Grit

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ANGELA DUCKWORTH

Angela Lee Duckworth was born and raised in the Philadelphia suburb of Cherry Hill, New Jersey. As she explains in *Grit*, her father—a Chinese immigrant who worked as a chemist for the massive chemical company DuPont but always dreamed of achieving success as an academic researcher—was obsessed with "geniuses" and frequently distraught to realize that there weren't any in his family. Despite not being born a "genius," Duckworth went on to study neurobiology at Harvard University and graduate with honors. After college, she spent two years establishing and directing Boston's Summerbridge (now Breakthrough) academic summer program for underserved middle school students. Then, she went to Oxford University, where she earned a master's degree in Neuroscience on a Marshall Scholarship, and joined the prestigious but controversial multinational consulting firm McKinsey for a year. Next, she taught middle and high school math and science for five years. In 2002, Duckworth began her PhD in psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. Many of the experiments she discusses in *Grit* were part of her graduate work studying the effects of self-discipline and grit on achievement in settlings like the National Spelling Bee and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. In 2007, she created the Grit Scale questionnaire, popularized the concept of grit in academic psychology, and became a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2013, she won a MacArthur Fellowship for her research, and she became a household name with the publication of *Grit* in 2016. In addition to her position in the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Psychology, Duckworth also holds secondary positions at the university's Graduate School of Education and Wharton School of Business. As of 2021, she also runs the Character Lab, a nonprofit dedicated to science-based personality development for children, and co-hosts the Freakonomics spin-off podcast *No Stupid Questions*.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Duckworth's work is particularly indebted to the generation of psychologists and neuroscientists that preceded her, including Benjamin Bloom, Carol Dweck, and especially her doctoral advisor Martin Seligman, who started the positive psychology movement in the 1990s. However, her research on grit is part of a long psychological tradition stretching back at least to 1907, when the influential American psychologist William James noted the difference between *having* talent and actually *using* it in the essay "The Energies of Men." The word "grit" was already in common usage in the mid-1800s, when it appeared in the work of writers like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Horatio Alger. From 1885 to 1993, there was even a weekly national newspaper called *Grit*, which shows how the concept has long been central to American identity. In particular, at the turn of the 20th century, "grit" was frequently viewed as the personality trait that enabled poor, rural, and immigrant Americans to overcome hardship and rise into the upper classes. At the same time, affluent families worried that their children might not maintain their class status in the U.S.'s highly unequal society because they did not face enough hardship to develop "grit." The concept of grit fell out of favor during much of the mid-20th century, with some exceptions (like Charles Portis's prominent 1968 novel *True Grit*). However, grit has returned to public view through Duckworth and her collaborators' research, which is the first to rigorously define and measure it. Duckworth's work has popularized the concept of grit and spurred intense debates among psychologists, journalists, and particularly educators. Indeed, the clear social and economic parallels between the early 20th and early 21st centuries have led many education scholars to criticize Duckworth for explaining educational disparities through individual personality differences rather than widespread social and economic inequality.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

At the end of *Grit*, Duckworth recommends numerous titles from fellow psychologists she cites throughout the book, including Carol Dweck's *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (2006), Martin Seligman's *Learned Optimism: How To Change Your Mind and Your Life* (1991), Anders Ericsson and Robert Pool's *Peak: Secrets from the New Science of Expertise* (2016), and Daniel Willingham's *Why Don't Students Like School: A Cognitive Scientist Answers Questions About How the Mind Works and What It Means for the Classroom* (2009). She also directs readers to books on motivation and achievement by popular journalists, such as Daniel H. Pink's *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (2009), Paul Tough's *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* (2012), and Charles Duhigg's *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* (2012). At key moments in *Grit*, Duckworth also cites the work of pioneering earlier psychologists like Benjamin Bloom, who wrote *Developing Talent in Young People* (1985) based on interviews with 120 "immensely talented individuals." Duckworth also references writings by many of her "paragons of grit," including Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll, who explains his coaching philosophy *Win Forever: Live, Work, and Play Like a Champion* (2010). Finally, Duckworth's critics include investigative journalist Jesse Singal, who dedicates a chapter to

her work in his 2021 book *The Quick Fix: Why Fad Psychology Can't Cure Our Ills*, and the psychologist Marcus Credé, who was widely recognized for the critical 2017 paper "Much ado about grit: A meta-analytic synthesis of the grit literature." Finally, education scholar Ethan W. Ris has published the paper "Grit: A Short History of a Useful Concept" to give much-needed historical context to the lively scholarly and policy debates around Duckworth's work.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance
- **When Written:** 2008–2016
- **Where Written:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- **When Published:** May 3, 2016
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Psychology, self-help, education
- **Antagonist:** The bias toward talent, "genius," learned helplessness, fixed mindset
- **Point of View:** First Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Grit – Passion = Drudgery. Duckworth's work became widely popular after *Grit*'s publication, and schools around the U.S. started formulating new curricula to boost academic performance by teaching grit. But Duckworth was critical of many of these efforts, which she argued overemphasized *perseverance* to the exclusion of *passion*. The goals that schools want to achieve—like higher test scores—are simply not interesting or purposeful to most young people, Duckworth argued, so they have little to do with grit.

Practice Makes Perfect. The six-minute TED Talk that Duckworth describes painstakingly preparing, practicing, and delivering in her book is now one of the most-watched TED Talks of all time.

PLOT SUMMARY

In *Grit*, psychologist Angela Duckworth argues that, contrary to popular belief, the secret to extraordinary achievement isn't talent, "**genius**," or IQ, but rather *effort*. Specifically, over more than a decade of intensive psychological research, Duckworth has found that the most successful people tend to have grit—which combines a sustained commitment to specific long-term goals (or *passion*) with the ability to work tirelessly toward those goals and easily bounce back from failure (or *perseverance*).

Grit predicts achievement because it fosters the most effective approach to problem-solving. Gritty people clearly understand what they want to accomplish and why. They dedicate time and energy to building the skills they need to succeed, then consistently apply those skills until they do. Perhaps most importantly, they never give up on their primary goals. Duckworth's book has three parts. In the first, she introduces the fundamentals of grit. Next, she explains how to identify and develop the four key traits of grit—interest, practice, purpose, and hope. Finally, she teaches parents, educators, and leaders how to help others cultivate grit.

Duckworth opens by recalling how, when she was growing up, her father always told her that she was "no genius." Like many people, he believed that talent is inherent and fixed. But ironically, Duckworth won a MacArthur "Genius Grant" for proving him wrong and showing that grit matters more than talent. For instance, at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, academic scores and athletic performance don't predict who makes it through the grueling six-week summer program called Beast Barracks. But grit *does*, at least when measured by Duckworth's Grit Scale questionnaire. Similarly, Duckworth has found that grittier salespeople are more likely to stay in their jobs, grittier high schoolers are more likely to graduate, and grittier spelling bee contestants are more likely to make it far in the National Spelling Bee.

Duckworth first became interested in grit while teaching middle-school math in New York City. She realized that her hardworking students earned higher grades than her more mathematically talented students, which flew in the face of conventional wisdom—most Americans attribute success to talent, not hard work. So does McKinsey, the prestigious consulting firm where Duckworth worked before becoming a teacher. But focusing on talent has clear downsides. For instance, students who see themselves as untalented tend to give up on academic challenges rather than working to improve their skills. In other words, people who focus on talent miss out on the opportunity to grow.

Yet all the scientific evidence shows that true achievement almost always comes from hard work. It's tempting to attribute the success of extraordinary athletes and artists to natural talent, especially because that suggests that normal people haven't done anything wrong and can't possibly hope to compete with them. But, in reality, anyone can achieve greatness if they work hard enough, under the right conditions. Duckworth explains her theory of achievement in two equations: "talent × *effort* = skill," and then "skill × *effort* = achievement." Notably, "effort counts twice." That's why grit is so much more important than talent. Accomplished figures like lifelong potter Warren MacKenzie and dyslexic novelist John Irving show that to truly achieve great things, people must work hard to build their skills and then work just as hard to apply them.

Duckworth includes her Grit Scale and encourages the reader to measure their own grit. The scale uses 10 questions to

measure grit's two key components: passion and perseverance. Passion isn't about committing to something very intensely for a short period of time, but rather about pursuing the "*same* ultimate goal in an abiding, loyal, steady way" over the course of years. Gritty people understand how all of their smaller goals fit into their quest for their major goal, which guides them through life like a **compass**. They also persevere in difficult situations, like longtime *New Yorker* cartoonist Bob Mankoff, who sent thousands of cartoons to the magazine in the 1970s before it finally accepted his first one. Fortunately, Duckworth explains, people's grit scores tend to change over time, which shows that both passion and perseverance can be learned. So can gritty people's four key underlying traits: *interest*, *practice*, *purpose*, and *hope*.

First, gritty people almost always genuinely love what they do, which strongly motivates them to succeed at it. But people don't find their interests in a flash of inspiration—instead, they have to gradually discover and develop them over time. Duckworth argues that young people should experiment with a wide variety of different interests—and it's fine to discard ones that aren't a good fit. Later, as gritty people age, they deepen their interests: they stick with their field but learn to find novelty and excitement within it.

Second, gritty people put in endless practice to improve their skills. Specifically, they put in years of what psychologist Anders Ericsson calls deliberate practice, which means they identify their weaknesses and working as hard as possible to improve them. While deliberate practice is a grueling and repetitive way to develop skills, when gritty people actually *use* those skills, they often experience the state of total immersion and concentration known as flow.

Third, gritty people generally feels a sense of purpose, which means that they do their work in part because it benefits other people. Of course, they can *also* be motivated by self-interest—in fact, the combination of selfish and other-oriented motives tends to be most effective. To find a sense of purpose, Duckworth argues, young people should look for the connections between their work and their values, and they should seek out role models who also live purposefully.

Fourth and finally, gritty people have hope—specifically, they believe that they can overcome obstacles and improve their lives through their own effort. Psychologists Marty Seligman and Steve Maier have famously shown that people and animals who are exposed to uncontrollable suffering often learn to view themselves as helpless, while those who have some control over their suffering often become more optimistic and resilient. In fact, optimists are generally healthier, grittier, and more successful. They *believe* that they can overcome obstacles, so they *try* much harder to do so—and often, they succeed. Similarly, psychologist Carol Dweck has found that people with a growth mindset (who believe that they can improve their abilities through effort) tend to perform much better over time than those with a fixed mindset (who think that their level of ability is set in stone). Like Seligman and Maier, Dweck has shown that the key to developing a growth mindset is overcoming obstacles early in life.

In her last three chapters, Duckworth asks how people can teach *others* grit. First, she examines parenting. Some parents, like football player Steve Young's, believe that strict rules and high expectations are the key to raising gritty children. Others, like comedian Francesca Martinez's, favor "unconditional affection and support." But really, both are right: effective parents (and other adult role models) have to be both *supportive* and *demanding*. In other words, they have high standards for young people but support them through the process of achieving those standards.

