

Insights from Grit by Angela Duckworth

What does it mean to be ‘Gritty’?

“Grit is NOT at all about stubbornly pursuing—at all costs and ad infinitum—every single low-level goal on your list. Sure, you should try hard—even a little longer than you might think necessary. But don’t beat your head against the wall attempting to follow through on something that is, merely, a means to a more important end.”

– Angela Duckworth

- Gritty people are fixed on high-level pursuits but flexible on low-level goals, like the daily to-do list.
- Gritty people know the 'Why?' behind everything they do.
- Gritty live life as a marathon, not a sprint.
- Gritty are stubborn, but not stupid.
- Like a toddler learning to walk, gritty people don’t waste time being ashamed or feeling anxious because they are too busy seeking feedback and improving.
- When a gritty person gets a rejection slip, encounters a setback, or reaches a dead end, they are disappointed, even heartbroken. But not for long.
- Gritty people not only put in more hours than the next person, but they also fill their hours with intense undistracted focus.
- Gritty people embrace boredom and avoid environments of distraction.

How to Grow Your Grit

“Learning to stick to something is a life skill that we all have to develop.” – Angela Duckworth

Interest

“Whatever it is that you want to do, you’ll find in life that if you’re not passionate about what it is you’re working on, you won’t be able to stick with it.” – Jeff Bezos

Angela Duckworth was captivated by the question: “What makes people successful and why?” That question compelled her to get through graduate school. What question will compel you to stay gritty?

“Every gritty person I’ve studied can point to aspects of their work they enjoy less than others, and most have to put up with at least one or two chores they don’t enjoy at all. Nevertheless, they’re captivated by the endeavor as a whole.” – Angela Duckworth

Practice

“You must zero in on your weaknesses, and you must do so over and over again, for hours a day, week after month after year. To be gritty is to resist complacency. “Whatever it takes, I want to improve!” is a refrain of all paragons of grit, no matter their particular interest, and no matter how excellent they already are”. – Angela Duckworth

Love the act of improvement, be better than you were yesterday, and resist complacency.

The effort that you apply each day counts twice towards achievement:

Effort x Talent = Skill,
Skill x Effort = Achievement

Purpose

Angela surveyed over 16,000 American adults and found the following to be true:

“Grittier people are dramatically more motivated than others to seek a meaningful, other-centered life. Higher scores on purpose correlate with higher scores on the Grit Scale.” – Angela Duckworth

The desire to aid in the wellbeing of others is likely to sustain your interest and make you grittier.

How are your efforts benefiting the well-being of other people?

Hope

“Grit depends on a different kind of hope. It rests on the expectation that our own efforts can improve our future.” – Angela Duckworth

Grit requires an enduring belief that your skills are malleable and not set in stone.

Modern science shows that our brains continue to grow well past childhood. Daily experience continuously shapes the adult brain.

Recall a time you developed a skill that initially seemed impossible (i.e. playing an instrument, using a software program, public speaking, etc.), but you managed to successfully learn the skill with sustained effort.