the five highest priority goals, . . . (3) Avoid the remaining 20 goals at all costs, as they distract you from what matters most.

Here, the author details the path New Yorker Cartoon Editor, Bob Mankoff took to get to the top. He suggests aspiring Cartoonists submit 10 cartoons at a time, “because in cartooning, as in life, nine out of ten things never work out.” This is comparable to the number of chances soccer teams must produce, on average to score a goal.

In 1926, (Psychologist) Catharine Cox published her findings after studying 301 accomplished historical figures. She essentially uncovered passion and perseverance as two of the main indicators of potential success.



Grit Grows

The author here begins to discuss Grit between fraternal and identical twins, heredity, genetics, and nature vs nurture.

The “Flynn Effect” addresses significant IQ gains over the past century. Duckworth compares this concept to what she what she calls a “reverse Flynn Effect” in regard to Grit. In her studies, older individuals tend to score higher on the Grit Scale. She follows the discovery however with the idea that perhaps after years of surviving academics, raising children, living paycheck to paycheck, etc. develops Grit. Essentially we develop the capacity for long-term passion and perseverance.

Here, Duckworth shares a story of a young woman who changed her behaviors from one who was often late to school to someone who set two alarms to make sure she got to work on time. The change happened after the manager at her new job let her know she would be fired if she was ever late to work. “Lectures don’t have the effect of consequences.”

The physiological assets in common among “paragons of grit:”
Interest, Practice, Purpose, Hope

Part II: Growing Grit From The Inside Out

Interest

Hester Lacey (Journalist), in regard to comments shared by the most successful people: “I love what I do.” From here, Duckworth discusses choosing what one loves versus choosing a profession based on practicality.

Research shows “people are enormously more satisfied with their jobs when they do something that fits their personal interests.” Additionally, “people perform better at work when what they do, interests them.”

Duckworth: “. . . while we might envy those who love what they do for a living, we shouldn’t assume that they started from a different place than the rest of us.” The author then goes on to compare these thoughts on professions to other aspects of life, like relationships.

Science shows the most effective way of developing passion for work includes three parts, . . . (1) Discovery, (2) Development, and (3) Deepening. Potter Warren MacKenzie took ceramics in college only because all the painting classes were full. Chef Marc Vetri earned “C”s in school, but loved cooking with his grandmother on Sunday afternoons.

Psychologist Benjamin Bloom describes the development of skill through three stages, “The Early Years,” “The Middle Years” and “The Later Years.” The Early Years is the immediate subject for Duckworth, where The Middle and Later Years are discussed in the following two chapters. Warm and supportive encouragement set the stage for young people to go about skill acquisition with the right mindset, in comparison to “over-bearing parents and teachers.” Additionally, children who try many different sports before finding one to devote time to often are more likely to succeed over the long term. Duckworth here even touches on burnout and injuries among children who specialize too soon.

The parental influence of Jeff Bezos, creator of amazon.com is discussed through focus on the direction from his mother Jackie.

Interest comes from the latin: interesse. Interesse means to differ, . . . to be different.

Duckworth concludes this chapter sharing questions one can ask (of him/herself) to foster discovery. She encourages the reader to experiment, try, guess, etc.

Practice

Kaizen is Japanese for “continuous improvement.”

Anders Ericsson’s study of successful musicians led to a popular 10,000 hour rule and discussion of ten years of practice to significantly impact achievement levels. This is followed by discussion of “deliberate practice” and the avoidance of maintaining.



Kevin Durant (NBA Basketball star) and accomplished musicians are quoted on their insistence to focus deliberate practice toward areas of improvement. Ben Franklin learned to write by taking extensive notes on his favorite magazine, *The Spectator*. David Blaine trained himself to hold his breath for seventeen minutes. Scripps Spelling Bee contestants and accomplished dancers focus on deliberate practice they share is less enjoyable and takes significantly more effort.

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi discusses “flow” as performing at high levels, but feeling the performance is effortless. Duckworth brought Ericsson and Csikszentmihalyi together to discuss “Deliberate Practice” and “Flow.” Duckworth defines the difference as: “deliberate practice is a behavior, and flow is an experience.”

Rowdy Gaines (Swimmer) discusses how he never really liked to practice, but loved competing, being fit, traveling and meeting friends. “I swam around the world for a race that lasted forty-nine seconds.” His story is followed by similar ones from Swimmer Katie Ledecky and Rower Mads Rasmussen. Katie Ledecky was filmed at age 6 in a race she struggled greatly through. After finishing she was asked “how was it?” She replied: “Great! That was hard!”