In the next chapter, Duckworth argues that extracurricular activities offer young people a crucial opportunity to develop grit. Where children usually find school hard but not interesting and social time interesting but not hard, extracurriculars can be *both*. In fact, adolescents who stick with the same extracurriculars for several years tend to perform better in college. While there still isn't robust scientific evidence comparing children who do extracurricular activities with those who don't, Duckworth believes that the effect is clear: activities teach young people to value and even enjoy hard work.

Finally, Duckworth asks how groups—whether a school, corporation, sports team, or entire nation—can build "a culture of grit." Culture strongly shapes people's identities, and identity strongly shapes the way people make decisions. Therefore, Duckworth argues, joining high-grit cultures is a surefire way to become grittier. For instance, UNC-Chapel Hill women's soccer coach Anson Dorrance and Seattle Seahawks football coach Pete Carroll have both made grit central to their teams' cultures, and this has fueled their success.

Duckworth concludes by reiterating that the importance of grit is good news for her readers. If inherent talent were the only route to success, most people would simply have to give up, since few people are born geniuses. But since grit is more important—and it's possible to become grittier over time—*anyone* can become a genius and succeed if they work hard enough.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Angela Duckworth – Angela Duckworth is an influential American research psychologist who studies grit (which she defines as a combination of passion and perseverance). In *Grit*, she draws from hundreds of research studies and interviews with high-achievers to explain why grit is the most important personality trait for success in a wide variety of fields, ranging from art and research to business and sports. She also

emphasizes that grit can be both taught and learned, and she explains how her interest in grit has stemmed from her own experiences, like her relationship with her **genius**-obsessed father and her tenure at the management consulting firm McKinsey. Duckworth is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, a MacArthur Fellow, and the founder and director of the nonprofit Character Lab.

Jeff Bezos – Jeff Bezos is the founder and CEO of Amazon.com. In childhood and adolescence, Bezos spent his free time inventing gadgets and contraptions, and his mother supported him. Duckworth uses Bezos as an example of how young people who get to autonomously play with their interests in a supportive environment are more likely to form deep interests and develop grit as adults.

Benjamin Bloom – Benjamin Bloom was an influential educational psychologist who remains best known for his theory of learning goals ("Bloom's Taxonomy"). However, Duckworth cites Bloom's analysis of high achievers (from the book *Developing Talent in Young People*) as part of her theory of how people develop grit over the course of their lives. She argues that people develop their *interests* during what Bloom calls "the early years," build their skills through *practice* during what Bloom calls "the middle years," and find a sense of *purpose* in their work during what Bloom calls "the later years."

Pete Carroll – Pete Carroll is the Seattle Seahawks football team's head coach. His coaching philosophy is based around identifying and cultivating grit, and Duckworth cites him as an example of how leaders can build successful organizations by forming gritty cultures. As part of her research for *Grit*, Duckworth visited Carroll and met his team in Seattle.

Kat Cole – Kat Cole is an American businesswoman who rose from a waitressing job at Hooter's to become the company's executive vice president. Later on, she became the president of Cinnabon. Cole tells Duckworth that she succeeded because she cares about helping others recognize their own strengths, and Duckworth uses this as an example of how a sense of purpose fosters grit.

Cody Coleman – Cody Coleman is a computer scientist who, Duckworth argues, overcame poverty and a substandard education to succeed thanks to his grit. Duckworth points out that Coleman developed grit because key adults—including his brother and his high school math teacher—supported him and set high expectations for him. She cites Coleman in order to suggest that adults besides parents can serve as important role models of grit for young people.

Tom Deierlein – Tom Deierlein is a soldier who was shot in the pelvis on tour in Iraq. Although his doctors said he may never walk again, he dedicated himself to physical therapy, managed to walk, and then even ran a 10-mile race. He explained that he would never give up because persevering against challenges is part of his identity as a soldier. Duckworth uses Deierlein's remarkable recovery as an example of how people can succeed by making grit part of their identity.

Anson Dorrance – Anson Dorrance is the coach of the nationally dominant UNC-Chapel Hill women's soccer team, which won 21 of the first 31 NCAA Women's Soccer Championships. Every year, Dorrance gives his players a series of assessments (including the Grit Scale) and makes them memorize literary quotes that represent the team's values. Duckworth uses his coaching style as an example of how leaders can build a culture of grit in their organizations.

Duckworth's Father – Angela Duckworth's father was a chemist who proudly spent more than 30 years working for the chemical company DuPont after migrating from China to the U.S. His ideas about work, passion, and **genius** are relatively conventional, but they strongly contrast with Duckworth's research findings. For instance, he believed that people's success depends on their inborn talent, while Duckworth found that it depends more on grit. He also believed that young people should ignore their personal interests and choose stable, prestigious careers, while Duckworth has found that people are more likely to succeed when they follow their interests.

Anders Ericsson – Anders Ericsson was an internationally renowned Swedish psychologist who studied performance and expertise. Ericsson is best remembered for finding that people generally need to practice something for 10,000 hours over 10 years in order to become an expert at it. However, Duckworth focuses on Ericsson's research into deliberate practice. She argues that deliberate practice is the most efficient way to build skills, which is why high-grit people often use it to improve their performance.

Jeffrey Gettleman – Jeffrey Gettleman is a Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* journalist who worked in East Africa for many years. Duckworth first met Gettleman when they were both pursuing master's degrees at the University of Oxford. At the time, while Gettleman didn't yet know he wanted to be a journalist, he did know that he wanted to work in East Africa. Duckworth uses his interests as an example of how high-grit people organize their lives around specific long-term goals.

Jane Golden – Jane Golden is a Philadelphia-based arts activist who has directed the Mural Arts Program for more than three decades. Despite suffering from chronic pain, she still works tirelessly—often seven days a week—to help local artists create new murals around her city. Duckworth cites Golden to illustrate how people with grit merge their interests with a greater sense of purpose.

Steve Maier – Steve Maier is a highly influential neuroscientist who studies how the brain reacts to stress. He and Marty Seligman developed the concept of "learned helplessness" through electroshock experiments on dogs in the 1960s. In a later experiment, Maier found that rats who can *control* the

electric shocks they receive as adolescents grow into more courageous and resilient adults. Duckworth cites Maier's research to explain how people can develop the hope that is crucial to grit.

Marty Seligman – Marty Seligman is an influential American psychologist who studies depression, resilience, and optimism. He is widely known for founding the field of positive psychology and discovering the phenomenon of "learned helplessness" alongside Steve Maier in the 1960s. Seligman was also Duckworth's advisor during graduate school, and she remembers when he told her that she "ha[d]n't had a good idea in two years" because she had no theory to explain her findings about achievement. Now, they are colleagues and occasional research collaborators at the University of Pennsylvania.

Will Shortz – Will Shortz is a famous puzzle-maker who works as the crossword editor for *The New York Times*. Duckworth explains how Shortz's mother, a writer and crossword fan, consistently supported his childhood interest in the field. She uses Shortz's early life as an example of how people are more likely to develop the strong long-term passion necessary for grit if they are allowed to pursue their interests in a supportive environment as adolescents.

Marc Vetri – Marc Vetri is an award-winning Italian American chef from Philadelphia. Duckworth explains how Vetri developed his interest in cooking slowly over time, in part through cooking with his grandmother and in part because he entered the restaurant industry while trying (and failing) to make it as a musician. Vetri's life illustrates how people should *foster* interests, rather than expecting to find them in a sudden epiphany.

David Yeager – David Yeager is a developmental psychologist who studies adolescent behavior. Duckworth cites his research showing how students perform better in school when they feel a sense of interest and purpose in their schoolwork, as well as when they receive wise (supportive and demanding) feedback from teachers. This research shows how parents and teachers can create an optimal learning environment for teenagers to start building grit.

Steve Young – Steve Young is the successful former quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers. Duckworth explores how Young's strict but supportive parents helped him develop grit, work through his childhood anxiety, and succeed in sports. She also compares and contrasts Young's parents with Francesca Martinez's, who were also appropriately supportive and demanding (even though they may initially seem much more permissive).

MINOR CHARACTERS

Dan Chambliss – Dan Chambliss is an award-winning sociologist. While he primarily studies higher education, he also researched competitive swimming for many years, and Duckworth cites this work to explain how athletic success depends on grit.

Ta-Nehisi Coates – Ta-Nehisi Coates is an award-winning American writer and recipient of a MacArthur "Genius Grant." Duckworth concludes *Grit* by citing Coates's comment that learning to fail effectively is the key to successful writing.

Bill Damon – Bill Damon is an influential Stanford psychologist who studies how people develop a sense of purpose in their lives.

Lucy Duckworth – Lucy is Angela Duckworth's daughter. Duckworth uses episodes from Lucy's childhood to illustrate key principles about how young people develop grit.

Carol Dweck – Carol Dweck is a pioneering psychologist who is widely known for her research on implicit theories of intelligence—and specifically the difference between fixed and growth mindsets. Based on Dweck's research, Duckworth argues that adopting a growth mindset is one of the best ways to develop grit.

Robert Eisenberger – Robert Eisenberger is an organizational psychologist who has found that children (and rats) can learn to value hard work if they're presented with appropriate challenges. Duckworth cites Eisenberger's research to argue that children can build grit by joining interesting but challenging extracurricular activities.

Bill Fitzsimmons – Bill Fitzsimmons is Harvard University's long-serving admissions dean. He tells Duckworth that grit and achievement in extracurricular activities play an important role in admissions decisions because these qualities predict students' long-term success.

Rowdy Gaines – Rowdy Gaines is a three-time Olympic gold medalist swimmer. Duckworth cites his experimentation with different sports to illustrate how people discover their passion and his rigorous training routine to illustrate the importance of deliberate practice.

John Irving – John Irving is a bestselling novelist who has succeeded despite his severe dyslexia. Duckworth uses Irving as an example of how grit is more important for success than talent.

Hester Lacey – Hester Lacey is a British journalist who has interviewed hundreds of highly successful people for her column in the *Financial Times*. Duckworth frequently cites Lacey's insights from these interviews in order to corroborate her own research findings about grit and success.

Katie Ledecky – Katie Ledecky is the most successful female swimmer in world history. Duckworth cites examples from Ledecky's career to illustrate the concepts of flow and deliberate practice.

Warren MacKenzie – Warren MacKenzie was an internationally recognized American potter. Duckworth uses MacKenzie's art to demonstrate why "effort counts

twice"—meaning that grit is the key to both building and applying skills.

Bob Mankoff – Bob Mankoff is a cartoonist who served as *The New Yorker*'s longtime cartoon editor. Duckworth cites Mankoff's stubborn, years-long effort to get his first cartoon published as an example of why the perseverance involved in grit is crucial to long-term success.

Francesca Martinez – Francesca Martinez is a British comedian who has built a highly successful career despite suffering from cerebral palsy. Duckworth cites Martinez's loving parents—and compares them to Steve Young's—in order to illustrate why supportive, demanding parents help their children develop grit.

