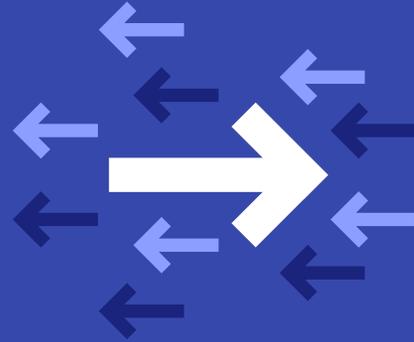


Grit

Passion and perseverance
for long-term goals

Strength of will



*“Ever tried. Ever failed. No Matter.
Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”*

—Samuel Beckett

Why does grit matter?

Excellence sometimes seems like the result of natural talent. But no matter how gifted you are—no matter how easily you climb up the learning curve—you do need to do that climbing. There are no shortcuts. Grit predicts accomplishing challenging goals of personal significance. For example, grittier students are more likely to graduate from high school, and grittier cadets are more likely to complete their training at West Point. Notably, in most research studies, grit and measures of talent and IQ are unrelated, suggesting that talent puts no limits on the capacity for passion and perseverance.

Pulse Check

To gauge how gritty you are at this point in your life, consider the following questions:

- I enjoy projects that take years to complete.
- I am working towards a very long-term goal.
- What I do each day is connected to my deepest personal values.
- There is at least one subject or activity that I never get bored of thinking about.

- Setbacks don’t discourage me for long.
- I am a hard worker.
- I finish whatever I begin.
- I never stop working to improve.

How do I encourage grit in others?

Model it. If you love what you do, let others know. Wear your passion on your sleeve. When you fail, openly share your frustration but go out of your way to point out what you learned from the experience. Emphasize playing the long game—life is a marathon, not a sprint.

Celebrate it. When you see grit, draw attention to it: *“Your work this past quarter has demonstrated enormous dedication. I know it wasn’t always easy.”*
Praise passion: “You’re so into this! That’s just awesome!”

Enable it. The paradox of grit is that the steely determination of individuals is made possible by the warmth and support of friends, families, teachers, and mentors. Don’t let people you love quit on a bad day.

My Values

Character LAB



PAGE 1: Overview

PAGE 2: Activity

PAGE 3: Example

How long does it take?

15 minutes

How do I do it?

First, identify 2-3 values, then write about why they are important to you.

How does it work?

By reflecting on your values in writing, you can affirm your identity and self-worth, creating a virtuous cycle of confidence, effort, and achievement.

Inspired by: Cohen, G. L., & Sherman, D. K. (2014). The psychology of change: self-affirmation and social psychological intervention. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 65, 333-371.

“If only I can be myself, I’ll be satisfied.”

—Anne Frank

My Values

Character LAB

EXAMPLE

Read this list of values and think about each one. Circle 2 to 3 that are most important to you.

- Athletic ability
- Art and literature
- Creativity, discovering, or inventing things to make a difference in the world
- Independence
- Kindness and generosity
- Living in the moment
- Membership in a social group (such as your community, racial group, or school club)
- Music
- My community
- My moral principles
- Nature and the environment
- Relationships with friends and family
- Sense of humor
- Success in my career
- Other: _____

Clear first value

In a few sentences, describe why the selected values are important to you. Focus on your thoughts and feelings, and don't worry about spelling, grammar, or how well-written it is.

My relationships with my friends and family are important to me because they make me who I am. My mom taught me so many important things about how to be kind and how to make my favorite foods and how to be brave. My sister and I fight sometimes, but she always has my back and makes sure I laugh when I am in a mood.

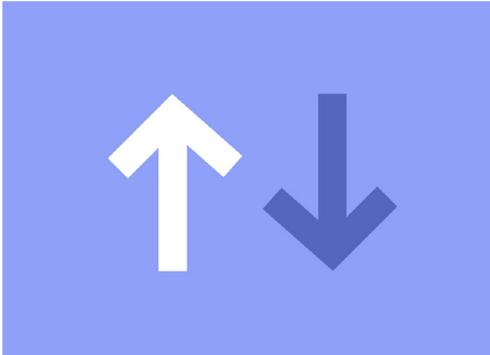
Clear second value

stories of personal significance

Music is also important to me. When I listen to music, I can be somewhere totally different. My favorite songs make me feel better even when I'm totally messed up. Listening to music with my friends is my favorite thing to do.

gives multiple details about value

Two Stories



PAGE 1: Overview

PAGE 2: Activity

PAGE 3: Example

How long does it take?

15 minutes

How do I do it?

In this writing activity, you reflect on a time when you succeeded and the steps you took to succeed, and also a time when you failed and what you learned from that.

How does it work?

People learn from experience by incorporating their experiences into a coherent story. Researchers found that you grow if your life story extracts the good from the bad and if it emphasizes your agency.

Inspired by: Jones, B. K., Destin, M., & McAdams, D. P. (2018). Telling better stories: Competence-building narrative themes increase adolescent persistence and academic achievement. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 76*, 76-80.