Duckworth now details her own practice efforts to develop her TED Talk.

How can you experience Flow?

- (1) Know The Science
 - The key points behind Deliberate Practice
- (2) Make It a Habit
 - Routines of Charles Shulz (Peanuts Cartoonist) and Maya Angelou (Poet)
- (3) Change The Way You Experience It
 - Here, the author discusses the change for Kindergarten children after being encouraged to learn to walk, speak, etc. to now beginning to feel embarrassment, fear and shame.

Teachers are actually now being instructed to commit errors on purpose to show children how to recover from mistakes.

Purpose

Benjamin Bloom's "Later Years" are discussed at the beginning of chapter 8.

Aristotle was among the first to recognize two paths to pursue happiness. Eudaimonic means focused on a life purpose, challenges and growth. Hedonic refers to a focus on increased pleasure and reduction of pain. Freud claimed people are driven by the "Pleasure Principle." Duckworth finds the grittiest of people connect their efforts to a world beyond their own.

The next few pages are dedicated to discussing the differences between choosing a job, a career or a calling.

Joe Leader is now the Senior Vice President at NYC Transit. He started as an intern and worked his way up.

Michael Baim (Professor), studies well-being through Mindfulness. "What many patients needed was to stop and breathe and fully connect with their lived experience."

"Only the fund-raisers who expressed stronger prosocial motives *and* who found the work intrinsically engaging made more calls and, in turn, raised more money for the university."

Aurora and Francisco Fonte own a Facility Services company and tie all their success to feeling a responsibility toward their employees and customers.

Kat Cole started as a server at Hooters, but took over in the kitchen after a cook quit in the middle of a shift. She did it because she was curious to see if she could do it, and wanted to help. She eventually was training kitchen employees and helping with office operations. She also took over at the bar when a Bartender quit and even ran shifts after a Manager quit. In a six month period, she had worked every job in the building. She eventually was asked to help open restaurants in Australia, Mexico City, the Bahamas and Argentina. By 26, she was a Vice President. She helped expand the brand to over 400 cities in 28 countries. At 32, Cinnabon recruited her to take over as their President. Within four years, there sales exceeded a billion dollars.



Three ways to Cultivate a Sense of Purpose

- (1) Reflect on how the work you're doing can make a positive contribution to society.
- (2) Think about how, in small but meaningful ways, you can change your current work to enhance its connection to your core values.
- (3) Find inspiration in a purposeful role model.

Hope

Angela Duckworth details the story behind the “B” she received in college and how it became the grade she was most proud of.

Psychologists Marty Seligman and Steve Maier (1964) performed an experiment with dogs that led to recognition of “learned helplessness.” Marty followed that experiment and worked with (Psychiatrist) Aaron Beck to compare Optimists and Pessimists and their responses in similar situations.

- Pessimists are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression.
- Optimists outperform Pessimists in various occupations.

Beck later studied the differing subjective interpretations of similar objective events. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy uses a patient's thoughts and self-talk as a target for therapy. Duckworth: “We can practice interpreting what happens to us and responding as an Optimist would.”

Duckworth details combining her Grit Scale with Seligman's Optimism Evaluation. Their finding: “happiness wasn't just the consequence of performing well at work, it might also be an important cause.” Optimistic Teachers are grittier, happier, and have students who achieve more.

Henry Ford: “Whether you think you can, or think you can't - you're right.”

Here, Duckworth introduces the research of Carol Dweck and her findings on “Growth” vs “Fixed” Mindsets.

Author James Baldwin: “Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”

Dweck's findings show that children develop a “Fixed Mindset” when their parents react to mistakes as if they're problems. This remains true even when parents promote a “Growth Mindset.” This concept is strengthened with discussion of body language.



Steve Maier recently followed up on his 1964 Learned Helplessness study putting rats in a similar situation. He's continuing the study of Helplessness and Mastery. He shares he is concerned for children who grow up in poverty, but also for children who grow without experiencing failure.

Growth Mindset —> Optimism —> Perseverance
Fixed Mindset —> Pessimism —> Giving Up

Duckworth touches on the same science Daniel Coyle shared in *The Talent Code* when she discusses the growth of myelin while learning a new challenge.