Friedrich Nietzsche – Friedrich Nietzsche was an influential 19th-century German philosopher. Duckworth cites Nietzsche's writings on expertise and **genius** to support her thesis that success depends more on grit than talent.

Chia-Jung Tsay – Chia-Jung Tsay is a business professor, organizational psychologist, and accomplished classical pianist who studies "naturalness bias"—or the common preference for attributing success to natural talent (**genius**) over hard work (grit). Duckworth also cites Tsay's life to illustrate how grit leads to success.

Warren Willingham – Warren Willingham was a psychologist who worked for the standardized test company Educational Testing Service. He conducted a massive study to see which personality traits best determined high school students' success in college. He found that follow-through—which Duckworth compares to grit—was the greatest predictor of academic and career success.

Amy Wrzesniewski – Amy Wrzesniewski is an organizational psychologist who studies how people find a sense of meaning and purpose in their work. She argues that whether people feel that their work is a job, a career, or a calling depends primarily on their individual values and perspectives.

TERMS

Grit – **Duckworth** defines grit as the combination of *passion*, or a steady commitment to specific long-term goals, and *perseverance*, or resilience and hard work.

Grit Scale – The Grit Scale is a 10-item questionnaire that **Duckworth** developed to measure grit. It asks respondents to rate whether they agree with statements like "I am a hard worker."

MacArthur "Genius Grant" – MacArthur Fellowships, commonly known as "Genius Grants," are yearly $625,000 prizes given to around 20 to 30 distinguished researchers, artists, or thinkers in any field. **Angela Duckworth** and **Ta-Nehisi Coates** have both received "Genius Grants."

Beast Barracks – Beast Barracks is a grueling six-week summer training program for new cadets at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

Deliberate Practice – Deliberate practice is a specific, highly effective, multi-step technique for training skills. The steps in deliberate practice are: identify one's weaknesses, set firm stretch goals to improve them, practice with full effort and concentration, gather and digest feedback about one's performance, and repeat.

Flow – Flow is the state of automatic concentration and complete immersion that people sometimes experience when performing activities that they have mastered.

Growth Mindset – According to psychologist **Carol Dweck**, a growth mindset is the assumption that intelligence and abilities can grow over time. People with growth mindsets tend to have more grit and achieve greater success over time because they treat failures as opportunities for improvement.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

PASSION, PERSEVERANCE, AND SUCCESS

American psychologist Angela Duckworth's book *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance* announces its main argument in its title. Most people wrongly assume that success depends on people's inborn talents, but Duckworth argues that effort—specifically the combination of passion and perseverance that she calls grit—is actually far more important. Duckworth began to understand the importance of grit while working as a middle school teacher, management consultant, and youth nonprofit leader. Then, she became a professional psychologist and conducted more than a decade of research on high achievers in fields as diverse as art, athletics, and academia. Duckworth's research has confirmed her hypothesis: grit is a key predictor of success. Specifically, gritty people succeed because they are passionate about a particular issue that's both interesting to them and meaningful to others, and they chase that passion with perseverance—which means they work tirelessly toward their goals, even when they experience major setbacks. Duckworth concludes that grit is the key ingredient for success because, while talent might determine people's potential, grit determines whether they translate that potential into actual *performance*.

Most people attribute success to talent, but Duckworth argues

that this explanation is completely wrong: success actually depends on grit. Duckworth uses her father as a typical example of how laypeople understand success. Duckworth's father constantly told her that she was "no **genius**"—he worried that she wasn't talented enough to succeed, as he thought that geniuses are born, not made. National surveys show that most Americans feel the same way: they attribute success primarily to inborn talent. But Duckworth argues that this commonsense explanation is wrong: the available scientific evidence shows that *effort* is more important than talent for success. For instance, sociologist Dan Chambliss has found that champion swimmers succeed by mastering many small habits over the course of years, and Duckworth's research has found that grit strongly predicts success in the National Spelling Bee and West Point's Beast Barracks summer program, while verbal IQ (for the Spelling Bee) and admissions scores (for Beast Barracks) do not. Thus, the common bias toward talent-based explanations actually distracts people from the truth. Duckworth's theory also explains *why* effort counts more than talent. She argues that to achieve their goals, people have to first build skills and then apply them. She defines this process through two equations: "talent × effort = skill" and "skill × effort = achievement." *Building* and *applying* skills both require effort, which is why Duckworth says that "effort counts twice." And Duckworth argues that the key to effort is grit—a steady long-term commitment to specific goals (passion) plus a stubborn insistence on pursuing those goals no matter what (perseverance). The dozens of gritty people Duckworth profiles throughout her book, like potter Warren MacKenzie and writer John Irving, show how grit is the key to effort, which is in turn the key to achievement.

Duckworth further links grit to success by breaking down the specific traits that make gritty people high achievers: *interest*, *practice*, *purpose*, and *hope*. First, gritty people have a strong *interest* in their field—which is why they willingly dedicate most of their time and energy to it. Whereas most people are disengaged at work and try out many different hobbies, gritty people find ways to love their work and deepen their interest in a *single* field over time. For instance, Jane Golden has been overseeing the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program for more than 30 years, but she's so passionate about getting to know the city, its communities, and its artists that she still gladly works late every day, often seven days a week. Golden shows that interest is the key to building the deep, consistent commitment that enables gritty people to succeed. Second, gritty people consistently *practice* to improve the skills that are crucial for success in their field. Specifically, they do deliberate practice, which means they specifically and intensively train to improve their weaknesses. For instance, Olympic gold medalist swimmers Rowdy Gaines and Katie Ledecky attribute their success primarily to their rigorous, punishing routines of deliberate practice. Without practice, Duckworth argues, nobody can reach the level of mastery necessary to truly stand out in their field. Third, gritty people generally feel a sense of *purpose* in their work, which means they want to help others through whatever they're doing. This makes their work more fulfilling and more strongly commits them to it. For instance, after college, Duckworth worked tirelessly to build a youth development program because she cared so strongly about helping her community. This shows how a sense of purpose can strongly motivate people to do important work that benefits others. Finally, gritty people have a special kind of *hope*—they believe that "[their] own efforts can improve [their] future." This encourages them to see failure as a learning experience, which leads them to keep trying and improving whenever they run into obstacles. Multiple studies have found that students and teachers with this kind of attitude—also known as a growth mindset—achieve superior academic outcomes. This shows why Duckworth argues that believing in one's own ability to improve is the first step to actually improving. People who don't believe they're inherently capable of improvement are much more likely to give up than to reach a high level in any field.

At the end of *Grit*'s first chapter, Duckworth writes, "*Our potential is one thing. What we do with it is quite another.*" As a psychologist, she hopes to correct conventional ideas about success and failure by showing that people should focus less on their potential and more on what they *do* with their potential. Still, grit isn't the *only* factor that affects people's success—as Duckworth notes in her conclusion, success also often requires traits like curiosity, conscientiousness, and, of course, talent. But it's still the most important, because it's the key factor that determines how much of their potential people actually achieve.

DEVELOPING GRIT

Even if talent is natural and unchangeable, Angela Duckworth argues, grit is learnable. This is excellent news for readers: since Duckworth believes that grit is the most important ingredient for success in most areas of life, she thinks that absolutely anyone can succeed if they learn to apply certain principles and techniques to their lives. As sociologist Dan Chambliss puts it, "greatness is many, many individual feats, and each of them is doable." Specifically, Duckworth argues that people can improve their *own* grit by developing the four traits that underlie it: interest, practice, purpose, and hope. Meanwhile, parents, teachers, colleagues, or even friends can help *others* develop grit by serving as role models and mentors. Because there are so many tried-and-true ways to build grit, Duckworth concludes that *anyone* can become gritty and successful if they're willing to put in the necessary work.

People can become grittier by working on the four key traits that underlie grit: interest, practice, purpose, and hope. First, people who want to build grit have to develop their interests.

While many people expect to discover their passion in a moment of insight, the empirical evidence suggests that successful people actually start by experimenting with many different interests, then gradually finding and developing their main passion over time. For instance, most Olympic athletes played and quit several sports as children before finding success in a particular one. Similarly, before they can reach the level of expertise required for true grit, young people need to experiment with different interests, usually for years, and then develop one particular interest for several *more* years. In fact, everyone has to pass through this process in order to develop true interests, which means that nobody is simply born with grit—all gritty people have had to develop it. Similarly, people can also actively cultivate a sense of purpose. Once they identify their interests, Duckworth argues, people ought to look for ways to serve others through their work and seek out role models who already dedicate their lives to serving others. This increases grit because it gives people an additional motivation to keep working toward a single goal and never give up when they encounter obstacles.

Next, people can build grit through deliberate practice, a special technique for improving skills. Most people don't know about deliberate practice and certainly don't do it, but scientists understand that it is the most effective way to train specific skills and have broken it down into a series of straightforward requirements. People should focus on their weaknesses, aim for specific goals that exceed their current ability, concentrate and work as hard as they can, seek critical feedback as soon as they're done, and repeat this whole cycle as much as possible (preferably by making it a habit). Through deliberate practice, Duckworth argues, people can master the skills necessary to perform at a high level in their field. Finally, Duckworth argues that people can develop the kind of hope and perseverance (or growth mindset) that is key to grit by taking on manageable challenges. In short, the more that people can successfully overcome smaller challenges, the more likely they are to try harder when they encounter larger ones. Marty Seligman and Steve Maier's research on rats suggests that the brain learns to respond to challenges people can control with courage, but to challenges they can't with hopelessness. Thus, Duckworth argues that people can train their own brains to persevere—and thereby develop grit—by deciding what kind of challenges to take on and thinking of their own abilities as changeable rather than fixed.

In addition to building grit "from the inside out," Duckworth argues, people can also help *others* build grit "from the outside in." First, adults—especially parents, but also teachers, mentors, or even friends—can help young people develop grit by modeling it. Specifically, gritty people should treat others with the same combination of support and high standards they have for themselves. Psychologists know that this helps young people become more confident, persistent, and passionate. For instance, psychologist David Yeager ran a study in which he gave students their teachers' essay comments with a post-it note that said, "*I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them.*" Students who received this note were twice as likely to revise and resubmit their drafts. If this minor signal can make such a difference, more comprehensive mentorship can transform people's lives, so long as it's both supportive and demanding. Next, Duckworth suggests that parents and mentors should help young people develop grit by seeking out *situations* that are both supportive and demanding. For instance, Duckworth strongly recommends signing children up for extracurricular activities like dance, sports, or music lessons, because this teaches them that it's possible for certain pursuits to be both fun and hard. It can also help them build their interests and learn deliberate practice. According to Duckworth, this sets young people up for the challenges they will face later in life. Finally, Duckworth argues that *culture* can effectively spread grit, because people who belong to the same group tend to reinforce one another's values. Thus, by joining a gritty culture—whether that of a team like the Seattle Seahawks, a corporation like JPMorgan, or even a country like Finland—people can both become and help others become grittier. Duckworth's advice is simple: "*to be grittier, find a gritty culture and join it.*"

The core lesson of *Grit* is that achievement depends more on effort than talent. As Duckworth puts it, skill is just talent multiplied by effort, and achievement is skill multiplied by effort again. But grit itself is a skill—and arguably the single most important one for achievement. This means that people can build it through effort, and this is why Duckworth highlights different strategies for doing so throughout her book.