Two Stories



1 Everyone occasionally experiences failures. Think about a time you feel you *failed* at something. For example, you might write about a time you lost in a competition or didn't attain a goal that was important to you.

How did the failure happen? Include as many details as you can.

Describe at least one way in which this failure changed you for the better.

2 Think about a time you *succeeded* at something important to you. This success can be from any area of your life: school, extracurricular activities, hobbies, or personal relationships, for example.

How did the success happen? Include as many details as you can.

What steps did you take to make this success a reality?

Two Stories

Character LAB

EXAMPLE

1 Everyone occasionally experiences failures. Think about a time you feel you *failed* at something. For example, you might write about a time you lost in a competition or didn't attain a goal that was important to you.

How did the failure happen? Include as many details as you can.

Does not have to be failing grade → Last year, I ran for student government but didn't win. I wanted to be class secretary but so did Mariah. We both

Gives details about story → campaigned but she won. I worked hard to make posters and campaign but it just didn't work.

Describe at least one way in which this failure changed you for the better.

Clear positive outcome → I met a lot of new kids in my grade who I didn't really know. I was really upset when I lost but I am still proud of myself for running because it was brave.

→ States impact on them

2 Think about a time you *succeeded* at something important to you. This success can be from any area of your life: school, extracurricular activities, hobbies, or personal relationships, for example.

How did the success happen? Include as many details as you can.

I got an A+ on my project about ancient Egypt. I made a diorama and a poster and a website about my topic of mummies. I read so much about them. I was happy that my work got me the A+.

Details about story

What steps did you take to make this success a reality?

- Read all the books my teacher recommended *Specific steps, not just "worked hard"*
- Watched videos online
- Asked my mom for help *Different kinds of steps*
- Redid my poster when paint spilled
- Typed all the things I learned on my webpage.
- Asked for feedback

Grit Endnotes

About these endnotes

This is where we provide references and in-depth information about everything in the Grit playbook.

Acknowledgements

We honor and thank the scientists whose research inspired this Playbook. In particular, we thank Anders Ericsson for working with our designers and educators to bring Expert Practice to classrooms everywhere. We are likewise indebted to Brady Jones, Mesmin Destin, and Dan McAdams for encouraging our adaptation of their work, which resulted in the Two Stories activity. Finally, we thank Geoff Cohen for sharing his research on self-affirmation and the My Values activity. Any errors or omissions are ours.

How we define this strength

See Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) for the first academic paper written on the concept of grit. But as the introduction of this paper suggests, the idea that have an enduring passion and the capacity to work hard, through thick and thin, has a very long past.

Ever tried. Ever failed.

See Beckett, 1995, p.89.

Do what you love

See Ferris, 2017, p.197. Josh Waitzkin has achieved world-class levels of skill in both chess and martial arts.

The result of natural talent

There is a tendency to favor naturals over strivers (Tsay, 2015). For example, people rate the same work as higher-quality and its creators

as more likely to succeed if they're described as "naturals" as opposed to "strivers." Upon scrutiny, many feats attributed to natural talent are actually the result of systematic practice (Ericsson & Faivre, 1988).

Accomplishing challenging goals of personal significance

Grit predicts final ranking in the Scripps National Spelling Bee (Duckworth et al., 2007), completion of Green Beret training, and job retention among sales representatives (Eskreis-Winkler et al., 2014) as well as teachers (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). For a systematic review, see Eskreis-Winkler, Gross, and Duckworth (2016).

grittier students are more likely to graduate

See Eskreis-Winkler, Duckworth, Shulman, and Beal (2014). Note that grit is not the only factor, or even the most important factor, in determining graduation from high school or college.

grittier cadets are more likely to complete

Grit Scale scores from the second day of training at the United States Military Academy, West Point predict completion of the first summer of training, nicknamed "Beast Barracks" (Duckworth et al., 2007) as well as graduation rates four years later (Kelly, Matthew, & Bartone, 2014). Likewise, grittier Green Berets are also more likely to complete their training (Eskreis-Winkler, Duckworth, Shulman, and Beal (2014).

grit and measures of talent and IQ are unrelated

See Duckworth et al. (2007).

Pulse Check

These items are adapted from the Short Grit Scale (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009). You can find longer, validated scales on this page: <http://angeladuckworth.com/research> (Duckworth et al., 2007; Duckworth & Quinn, 2009).

My Values

See Cohen and Sherman (2014) for a review of research on affirming one's values. The benefits of this brief activity are remarkable, particularly for individuals whose identity and self-worth are challenged by features of their situation.

Two Stories

See Jones, Destin, and McAdams (2018). It is well-established that accounts of past life events are an important part of our identity (McAdams & Pals, 2006). This study suggests that shifting the way we think about important life events can also influence our motivation and behavior in the present and future as well.

Expert Practice

See Ericsson and Pool (2016) for an accessible summary of several decades of research on how human expertise develops.

If only I can be myself...

See Anne Frank, 1991, p.214. Anne Frank was a young Jewish victim of the Holocaust.

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