

Developing Grit: What It Is, the Science Behind It, and How You Can Build It

Grit—the passion and perseverance for long-term goals—is often hailed as a critical factor in success.

According to psychologist Angela Duckworth, who popularized the concept in her book ***Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance***, grit is not just about hard work; it's about **sustaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress.**

And the good news is that grit can be developed.

But Isn't Grit Inherited?

While some aspects of personality, like resilience and conscientiousness, may have genetic influences, grit is not something you are simply born with or without.

Research by Duckworth and others suggests that grit is **largely cultivated through experience and intentional practice.** The more you work at developing persistence and passion, the more gritty you become.

The Science Behind Grit

Grit is closely related to other psychological traits, such as self-control, perseverance, and passion. It requires not only **maintaining effort but also finding the motivation to keep going.**

Here's a breakdown of the science:

1. **Neuroplasticity:** The brain is adaptable. By persevering through challenges, you reinforce neural pathways that make future perseverance easier. The more you practice grit, the more "natural" it becomes for your brain to approach difficult tasks with resilience.
2. **Growth Mindset:** A growth mindset (the belief that abilities can be developed through effort) is crucial for grit. People with a growth mindset view challenges as opportunities to learn, which motivates them to persevere. Research by Carol Dweck has shown that those who believe their talents can grow through hard work are more likely to develop grit than those with a fixed mindset.
3. **Long-term Goals and Motivation:** According to Duckworth, grit relies on having a clear, long-term goal that provides purpose and drives you forward. Passion for

a goal sustains your energy and focus, while perseverance pushes you through difficult times.

Tangible Steps to Develop Grit

If you feel your grit is lacking, don't worry—there are actionable steps you can take to build it:

1. **Set Long-Term Goals:** Identify a goal that excites you and brings long-term meaning. Grit requires a target to aim for, something that gets you through challenges because it's worth the effort.
2. **Break Goals into Sub-Goals:** Tackling an overwhelming long-term goal can feel impossible. Break it down into manageable, short-term tasks. Celebrating small wins helps you stay motivated and focused.
3. **Cultivate a Growth Mindset:** Remind yourself that failure is part of the process. Embrace mistakes as learning opportunities. Practicing self-compassion during setbacks prevents burnout and helps you bounce back.
4. **Practice Consistency:** Building grit means showing up even when you don't feel like it. Consistent effort, even in small amounts, is better than bursts of energy followed by burnout. Establish a routine and stick to it.

5. **Visualize Success and Obstacles:** Mental contrasting, a method of envisioning your goals while simultaneously acknowledging the obstacles, can help build grit. This allows you to prepare for challenges ahead of time and strengthen your resolve to overcome them.

6. **Find Purpose in What You Do:** Studies have shown that when people connect their work to a greater purpose, they are more likely to persevere. Purpose fuels passion, which, in turn, fuels grit.

7. **Seek Feedback and Reflect:** Continuous improvement is essential. Ask for feedback, reflect on your progress, and adjust your strategies. Feedback, especially when constructive, fosters learning and resilience.

8. **Build Resilience through Adversity:** Embrace challenges that push you outside your comfort zone. The more you endure difficult situations and succeed, the more grit you develop.

Obscure but Effective Ways to Build Grit

While the more common strategies for developing grit involve persistence and mindset, here are a few lesser-known tactics:

1. Cold Showers or Exposure to Controlled Discomfort: Enduring small, controlled discomforts, like cold exposure, helps build mental toughness. The Wim Hof Method is an example where cold exposure and breathing exercises are used to train resilience.

2. Voluntary Hardship: Engaging in activities like fasting or digital detoxes trains your mind to handle discomfort, making you more resilient when you face challenges that require grit.

3. Journaling for Grit: Regularly writing about your goals and reflecting on progress fosters long-term perseverance. Research shows that goal-setting combined with reflection increases commitment and follow-through.

4. Surround Yourself with Gritty People: We're often influenced by the people we surround ourselves with. Being part of a gritty community—whether it's peers, mentors, or coworkers—creates a feedback loop of motivation and persistence.

Grit isn't something reserved for a select few—anyone can develop it.

It's a skill honed by setting meaningful goals, pushing through adversity, and embracing growth. By adopting a growth mindset and practicing perseverance in the face of challenges, you can develop the mental toughness needed to accomplish the things you're meant to do and be in this life.