Duckworth suggests that, because psychologists study the human mind systematically, they should be the principal authorities on human achievement and improvement. In fact, Duckworth initially became a psychologist because she believed that research was the best way to understand and foster human achievement. After noticing the limits of talent-based explanations while working as a management consultant and middle school teacher, she had a hunch that grit was actually the key to achievement. But she knew she had to test this hypothesis experimentally if she wanted to truly understand how people can use grit to improve their lives. In other words, she knew that experimental psychology is the best method for evaluating hypotheses about human nature because it allows researchers to test people's perceptions, thoughts, and decisions in real-world environments. This is why, unlike many popular psychology books, *Grit* constantly grounds theoretical explanations in experimental evidence. Duckworth always describes the studies that support her claims, and she carefully evaluates whether these studies adequately support various conclusions about human achievement. She only uses anecdotes to illustrate the implications of research—and not as

a replacement for explaining the research itself. By constantly tying her claims back to rigorous evidence, Duckworth preserves her credibility (and her discipline's credibility) on the topics she covers in *Grit*.

PSYCHOLOGY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Author and psychologist Angela Duckworth argues that people with high levels of grit (a combination of passion and perseverance) learn to organize their lives around a single top-level goal that guides all of their decisions. Duckworth's own "life-organizing goal" is simple but specific: "use psychological science to help children thrive." Indeed, her life, work, and writing are a testament to the power of behavioral science. In *Grit*, she shows that countless psychologists (as well as sociologists, neuroscientists, and even philosophers) have dedicated their careers to understanding the human mind through the scientific method. And their work has paid off: it has given scholars a wide range of techniques for understanding and modifying people's behaviors, thoughts, and perceptions. In particular, psychology is one of humanity's main strategies for harnessing its own potential. In other words, beyond studying *how* people grow over time and achieve their goals, psychology also *helps* people grow and achieve even more ambitious goals. Thus, Duckworth shows that psychology and behavioral science should be seen as central tools in humanity's attempts to improve itself.

But Duckworth also clearly identifies psychology's limits—she admits that there are certain topics that psychologists can't study (and many that they simply haven't gotten to yet). For instance, she notes that psychologists can't ethically run experiments assigning children to different extracurricular activities, which means that evidence about extracurriculars' implications for success is still limited. Similarly, Duckworth frequently points out where her conclusions are only provisional, as psychologists need more studies to answer specific research questions (like whether warm or stern parenting is more likely to foster grit). This may seem to limit the power and validity of her conclusions, but actually, it just bolsters her credibility further. By explaining exactly where the evidence for her beliefs begins and ends, Duckworth affirms that she only makes claims that she knows to be true. Moreover, by pointing to directions for future research, she suggests that researchers likely *will* be able to answer many open questions about grit and success in the future, which reaffirms that psychology is a key engine of human progress.

Duckworth also shows how psychological research benefits the world by generating practical solutions to the problems that people face. In particular, since she focuses on the psychology of success, she notes how psychology research has opened new possibilities for human achievement. First, experimental psychology points people to effective behavioral interventions that can make them more successful. For example, researchers have found that a specific practice routine called deliberate practice is by far the most effective way for people to improve their skills. Through deliberate practice, people have achieved unprecedented levels of mastery in a wide variety of fields, ranging from Olympic swimming to the National Spelling Bee. This shows how cutting-edge psychological research actually expands the realm of human possibility by giving people skill-improvement strategies that are scientifically proven and that they wouldn't have known about otherwise. Next, psychology also shows how people can change their lives simply by changing the way they *think*. For instance, Duckworth emphasizes that learning "optimistic self-talk"—or viewing situations in a positive light and blaming "temporary and specific causes" for problems—is one of the most important changes people can make in order to develop grit. (This is because optimists are more likely to see themselves as capable of overcoming problems, try to overcome those problems, and actually succeed in doing so.) This is another example of how psychologists have given people a whole new set of tools for improving their lives—in this case, by demonstrating how thought shapes behavior.

For Duckworth, grit is so valuable because it enables people to push past what they perceive to be their limits. It allows them to develop abilities and accomplish feats that may have seemed improbable in the past. But she also shows that, in many ways, psychology has done the same for humanity: it has allowed people to understand and improve on their natural programming in ways that no individual could ever do on their own. Thus, while Duckworth's book is still primarily about the value of grit, it's also a clear defense of the scientific method, scientific community, and generations of past psychologists that have made her research possible.

GRIT AND SOCIETY

In her conclusion to *Grit*, Angela Duckworth addresses an unusual question: is it possible to have *too much* grit? Yes, she says, in theory. But in practice, nobody has ever told her they wanted to be *less* gritty (that is, less passionate and tenacious). Indeed, given the option, most people in modern societies would choose to become grittier. After all, this would help them set and achieve more meaningful goals. Because grit promotes achievement, commitment, and hard work, Duckworth argues, it's a profound asset to society as a whole: *everyone* stands to gain when people become grittier. And because norms like grit spread naturally through organizations and societies, people who start to improve their own grit are likely to help others do the same. Thus, Duckworth doesn't just want to help people tackle their individual problems through grit—she also wants to build a national or even global culture of grit by teaching as many people as possible to recognize and pursue its benefits.

While grit is primarily an individual trait—it describes people's attitude toward their *own* goals and accomplishments—it's also highly dependent on shared cultural norms and identities. This is partially because people make many of their "critical gritty-or-not decisions"—including whether to stick with their commitments and interests—based on their sense of identity. As Duckworth puts it, people don't simply weigh the costs and benefits of these kinds of important decisions. Instead, they more often ask, "*What does someone like me do in a situation like this?*" Thus, if grit is part of person's *identity*, they're likely to habitually make gritty decisions. And, importantly, people's identities are almost always collective—in other words, people define the "*someone like me*" in terms of their membership in certain groups. For example, after getting shot, soldier Tom Deierlein insisted on outdoing his physical therapist's expectations and running a 10-mile race because belonging to the military is central to his identity. If *most* people can form shared identities that involve grit, like Deierlein did, then grit's benefits are likely to spread far and wide.

Groups can also make people grittier by changing or enforcing certain social norms. For instance, laypeople might view competitive swimmers as extraordinarily dedicated because they wake up to train at four every morning, but swimmers generally surround themselves with peers who do the same, so they don't see it as unusual. For that reason, it's easy to see how swimmers who surround themselves with other swimmers are more likely to train regularly. Similarly, Duckworth thinks, entire organizations and cultures can make grit a norm. In fact, Duckworth gives numerous examples of organizations (like the US Military Academy at West Point, the Seattle Seahawks football team, and KIPP charter schools) and even countries (like Finland) that have become successful by building grit into their cultures. For instance, KIPP schools raise more academically successful students than their competitors because they specifically train teachers to adopt and pass on a growth mindset, and Finland mounted a remarkably successful defense during the 1939 Winter War in part because its people believed in a cultural trait called *sisu* (perseverance). These examples are clear blueprints for how Duckworth thinks society at large can start to value grit. And just as new norms can spread through teams or institutions, they can also spread throughout society as a whole. Duckworth notes that people tend to learn attitudes like grit as children by imitating and emulating the adults around them. Similarly, peers can educate one another—for instance, Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll points out how his star player, Earl Thomas, helps his teammates learn to be grittier. Thus, when some people become grittier, it's likely that the people around them will also learn about grit (if not actually develop it). This shows that if enough people dedicate themselves to learning and teaching grit, it can spread organically throughout a culture and eventually become a norm.

Because it's clearly possible to foster and spread grit on a large scale, then, Duckworth views making the world grittier as a key part of her mission as a psychologist. She points out that just like IQ scores, average grit scores do change noticeably over generations. Specifically, younger people's grit scores are lower than older people's scores. It's difficult to say whether this is because they simply haven't matured yet or because of cultural and societal changes (like new technologies) that make grit less common today. Perhaps it's both. Regardless, Duckworth's data shows that it's *possible* for a generation's grittiness to change, which means that it's also perfectly possible to make society grittier as a whole. In fact, West Point shows how it's possible for an organization to completely turn around by changing its attitude toward grit. Hazing was the norm at West Point for decades, in part because the US Army believed that it would weed out weak or uncommitted students (in other words, those that lacked grit). But now, instead of encouraging low-grit cadets to drop out, West Point focuses on *making them grittier*. As a result, more of its cadets graduate and more of them are proficient at the skills they need to succeed in the military. Thus, because West Point has incorporated grit into its culture, it has become a much more successful institution overall. Duckworth sees no reason why other institutions—and society as a whole—can't do the same and build robust cultures of grit in the process.

Grit's social implications explain Duckworth's decision to publicize her Grit Scale (the questionnaire she developed to measure grit) and write this book: she hopes that grit can become a popular movement, at least to a limited extent. For now, it's all too easy to mistake Duckworth's "paragons of grit" for talented **geniuses** and miss the real lessons that their success holds for everyday people. But in time, Duckworth thinks, perhaps popular culture can stop worshipping genius and start worshipping hard work instead.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

GENIUS

Ordinary assumptions about "genius" represent the way that most people instinctively attribute success to innate talent, when it's more often the result of grit. Angela Duckworth opens *Grit* by recalling that when she was growing up, her father frequently told her that she was "no genius." Like many people, Duckworth's father assumed that people's achievement depends primarily on whether they're innately smart, creative, or motivated enough to pull ahead of others. But Duckworth's research shows that effort influences achievement much more than talent does, which means that

geniuses aren't born—they're made.

Of course, Duckworth is far from the first scholar to make this point. For instance, back in the 19th century, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche argued that most people prefer to view accomplished people as natural geniuses rather than recognize all the effort that goes into their achievement (and compare it to their own lack of effort).

Ironically, as an adult, Duckworth won a MacArthur "Genius Grant" precisely for her research showing that grit (and not talent) is the most important factor in achievement. This represents the alternative view of genius that she lays out at the end of the book. For Duckworth, genius is not the ability to succeed effortlessly, which very few people have. Instead, it's the drive to constantly improve and achieve excellence at the things that one finds interesting and important. Therefore, everyone is capable of being a genius in the right circumstances.

