**Grit is a factor of success**

Herald Journal: Tuesday, October 29, 2013

By Bruce Johns | [1 comment](http://news.hjnews.com/allaccess/article_5fa9ec60-4025-11e3-ad21-0019bb2963f4.html#user-comment-area)

“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.” — Thomas Edison

What is it within extraordinary achievers that makes them extraordinary? Is it exceptional talent? In many cases, the answer is a resounding yes. But a growing body of research shows that top achievers in many fields are not geniuses or former child prodigies, but rather reasonably bright people who dedicated a tremendous amount of time and effort to their craft — honing their skills and persevering in the face of setbacks. Dr. Angela Duckworth calls it grit.

Gritty people are more likely to achieve success in whatever they tackle. Grit is only faintly related to IQ, but it is highly related to successful outcomes. In other words, less intelligent or less talented people with grit may outperform the more gifted who lack it. Grit explains why some folks with lower ACT/SAT scores, nevertheless, achieve high GPA’s in college. Children with grit are more likely to survive into later rounds of the National Spelling Bee, mainly because they outwork their rivals in their preparations.

Examples of grit are everywhere. In “Talent is Overrated: What Really Separates World Class Performers from Everybody Else,” author Geoff Colvin says top violinists practice more than twice as many hours as less accomplished peers. Tiger Woods began playing golf as a toddler, under his father’s coaching but didn’t start winning major titles until he had been honing his game daily for 20 years. Dr. Martin Seligman says, “Unless you’re a genius, I don’t think that you can ever do better than your competitors without a quality like grit.” David Baker, author of seven books of poetry, says, “Unfortunately, no one comes in my window and whispers poems to me. I may work on a single poem for weeks or months and write 60 or 70 drafts, only to decide that draft 22 was the good one.” Indiana University’s Jonathan Plucker says Mozart, who once reported that an entire symphony appeared before him, mentioned in his next paragraph that he refined that work for months afterward.

The combined effect of talent, grit, drive, and passion can be seen locally whenever Dr. Craig Jessop raises his baton. A Millville native, Jessop is the former director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and is a world class conductor who came home to Cache Valley. As members of the American Festival Chorus will tell you, drilling for perfection is as natural to Jessop as eating ice cream is for the rest of us — and apparently as enjoyable. One of his favorite sayings is, “Music is 90 percent craft and 10 percent art.” During six-hour Saturday rehearsals, he gives everyone but himself a break. He spends untold private hours reviewing musical scores and listening to performances which allows him to hear the exact moment the chorus aligns, even briefly, with the musical universe. He also hears every diversion. And while he may not be able to squeeze out every drop he wants from his performers, his vision and grit inspire his protégés to heights beyond that which any of them imagined.

Watch for grit. Good things tend to follow.

———

Dr. Bruce Johns is a clinical psychologist with 30 years of experience. He can be reached at [brucerjohns@gmail.com](mailto:brucerjohns@gmail.com).