

## Building Grit - Improve Performance With Grit

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### **Building Grit**

Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth, a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania, worked with Dr. Seligman. In her application to the program, Ms. Duckworth stated that she had done extensive teaching and volunteering in public schools, summer programs, and universities. What she found was that what was needed to improve education was not the schools but the students themselves. Dr. Duckworth and her team went on to prove that the common denominator among spelling bee finalists, successful West Point cadets, salespeople, and teachers who not only stick with but improve in their performance, is grit.

In her book *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, she defines **grit** as a distinct combination of passion, resilience, determination, and focus that allows a person to maintain the discipline and optimism to persevere in their goals, even in the face of discomfort, rejection, and a lack of visible progress for years, or even decades. Dr. Duckworth and her team created a test called the Grit Scale, and they discovered that a person's grit score can predict their achievement in difficult situations, and that grit is a greater predictor of success in life than intelligence, family background and income, and grades in school.

The exciting news for all parents is that grit can be cultivated in ourselves and our children. Dr. Duckworth is the founder and CEO of Character Lab [characterlab.org/](http://characterlab.org/) where parents and teachers can find actionable advice based on science. On the website, you can find out where you are on the **grit scale**. Or you can sign up to get sixty second "Tips of the Week" on everything from "How to Benefit from Boredom" to "The Soul of Empathy."

There are playbooks on assorted topics. The one on **grit** gives the following tips on how to encourage grit in others--my children, family, co-workers and friends:

- **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 difficult day.

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