COMPASS

Andrea Duckworth compares passion to a compass in order to explain how, when it comes to setting goals, *consistency* is more important than *intensity*. A more popular metaphor for passion is fireworks, but Duckworth argues that fireworks burst and then fizzle out, whereas a compass consistently guides people in the right direction over time. Similarly, she argues, people who consistently pursue specific long-term goals are more likely to succeed than people who intensely pursue their short-term desires. Specifically, high-grit people understand how their different goals fit together into a hierarchy, with their less important goals serving to help them reach their ultimate, highest-level goal. (For instance, Duckworth's ultimate goal is: "use psychological science to help young people thrive.") Passion is like a compass because gritty people's passions—their ultimate goals—consistently guide all of their life decisions.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scribner edition of *Grit* published in 2018.

Preface Quotes

There was about a month between the MacArthur call and its official announcement. Apart from my husband, I wasn't permitted to tell anyone. That gave me time to ponder the irony of the situation. A girl who is told repeatedly that she's no genius ends up winning an award for being one. The award goes to her because she has discovered that what we eventually accomplish may depend more on our passion and perseverance than on our innate talent. She has by then amassed degrees from some pretty tough schools, but in the third grade, she didn't test high enough for the gifted and talented program. Her parents are Chinese immigrants, but she didn't get lectured on the salvation of hard work. Against stereotype, she can't play a note of piano or violin.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker), Duckworth's Father

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: x

Explanation and Analysis

In her preface to *Grit*, Angela Duckworth explains the personal significance of her research. Growing up, her father constantly told her that she was "no genius"—with the implication that she wouldn't be able to achieve great things because she lacked the inherent talent necessary for success. But as a psychologist, she proved that the opposite is actually true: passion and perseverance predict achievement to a much greater extent than inherent talent does. Then, ironically enough, Duckworth won a MacArthur Fellowship—which is commonly called a "Genius Grant"—for this work. Thus, as she points out here, she was publicly declared a genius for her hard work proving that genius is really about hard work, not inherent talent.

Duckworth introduces her book with this story for several reasons: it's dramatic, it explains the basic motivations behind her research, and most importantly, it succinctly captures how she wants to change her readers' minds. By presenting extensive psychological evidence about the power of grit, she hopes to help people reevaluate their assumptions about genius—and their own potential to achieve it. Duckworth wagers that most people think like her father did, whether they like it or not: they assume that their abilities are inherent and fixed, which means there's nothing they can do to develop them. But, in reality, inherent talent is only a small part of the equation. Effort—and specifically *grit*, the personality trait that

promotes it—is far more important. Duckworth hopes that, by the time readers finish her book, they will believe in their own capacity to grow—and even become geniuses in their own right.

Chapter 1: Showing Up Quotes

In their own eyes, they were never good enough. They were the opposite of complacent. And yet, in a very real sense, they were satisfied being unsatisfied. Each was chasing something of unparalleled interest and importance, and it was the chase—as much as the capture—that was gratifying. Even if some of the things they had to do were boring, or frustrating, or even painful, they wouldn't dream of giving up. Their passion was enduring.

In sum, no matter the domain, the highly successful had a kind of ferocious determination that played out in two ways. First, these exemplars were unusually resilient and hardworking. Second, they knew in a very, very deep way what it was they wanted. They not only had determination, they had *direction*.

It was this combination of passion and perseverance that made high achievers special. In a word, they had grit.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 8

Explanation and Analysis

In graduate school, Duckworth wanted to understand the personality traits that helped high achievers succeed, so she started interviewing them. She found that they shared a remarkably similar outlook on themselves and their work. As she explains here, all of them were intrinsically motivated to improve. No matter how skilled or successful they became, they always wanted to go further, and they were always willing to put in the effort to do so. In a sense, they were always unsatisfied with their progress, but as Duckworth notes here, "they were satisfied being unsatisfied" because they cherished the very process of improvement. Failure didn't discourage or depress them—instead, it just motivated them to try even harder.

These interviews gave Duckworth her first intuitive understanding of grit, the concept that later became the central focus of her research and interests. And she tells this story early in her first chapter so that the reader can approach the grit in the same way. Duckworth will spend the rest of her book delving into details about its components, how to build it, and precisely how it fosters success. But first, she wants the reader to simply grasp what it looks like intuitively: it's a relentless drive for improvement and success in a well-defined area of interest.

Our potential is one thing. What we do with it is quite another.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of her first chapter, Duckworth summarizes her research's key lesson about the relationship between talent and effort. Namely, talent may determine people's ultimate potential, but *most* people's potential vastly exceeds their accomplishments. In other words, most people simply don't realize their potential, which means their talents aren't what lead to their achievements. As a result, it makes little sense to predict achievement by measuring a person's talent, nor does it make sense to even value talent as much as modern culture tends to. The bias towards focusing on potential leads people to overlook the factor that really *does* determine achievement: *effort*. This is why Duckworth argues that people should focus less on potential and more on "*what we do with [our potential].*" In other words, people should value talent less and grit more.

Chapter 2: Distracted By Talent Quotes

It seemed a sure bet that those for whom things came easily would continue to outpace their classmates. In fact, I expected that the achievement gap separating the naturals from the rest of the class would only widen over time.

I'd been distracted by talent.

Gradually, I began to ask myself hard questions. When I taught a lesson and the concept failed to gel, could it be that the struggling student needed to struggle just a bit longer? Could it be that I needed to find a different way to explain what I was trying to get across? Before jumping to the conclusion that talent was destiny, should I be considering the importance of effort? And, as a teacher, wasn't it my responsibility to figure out how to sustain effort—both the students' and my own—just a bit longer?

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

In the second chapter Duckworth explains how, while working as a middle school math teacher, she fell victim to the common bias towards talent. She assumed that her more mathematically talented students were more likely to succeed, and she treated them accordingly. Then, at the end of the semester, she realized that she had been totally wrong. Talent certainly helped students succeed, but it didn't predict success on its own. Instead, Duckworth's hardest-working students—including those who didn't have very much innate mathematical talent—were the most successful in her class. In contrast, many of the "naturals" did poorly in her class because they simply didn't try very hard.

This experience showed Duckworth for the first time that effort contributes more to success than talent. It also showed her how adults (and especially teachers) fail young people when they get "*distracted by talent*." Meanwhile, by recognizing the importance of effort, Duckworth also changed her teaching style and became a more effective educator. She realized that her less talented students had far more potential than she had thought—and, in many cases, more than even *they* thought. She has concluded that the best way for educators to help young people achieve their potential is by valuing effort and giving all students a chance to improve over time. Thus, Duckworth's experience as a teacher shows both the dangers of people's conventional bias towards talent and the rewards of abandoning this bias in favor of the evidence-based preference for effort.

> Chia's research pulls back the curtain on our ambivalence toward talent and effort. What we say we care about may not correspond with what—deep down—we actually believe to be more valuable. It's a little like saying we don't care at all about physical attractiveness in a romantic partner and then, when it comes to actually choosing whom to date, picking the cute guy over the nice one.

The "naturalness bias" is a hidden prejudice against those who've achieved what they have because they worked for it, and a hidden preference for those whom we think arrived at their place in life because they're naturally talented. We may not admit to others this bias for naturals; we may not even admit it to ourselves. But the bias is evident in the choices we make.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker), Chia-Jung Tsay

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 24-5

Explanation and Analysis

The organizational psychologist Chia-Jung Tsay—who is also an accomplished classical pianist—studies "naturalness bias," or the bias towards talent and away from effort. She has found that even expert musicians who *know* that effort and practice are the keys to success nevertheless exhibit an unconscious psychological preference for inherently talented "naturals" over hardworking "strivers." Tsay's research shows that this bias is deep-rooted—indeed, as Duckworth notes here, most people don't even choose it. (If anything, they learn it from the cultural and familial influences that surround them in their youth.)

Tsay's research has significant implications for Duckworth's. First, Tsay shows that, in a deep, unconscious way, people tend to resist the truth about effort and talent. (The truth is that "strivers" are much more likely to succeed than "naturals" because, as study after study has shown, effort influences achievement far more than talent.) Tsay's research also shows that resisting the bias for talent requires far more than simply learning the truth—rather, it depends on a much longer and more complex process of helping people change their assumptions and reprogram their automatic thought processes. Of course, this process doesn't have to be totally individual. It can also happen at the level of whole cultures, and to an extent, this is what Duckworth hopes to do by publishing and publicizing her research through *Grit*.

"What do we mean by *talent*?" the McKinsey authors ask in the book's opening pages. Answering their own question: "In the most general sense, talent is the sum of a person's abilities—his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgment, attitude, character, and drive. It also includes his or her ability to learn and grow." That's a long list, and it reveals the struggle most of us have when we try to define talent with any precision. But it doesn't surprise me that "intrinsic gifts" are mentioned first.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 26-7

Explanation and Analysis

Before becoming a teacher, Duckworth spent a year working at the prestigious management consulting firm McKinsey, which is famous for its obsession with talent. In McKinsey's eyes, talent is the key to the modern economy: profit, growth, and innovation depend on identifying people who have certain inherent abilities and then moving them into appropriate positions. This deeply influences how McKinsey advises the companies who hire it. It also influences the way McKinsey runs *itself*. The firm assumes that "talented" consultants—meaning, roughly, recent graduates who have an intuitive knack for complex analysis and can confidently present their hunches as the truth—will naturally make better business decisions than executives who have spent decades in their fields.

But Duckworth examines McKinsey's record and points out that this is far from the truth: the agency's methods have bankrupted numerous companies, caused several public scandals, and mostly benefited self-promoting consultants and executives who genuinely believe that their inherently superior talent for business means that they make better decisions than everyone else. People continue to hire the firm, Duckworth suggests, not because of its results but because the mythology of talent has a powerful stranglehold over modern global business culture.

Duckworth therefore views McKinsey as a representative example of how the bias toward talent greatly limits success. In fact, McKinsey's mindset limits its own effectiveness, its clients' success, and—because of its enormous influence—the entire economy's capacity to innovate and grow. While McKinsey does include the "ability to learn and grow" among its valued "talents," it ironically still assumes that this ability is somehow set in stone, making the assumption that only certain people are capable of this kind of growth. In reality, all the available psychological evidence suggests that McKinsey is wrong—"talent" barely affects achievement at all, while effort predicts the vast majority of it.

In my view, the biggest reason a preoccupation with talent can be harmful is simple: By shining our spotlight on talent, we risk leaving everything else in the shadows. We inadvertently send the message that these other factors—including grit—don't matter as much as they really do.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

Although Duckworth focuses her second chapter on the downsides of the common cultural bias toward talent, she clarifies at the end of the chapter that talent itself is by no means a bad thing. After all, anyone would prefer to be talented rather than untalented, and talented people who work hard are far more likely to succeed than untalented people who work just as hard.

The bias toward talent is dangerous not because talent *itself* is dangerous, but because it often overshadows the importance of effort. Just like Duckworth was "distracted by talent" when she worked as a math teacher, most people with power and authority over others tend to unfairly allocate too much attention to talented people and too little to hardworking ones. Essentially, they spend time, effort, and resources on the wrong people because they have inaccurate assumptions about what actually causes people to succeed. On the level of society as a whole, this represents a tragic misallocation of resources that greatly limits people's ability to fulfill their potential.