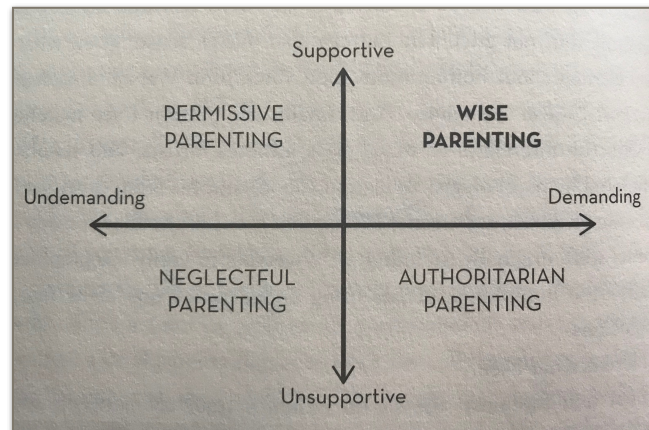
Three steps to boost Optimism and a Growth Mindset

- (1) Update your beliefs about intelligence and talent.
- (2) Practice optimistic self-talk
- (3) Ask for a helping hand.

Part III: Growing Grit From The Outside In

Parenting for Grit

Duckworth uses Chapter 10 to share stories of the Quarterback Steve Young and Comic Francesca Martinez showing the difference between “Supportive” and “Demanding” parents.



Larry Steinberg (Psychologist): “. . . teens with warm, respectful, and demanding parents earned higher grades in school, were more self-reliant, suffered from less anxiety and depression, and were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior.”

The author shares the importance of modeling Grit by discussing how children copy the actions of adults and defining the differences between “imitation” and “emulation.” Duckworth also shares the unintended comments made by sending a child to an extracurricular event versus taking a child to the event.

The focus is now put on “supportive” and “demanding” coaches, teachers, mentors and bosses. Teachers who use the phrase “I have very high expectations and I know you can reach them,” develop grittier students.

The Playing Fields of Grit

The importance and nature of extracurricular activities is the focus of the beginning of this chapter. Duckworth contends: “School is hard, but not intrinsically interesting. Texting is interesting, but not hard. Ballet can be both.”

Margo Gardner (Psychologist) found correlations between children who spend more than a year in an extracurricular activity are more likely to graduate from college, to get a job and to make more money.

Bill Gates, when hiring programmers to work at Microsoft assigned potential employees a task that would take hours of tedious work. The test proved nothing other than whether or not a programmer would finish what they began.

The Corresponsive Principle shares that the situations a person will gravitate to will also enhance the characteristics that brought them there in the first place.

Duckworth shares thoughts on insisting children go to practice for the events they signed up to participate in.

Bill Fitzsimmons (Harvard, Dean of Admissions) bases an aspect of admittance into Harvard on Grit and the building of Character.

Robert Eisenberg (Psychologist) trained rats to work hard and found that “industriousness” can be learned.

“If you work hard, you’ll be rewarded. If you don’t, you won’t.”

The author closes the chapter by detailing the “Hard Thing” rule she demands her family buy into.

A Culture of Grit

Pete Carroll invited Angela Duckworth to visit the Seattle Seahawks and see how they develop their culture. During her studies here and in other places, she has found: “A distinct culture exists anytime a group of people are in consensus about how we do things here and why.” “If you’re a leader, and you want people in your organization to be grittier, create a grittier culture.”



Duckworth recalls conversations with Dan Chambliss (introduced in chapter 3), and touches on the how leaders can use conformity to get people to buy in, being aware of basic human drives to fit in. She shares that Chambliss was able to create a “corresponsive principle of personality development.” When an organization is able to help people understand why things are done the way they are within that group, the people inside that group begin to act accordingly and buy into why.

Sisu (“see-sue”) is a Finnish word referring to an inner strength, essentially perseverance. “Thinking of yourself as someone who is able to overcome tremendous adversity often leads to behavior that confirms that self-conception.”

Jamie Dimon (CEO, JP Morgan Chase) refers to the motto of his alma mater, “Grytte.” He uses the Old English definition in a 1897 yearbook from the Browning School: “Firmness, courage, determination . . . which alone win the crown of genuine success in all undertakings.”

Anson Dorrance’s (UNC Women’s Soccer Coach) “Competitive Caludron” is detailed here as well as commentary on many of the ideas he built the concept around (posting results, the memorization of Core Values, etc.)

The Academy at West Point is brought back into the spotlight here to touch on traditions that build respect through General Caslen's "Developmental Model." He describes the action of "leading from the front" to get cadets caught up standards they have.

Duckworth now returns to Pete Carroll and the Seattle Seahawks and more discussion on their culture. The Seahawks discuss viewing the notion of "competition" on the latin roots of the word. This way, the focus is "to strive together," . . . there is no focus on another person losing.