Chapter 3: Effort Counts Twice Quotes

❝ We prefer our excellence fully formed. We prefer mystery to mundanity.
But why? What's the reason for fooling ourselves into thinking Mark Spitz didn't *earn* his mastery?

"Our vanity, our self-love, promotes the cult of the genius," Nietzsche said. "For if we think of genius as something magical, we are not obliged to compare ourselves and find ourselves lacking. . . . To call someone 'divine' means: 'here there is no need to compete.' "

In other words, mythologizing natural talent lets us all off the hook. It lets us relax into the status quo.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth, Friedrich Nietzsche (speaker), Dan Chambliss

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 39

Explanation and Analysis

After noting that experimental evidence strongly favors grit over talent and arguing that people are unconsciously biased toward talent anyway, Duckworth tries to understand where this bias comes from—and how people can remedy it. Duckworth's friend, the sociologist Dan Chambliss, pointed her to the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, the 19th-century German philosopher. Nietzsche argued that people prefer to attribute success to talent because this protects their "vanity" and "self-love"—that is, their ego. In plainer terms, if we think other people succeed because they're talented, then we have an easy excuse for *not* achieving great things: we're simply not as talented. We didn't choose this, we can think, so it isn't our fault—it's just a fact of nature.

Of course, this explanation is false: according to all of the available psychological evidence, people succeed primarily because of how much *effort* they are willing and able to put towards their goals. (That said, Duckworth absolutely agrees that many people can't achieve great things because they don't have the time, resources, or privileges necessary to pursue their passions.) As Nietzsche argued, if we admit that effort is the key to success—which means that genius is a *craft*, not a quality—then we have to "compare ourselves and find ourselves lacking." In other words, we have to admit that our own failures are partially our fault. Of course, people want to protect their egos, so they avoid thinking this way, and they blame success on talent instead. But most psychologists and high achievers can easily see through this logic. Ultimately, instead of lamenting our lack of effort, Duckworth suggests that we should look on the bright side: if effort is the key to success, then *everyone* is capable of great things.

❝ talent × *effort* = skill
skill × *effort* = achievement

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

In her third chapter, Duckworth lays out her theory of success: talent and effort are the two primary ingredients of achievement, but "effort counts twice." Namely, effort is the way that people translate their talents into usable skills, which is why "talent × *effort* = skill." But effort is *also* the way that people apply those skills in order to achieve things, which is why "skill × *effort* = achievement." Thus, while talent certainly contributes to success—and can even mark the difference between two otherwise similar people—it ultimately matters far less than effort. And since grit is the personality trait that determines how much effort people put into achieving their goals, the best way for people to increase their chances of success is by improving their grit.

While these equations succinctly capture Duckworth's central argument about the importance of grit, they also leave out another essential component of success: *circumstances*. Duckworth herself admits this: she's a psychologist, not a sociologist or anthropologist, and so she specializes in studying *individuals*. But the circumstances of people's lives—such as luck, mentorship, and the social class, society, and family they're born into—determine whether they get the opportunity to develop and pursue their interests in the first place. In other words, Duckworth admits that her equation applies primarily to people who are privileged enough to be able to make success and professional achievement their main goals in life. But this doesn't make it any less accurate—instead, it just points to the importance of expanding opportunities so that everyone has the same chance to succeed.

I would add that skill is not the same thing as achievement, either. Without effort, your talent is nothing more than your unmet potential. Without effort, your skill is nothing more than what you could have done but didn't. With effort, talent becomes skill and, at the very same time, effort makes skill *productive*.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 51

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth illustrates the relationship between talent, effort, and achievement through two equations: first, "talent × *effort* = skill," and second, "skill × *effort* = achievement." Readers might object that this is too complicated—perhaps Duckworth should just condense it all into one equation. But in this passage, Duckworth explains why the intermediary step of skill is essential. Namely, successful people don't magically apply their talents and immediately succeed: first, they have to build skills. Before they can actually achieve things in their chosen field, they have to learn about it: they have to go to school, gain experience, and/or improve through trial and error. (As Duckworth later notes, this explains why *deliberate practice* is so important.) Later, once they build their skills, people have to actually use them—a highly-skilled swimmer has to actually *swim* to set a world record, for instance, and a skilled writer has to actually *write* in order to publish a successful book. Thus, there are two equations for achievement because achievement truly is a two-part process: while talent, skill, and achievement are all admirable, talent is *not* the same as skill and skill is *not* the same as achievement.

Chapter 4: How Gritty Are You? Quotes

"Grit is about working on something you care about so much that you're willing to stay loyal to it."

"It's doing what you love. I get that."

"Right, it's doing what you love, but not just falling in love—*staying* in love."

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

In common parlance, the word "grit" usually connotes endurance, hard work, and toughness. And all of these concepts *are* part of what Duckworth calls grit. But they don't even get close to conveying the whole picture. This is why Duckworth repeatedly emphasizes that grit is really about long-term commitment, not short-term effort.

Before one of Duckworth's speeches, a young entrepreneur approached her to brag about how hard he was working on his startup. He thought this made him gritty, but Duckworth pointed out that grit is really about sticking with the same goals for many years, not just working hard to achieve one's goals in the short term. In other words, grit isn't just "doing what you love" at any given point in time—it's "*staying* in love" with the same thing over the course of one's entire career.

This distinction between "falling in love" and "*staying* in love" is absolutely central to Duckworth's argument. Plenty of people work hard at jobs they don't love or develop a series of unrelated hobbies and passions over the course of their lives. This isn't real grit; people can't accomplish great things in *any* field if they don't stick to one. Instead, lifelong "paragons of grit" have a different kind of passion and perseverance—when they're young, they seriously figure out what matters to them, then figure out a way to dedicate their lives to it. Then, they work hard at *that* specific thing for the rest of their lives.

1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.
2. Setbacks don't discourage me. I don't give up easily.
3. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.
4. I am a hard worker.
5. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.
6. I finish whatever I begin.
7. My interests change from year to year.
8. I am diligent. I never give up.
9. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.
10. I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 55

Explanation and Analysis

Throughout her research career, Duckworth has measured grit using the Grit Scale, a questionnaire composed of the ten statements she lists here (and, early on, two others). She asks respondents to rate how much each statement applies to them, then calculates a grit score ranging from one to five, based on their average responses. For the odd-numbered items, which measure passion, people get more points the *less* they agree with the statement. And for the even-numbered items, which measure perseverance, people get more points the *more* they agree with the statement. The average American adult scores around 3.8. The Grit Scale is fundamentally subjective, and people's grit scores change over time, but when given to large groups of people, the Scale can still meaningfully capture a snapshot of aggregate differences in grit.

The five odd-numbered items that measure passion essentially ask whether people stick to the same projects over time. Duckworth emphasizes that these items test the *consistency* of commitment, not the *intensity* of it. People who intensely pursue many different interests, one after the other, are not truly gritty because they are unlikely to stick with one interest for long enough to accomplish anything. Meanwhile, the other five items, which measure perseverance, focus on how much effort people put into their projects and how they deal with failure. Thus, the Grit Scale yields an overall grit score that measures passion and perseverance.

> The common metaphor of passion as fireworks doesn't make sense when you think of what passion means to Jeff Gettleman. Fireworks erupt in a blaze of glory but quickly fizzle, leaving just wisps of smoke and a memory of what was once spectacular. What Jeff's journey suggests instead is passion as a compass—that thing that takes you some time to build, tinker with, and finally get right, and that then guides you on your long and winding road to where, ultimately, you want to be.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker), Jeffrey Gettleman

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth explains that gritty people are *passionate* because they identify their primary goals and then structure their lives around those goals. For instance, Jeffrey Gettleman always knew that he wanted to work in East Africa, and he spent a decade working his way up the ranks as a journalist in order to get a job there.

Duckworth strongly warns her readers against thinking about passion in the conventional sense of *intensity*: lots of people have intense interests in certain areas, but quickly give up and move on to others without accomplishing much of anything.

This is why Duckworth argues that passion should be compared not to fireworks but to a compass. In the context of grit, she isn't talking about the intense *feelings* that draw someone to a particular interest—after all, those feelings tend to quickly fade away. Instead, she asks whether people manage to *commit* to a particular interest and then use it to guide themselves through life. This is why passion is like a compass: it consistently points people in the direction that they need to go.

Chapter 5: Grit Grows Quotes

> Taken together, the data I've collected on grit and age are consistent with two different stories. One story says that our grit changes as a function of the cultural era in which we grow up. The other story says that we get grittier as we get older. Both could be true, and I have a suspicion that both are, at least to an extent. Either way, this snapshot reveals that grit is not entirely fixed. Like every aspect of your psychological character, grit is more plastic than you might think.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth notes that, according to her research, young people are consistently less gritty than older ones. This is unsurprising for two reasons: grit changes throughout people's lives, and culture strongly influences grit. Thus, it makes sense that one generation's grit would be lower than another's. Perhaps younger people simply haven't grown into grit yet, Duckworth suggests, or perhaps societies no longer foster grit as much today as they did a generation

ago.

It's hard to discern which of these two explanations is correct simply because, as every scientist and statistics student knows, correlation does not imply causation. Aging *could* cause increased grit, but so could some other factor. Psychologists haven't been able to answer this question yet, and it's unclear when (if ever) they'll be able to. Therefore, Duckworth emphasizes that her commentary is purely speculative. But there's good reason to believe that grit is less valued today *and* people tend to develop it as they grow (because they are more likely to identify and develop their interests, overcome obstacles and become more persistent, and so on). Nevertheless, the generational shift away from grit also shows that the opposite is possible: new technologies, shared experiences, and social norms can once again make grit more desirable. Needless to say, Duckworth hopes to help bring about this change.

Chapter 6: Interest Quotes

❝ Nobody is interested in everything, and everyone is interested in something. So matching your job to what captures your attention and imagination is a good idea. It may not guarantee happiness and success, but it sure helps the odds.

That said, I don't think most young people need encouragement to follow their passion. Most *would* do exactly that—in a heartbeat—if only they had a passion in the first place. If I'm ever invited to give a commencement speech, I'll begin with the advice to *foster a passion*. And then I'll spend the rest of my time trying to change young minds about how that actually happens.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

In her chapter on interests, Duckworth asks whether young people ought to follow their dreams or choose more practical careers (of the sort that their parents are likely to want for them). She concludes that they should do the former. Of course, as in the rest of her book, Duckworth is speaking to young people, particularly college graduates, who are interested in reaching the highest levels of their field. She is *not* writing to young people who, for whatever reason, need or want to prioritize financial and professional stability. (Readers may even feel that she is writing to a privileged minority and ignoring the practical needs or limitations most people face.)

In this context, Duckworth's advice is: find and follow a passion. First, passion motivates people to succeed—needless to say, people are more likely to dedicate energy and attention to things that genuinely interest them, and this makes it significantly more likely for them to succeed. Second, as Duckworth notes here, one of the main obstacles to following a passion is simply not *having* one yet. When they graduate from college, many young people despair at not knowing what they want to do with their lives. But, while many people assume that passion will strike them fully formed in a special moment of insight, the reality is that finding a passion is a long, gradual process of trial and error. This is why Duckworth would tell young people to "*foster a passion*" instead. Rather than giving up because they don't have a passion, they ought to take the first steps toward finding one.

❝ Experts and beginners have different motivational needs. At the start of an endeavor, we need encouragement and freedom to figure out what we enjoy. We need small wins. We need applause. Yes, we can handle a tincture of criticism and corrective feedback. Yes, we need to practice. But not too much and not too soon. Rush a beginner and you'll bludgeon their budding interest. It's very, very hard to get that back once you do.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 108

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth warns parents that it's unrealistic to expect children to immediately find and pursue a passion. A minority of young people can do so, but the vast majority will not. Instead, Duckworth argues, parents have to help their children *foster* their interests. This means creating supportive play environments for them, giving them enough realistic praise to keep them going, and most importantly, keeping the stakes relatively low. In these early stages, *performance* matters little; *enjoyment* should be the real priority. Young people who don't get through this stage might be ordinarily successful at whatever career they choose, but they're far less likely to be exceptional because they're simply less likely to be doing work that truly appeals to them. In addition to concretely showing young people and their parents how to build the first key ingredient for

grit (genuine interest in a specific field), Duckworth's advice also illustrates how psychology can help people navigate some of their most significant decisions and dilemmas.

❝ If you'd like to follow your passion but haven't yet fostered one, you must begin at the beginning: discovery.

Ask yourself a few simple questions: *What do I like to think about? Where does my mind wander? What do I really care about? What matters most to me? How do I enjoy spending my time? And, in contrast, what do I find absolutely unbearable?* If you find it hard to answer these questions, try recalling your teen years, the stage of life at which vocational interests commonly sprout.

As soon as you have even a general direction in mind, you must trigger your nascent interests. Do this by going out into the world and *doing* something. To young graduates wringing their hands over what to do, I say, *Experiment! Try! You'll certainly learn more than if you don't!*

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 114-5

Explanation and Analysis

Many people expect that they will find their undying passion in a single moment of insight—and most people probably wish that interests worked this way. But they don't, Duckworth argues. The reality is far more complicated. Instead of waiting around for an epiphany, people who aren't sure about their interests need to embark on an active process of discovery. It's never too late to do this—however, sooner is always better. And people can start this process as soon as they finish reading this chapter. Here, Duckworth explains how. People can start seriously reflecting on what they enjoy and care about, then slowly refine this into a set of specific career interests and actionable goals. In addition to helping people who find themselves in this particular situation, Duckworth's advice also reflects the way her broader message about grit can help people: it shows them that things they used to believe were beyond their control are actually within it. *Grit*'s central message is that, instead of waiting for their interests to find *them* or hoping for their inherent talents to carry them through life, people ought to start working for what they want because this is the only tangible way to succeed.

Chapter 7: Practice Quotes

❝ Ericsson generally finds that deliberate practice is experienced as supremely effortful. As evidence that working at the far edge of our skills with complete concentration is exhausting, he points out that even world-class performers at the *peak* of their careers can only handle a maximum of one hour of deliberate practice before needing a break, and in total, can only do about three to five hours of deliberate practice per day.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker), Anders Ericsson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 127

Explanation and Analysis

When it comes to practice—like when it comes to interests—quality is more important than quantity. Psychologist Anders Ericsson, who studies how world-class performers build and apply their skills, has consistently found that deliberate practice is the key to these performers' success. Moreover, he finds that doing high-quality deliberate practice for a few hours is a much better way to improve than doing low-quality forms of practice for much longer. It's easy to confuse the number of *hours* someone spends working, practicing, or learning with the quantity of *effort* they put into it. Duckworth believes that this confusion is particularly dangerous: it leads people to go through the motions of practice without actually improving. According to Ericsson, true deliberate practice is so strenuous that almost nobody can keep it up for more than an hour at a time. But that doesn't mean people should avoid such practice. Rather, Duckworth encourages her readers to engage in deliberate practice—despite how challenging it is.

❝ *Gritty people do more deliberate practice and experience more flow.* There's no contradiction here, for two reasons. First, deliberate practice is a behavior, and flow is an experience. Anders Ericsson is talking about what experts *do*; Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi is talking about how experts *feel*. Second, you don't have to be doing deliberate practice and experiencing flow at the same time. And, in fact, I think that for most experts, they rarely go together.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker), Anders Ericsson

Related Themes:

Page Number: 131

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth describes an apparent disagreement between two prominent psychologists who study performance and expertise. Anders Ericsson thinks that success is painful because it requires deliberate practice, which is extremely difficult. In contrast, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi thinks that success is pleasurable because experts feel a sense of flow—an enjoyable state of total concentration and immersion—when they use their skills.

Duckworth quickly realized that there's no real disagreement here at all: success can be *both* painful and enjoyable, just at different times. Ericsson's research focuses on how experts develop skills through practice, while Csikszentmihalyi's focuses on how they put their skills into action through performance. For instance, a champion swimmer is likely to find practice difficult and exhausting but swimming in a race very fulfilling and enjoyable. Indeed, for many experts, the pleasure of flow makes up for, or even lessens, the pain of deliberate practice. Thus, Ericsson and Csikszentmihalyi's findings actually go hand-in-hand: deliberate practice and flow are two sides of the same coin.

❝ Each of the basic requirements of deliberate practice is unremarkable:

- A clearly defined stretch goal
- Full concentration and effort
- Immediate and informative feedback
- Repetition with reflection and refinement

But how many hours of practice do most people accomplish that checks all four of these boxes? My guess is that many people are cruising through life doing precisely zero hours of daily deliberate practice.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 137-8

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth's advice for cultivating interests, purpose, and hope is complex and varied. But her advice for effective practice is simple: start following the formula for deliberate practice, and then keep doing it. If possible, turn it into an automatic habit and do it every day. If not, do as much as possible.

After all, scientists have spent years working out the most effective ways for people to improve their skills. Now, thanks to their effort, people have a foolproof checklist for deliberate practice. First, they have to set "a clearly defined stretch goal." This means it has to be measurable and just beyond their current abilities. For instance, a runner could aim for a time a few seconds below their personal record. Next, deliberate practice requires "full concentration and effort," which is self-explanatory—in practice, people ought to try their best, as though they were actually performing. Third, deliberate practice must involve "immediate and informative feedback," which must help people specifically identify shortcomings and areas of improvement. For instance, the runner should measure their time and, if possible, identify which part of their race was their weakest. Finally, to practice effectively, people have to repeat what they have just done "with reflection and refinement," which means they have to think about what and how they need to improve, and then focus on doing exactly that the next time. For example, the runner would repeat the race and try to specifically improve on their slowest lap. While deliberate practice will function differently for different people working on different skills, the basic formula is broadly applicable, and the available evidence suggests that it is by far the best way to refine any kind of skill.

Chapter 8: Purpose Quotes

❝ Most people first become attracted to things they enjoy and only later appreciate how these personal interests might also benefit others. In other words, the more common sequence is to start out with a relatively self-oriented interest, then learn self-disciplined practice, and, finally, integrate that work with an other-centered purpose.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 143-4

Explanation and Analysis

In order to approach their work with grit, people need more than just a strong personal *interest* in it. They also need to bring a sense of *purpose* to it, which means that they must find a way to use it to serve others. In general, this all develops in a determinate order: people start with interest and then find purpose later on. Interest initially hooks people, and then a combination of interest and purpose

keeps them going. This isn't always the case, but since it's the most common one, it yields clear and actionable advice for people in the early stages of developing grit. As Duckworth explains here, such people should first focus on identifying and developing their interests. Next, they should "learn self-disciplined practice" to hone their skills. Only then should they worry about making their work meaningful to others. That said, many people follow alternate paths—some even get drawn to particular kinds of work because of their strong sense of purpose, and this path is no worse than any other.

Writing this book made me realize that I'm someone who had an inkling about my interests in adolescence, then some clarity about purpose in my twenties, and finally, in my thirties, the experience and expertise to say that my top-level, life-organizing goal is, and will be until my last breath: *Use psychological science to help kids thrive.*

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 159

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth cites her own experience to illustrate how people can refine their passions over the course of their careers. She argues that her trajectory is more or less typical for gritty people: it took many years for her to settle on her interests (understanding success and achievement through psychology), and then many more years for her to truly become a competent researcher and educator. She didn't truly integrate this interest with her lifelong passion for helping young people until her thirties.

The main lesson from Duckworth's story is that passion—a stable commitment to a clear goal that combines one's interests and sense of purpose—takes a very long time to form. It's easy to try and rush it; after all, plenty of college students convince themselves that they have already discovered their life's purpose, only to switch fields a few years later. But Duckworth views life as a marathon, not a sprint. Duckworth's story also shows that it's easy to go through life without truly reflecting on the process of finding and committing to a passion. After all, Duckworth comments that she didn't even fully understand her own trajectory until she wrote this book. (And she's the expert on passion and purpose!) But truly reflecting on one's passion is key to fully developing it. Finally, Duckworth's story also shows the reader *why* she continues to study and write about grit: she views helping others develop grit as an important kind of public service, especially to young people and the adults who educate them.

Chapter 9: Hope Quotes

What is hope?

One kind of hope is the expectation that tomorrow will be better than today. It's the kind of hope that has us yearning for sunnier weather, or a smoother path ahead. It comes without the burden of responsibility. The onus is on the universe to make things better.

Grit depends on a different kind of hope. It rests on the expectation that our own efforts can improve our future. *I have a feeling tomorrow will be better* is different from *I resolve to make tomorrow better.* The hope that gritty people have has nothing to do with luck and everything to do with getting up again.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 169

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth argues that grit depends on hope. Importantly, though, she clarifies that she's talking about a very specific *kind* of hope. Most people associate hope with the general outlook that the world will get better on its own. But this kind of hope puts "the onus [...] on the universe" to improve itself. When Duckworth talks about hope, what she's really referring to is the act of believing in *oneself* and, at times, humanity as a whole. In other words, gritty people believe that the world will improve because they are willing to put in the effort to improve it. This hope is based on a faith in one's own resilience and perseverance; but, paradoxically, this hope also helps people develop *more* resilience and perseverance. Thus, while it's only a cognitive shift—a subtle change in thought and perception—it can radically transform people's lives and lead to an array of accomplishments.

> I like to think of a growth mindset this way: Some of us believe, deep down, that people really *can* change. These growth-oriented people assume that it's possible, for example, to get smarter *if* you're given the right opportunities and support and *if* you try hard enough and *if* you believe you can do it. Conversely, some people think you can learn skills, like how to ride a bike or do a sales pitch, but your *capacity* to learn skills—your talent—can't be trained. The problem with holding the latter fixed-mindset view—and many people who consider themselves talented *do*—is that no road is without bumps. [...] With a fixed mindset, you're likely to interpret these setbacks as evidence that, after all, you don't have "the right stuff"—you're not good enough. With a growth mindset, you believe you can learn to do better.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker), Carol Dweck

Related Themes:

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth connects her analysis of hope to the acclaimed psychologist Carol Dweck's research on fixed and growth mindsets. As Duckworth explains it, Dweck has found that some people fundamentally believe in their capacity to improve, while others view their own talent as essentially fixed. (For instance, some people think that their IQ defines how intelligent they are, while others strive to improve their IQ over time.) The scientific evidence supports the growth mindset—people *can*, as a matter of fact, grow their talent in the right circumstances—but the fixed mindset is still more common, as it is intuitive for most people and deeply ingrained in modern cultures.

Moreover, these mindsets become self-fulfilling prophecies. People with a growth mindset grow over time because they make the necessary effort to do so. In contrast, those people with a fixed mindset tend to stay at the same level of ability simply because they don't think it's possible to improve or try to do so. In particular, Duckworth notes, the fixed and growth mindsets determine how people respond to *failure*, which presents a particularly important and ripe opportunity for improvement. For this reason, she concludes that a growth mindset is a crucial part of the perseverance that is necessary for grit.

> Collectively, the evidence I've presented tells the following story: A fixed mindset about ability leads to pessimistic explanations of adversity, and that, in turn, leads to both giving up on challenges and avoiding them in the first place. In contrast, a growth mindset leads to optimistic ways of explaining adversity, and that, in turn, leads to perseverance and seeking out new challenges that will ultimately make you even stronger.

growth mindset ? optimistic self-talk ? perseverance over adversity

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker), Carol Dweck, Marty Seligman, Steve Maier

Related Themes:

Page Number: 191-2

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth integrates her theory of grit with Carol Dweck's research about growth mindsets and Marty Seligman and Steve Maier's work on adversity and learned helplessness in animals. Dweck found that people with a growth mindset are more likely to take on challenges, learn from failures, and improve their abilities over time. Meanwhile, Seligman and Maier found that people and animals who manage to overcome or control adversity in their youth become more courageous and persistent as adults, while those who experience severe and uncontrollable adversity grow up to avoid challenges and act helpless before threats. In a nutshell, Seligman and Maier really found that overcoming adversity teaches people a growth mindset, and Dweck really found that this growth mindset teaches people to overcome adversity. Thus, their results feed off of one another in a feedback cycle: overcoming adversity and developing the kind of hope necessary for grit both reinforce the other. Of course, this virtuous circle—people overcome adversity, grow from it, learn an optimistic or growth mindset, and then seek out further adversity—is also the foundation for Duckworth's advice about parenting and leadership in her last three chapters.

Chapter 10: Parenting for Grit Quotes

> "There was an underlying selflessness to the tough love," Steve continued. "I think that's vital. If any of the tough love is about the parent just trying to control you, well, kids smell it out. In every way possible, I knew my parents were saying, 'We're looking to see *your* success. We've left ourselves behind.' "

Related Characters: Steve Young (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 207

Explanation and Analysis

When people consider the problem of how to raise gritty children, they usually propose one of two things: strict parenting to teach children to overcome challenges and persevere, or hands-off parenting to support children's autonomy and help them develop passions. But Duckworth argues that, actually, both strict and lax parents can succeed if they strike the right combination of support and high expectations for their children. She illustrates this by comparing the quarterback Steve Young's parents to the comedian Francesca Martinez's. Here, she quotes Young—he argues that, even though his parents raised him with extremely strict rules, they clearly did so out of love. Whereas some strict parents might merely be controlling or egotistical, Young suggests, his parents used discipline in order to instill the values that later led him to success.

Young's comments show that the key to effective parenting isn't necessarily a parent's tone or the number of rules they set, but rather whether they manage to model grit—meaning that they expect excellence from their children but give them a supportive environment in which to develop it and teach them to view failure as a learning opportunity.

"Growing up with support, respect, and high standards confers a lot of benefits, one of which is especially relevant to grit—in other words, wise parenting encourages children to *emulate* their parents.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 214

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth argues that gritty parents tend to raise successful children most of all because they give their children an opportunity to learn from their own virtues. Of course, supportive but demanding parenting helps children develop accountability, build their skills, explore their interests, and learn from failure. But as they grow, Duckworth argues, children learn first to merely *imitate* what the adults around them do, and later to *emulate* the behavior of the adults they most respect. Although the words "imitate" and "emulate" are quite similar, Duckworth's use of "imitate" implies a certain kind of copying, whereas her use of "emulate" implies an actual embodiment of positive values. Therefore, children develop their own habits by first mirroring role models. Eventually, those habits become second nature. For this reason, gritty parents make particularly strong role models for their children, suggesting that the first step to raising gritty children is actually to work on one's *own* grit.

"You don't need to be a parent to make a difference in someone's life. If you just care about them and get to know what's going on, you can make an impact. Try to understand what's going on in their life and help them through that. That's something I experienced firsthand. It made the difference."

Related Characters: Cody Coleman (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 222

Explanation and Analysis

Cody Coleman grew up in poverty but eventually found his way to MIT and Stanford thanks in part to a series of well-timed relationships with key mentors, ranging from his estranged brother to his high school teachers. Duckworth uses Coleman's story as an example of how *anyone* can develop grit in the right circumstances—and *any* adult can help inspire young people, even if they're not a parent. As Coleman explains here, young people learn from all the adults around them, so simply making an effort to understand, connect with, and empower them is often enough to show them that they have the power to control their own future. Indeed, Duckworth affirms that the lessons about modeling and fostering grit from this chapter apply to all kinds of relationships—not only those between parents and children. In fact, as she points out in her chapter on culture, these lessons can even apply to relationships between adults or peers who want to help one another develop grit.

Chapter 11: The Playing Fields of Grit Quotes

The bottom line of this research is this: School's hard, but for many kids it's not intrinsically interesting. Texting your friends is interesting, but it's not hard. But ballet? Ballet can be both.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 225

Explanation and Analysis

Although the experimental evidence on the subject still isn't rock solid, Duckworth strongly believes that extracurricular activities are one of the best ways for parents to instill grit in their children. Her reasoning is that people develop grit when they face situations that are both challenging (which helps them build perseverance) and interesting (which helps them build passion). But young people often don't find this combination on their own—they do some challenging things (like school) and some interesting things (like spending time with their friends) but nothing that's both interesting enough to inspire passion and challenging enough to teach perseverance.

This is where extracurriculars come in. When children can pursue structured activities that they find interesting and give them clear opportunities to build their skills, they can start to build grit (or at least recognize its value). As an added bonus, extracurricular activities also expose children to supportive but demanding adults who aren't their parents or teachers. Duckworth argues that these adult coaches, trainers, and instructors can teach children grit and show them what true expertise looks like.

So far, there hasn't been a corresponsive principle study of grit.

Let me speculate, though. Left to her own devices, a little girl who, after failing to open a box of raisins and saying to herself, "This is too hard! I quit!" might enter a vicious cycle that reinforces giving up. She might learn to give up one thing after another, each time missing the opportunity to enter the virtuous cycle of struggle, followed by progress, followed by confidence to try something even harder.

But what about a little girl whose mother takes her to ballet, even though it's hard? […] What if that little girl was nudged to try and try again and, at one practice, experienced the satisfaction of a breakthrough? Might that victory encourage the little girl to practice *other* difficult things? Might she learn to welcome challenge?

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 234

Explanation and Analysis

Duckworth argues that extracurriculars help children build grit by launching a "virtuous cycle." When children succeed at difficult but interesting tasks—of the kind they're likely to encounter in extracurricular activities—they improve their skills, build confidence, and start to develop an optimistic growth mindset. In contrast, when they never get this opportunity, children often learn to avoid challenges and view their potential as inherently limited. As Duckworth pointed out in her chapter on hope, all grit depends on a version of this cycle: gritty people are far more likely to have learned early in life that they can improve themselves by facing challenges. The more challenges they face, the more they improve—and the more they improve, the more they seek out challenges. This cyclical logic fits with what psychologists call the "corresponsive principle," which states that people seek out experiences that fit their personality traits, and then those experiences *reinforce* those traits. Through extracurriculars, Duckworth concludes, parents can help their children start this cycle early and ultimately set them up for grit and success in adulthood.

Chapter 12: A Culture of Grit Quotes

The bottom line on culture and grit is: *If you want to be grittier, find a gritty culture and join it. If you're a leader, and you want the people in your organization to be grittier, create a gritty culture.*

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 245

Explanation and Analysis

In her chapters on grit and parenting, Duckworth showed that grit is contagious: people become gritty when they surround themselves with other gritty people. This is especially true when these others are mentors or role models. In this final chapter, Duckworth shows how entire *cultures* can use this principle to become grittier. Teams, organizations, and even whole societies can spread grit by making it a priority. But to do so, leaders have to

intentionally "*create a gritty culture.*" In other words, they have to clearly communicate the importance of grit and, if possible, reward it throughout the organization.

Individuals can also become grittier by seeking out gritty influences. The more consistent, organized, and principled these influences are, the more people can learn from them, and the stronger the pressure to conform (through grit) will become. Thus, beyond working individually on interest, practice, purpose, and hope, one of the easiest ways for individuals to work on their grit is to harness the power of peer pressure—or "*find a gritty culture and join it.*"

❝ Indeed, the calculated costs and benefits of passion and perseverance don't always add up, at least in the short run. It's often more "sensible" to give up and move on. It can be years or more before grit's dividends pay off.

And that's exactly why culture and identity are so critical to understanding how gritty people live their lives. The logic of anticipated costs and benefits doesn't explain their choices very well. The logic of identity does.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 250

Explanation and Analysis

The pressure to conform is one reason that gritty cultures create gritty people. But another is the way that culture and group membership shape people's identities—more than anything else, the social, cultural, and professional groups that people join determine the way they view themselves and their place in the world. This means that, when grit becomes part of people's identity, it's very difficult to remove. In other words, people whose identities are based on grit will stubbornly make gritty decisions even when it doesn't seem to make sense. For Duckworth, however, this is great news: it means that people with gritty identities will choose their long-term self-interest over their short-term self-interest.

As Duckworth explains here, this solves one of the hardest puzzles about grit, which is how to convince people to commit themselves to passions that might not pay off for years. Many people choose to give up, move on, or ignore their passions in the short term because they simply don't want to wait around for the results. But people who view grit as central to their sense of self are far less likely to give up. Of course, the broader implications of Duckworth's observation are clear: if a whole organization or even society can build its identity around grit, then everyone who belongs to it is likely to do the same.

❝ If each person's grit enhances grit in others, then, over time, you might expect what social scientist Jim Flynn calls a "social multiplier" effect. In a sense, it's the motivational analogue of the infinity cube of self-reflecting mirrors Jeff Bezos built as a boy—one person's grit enhances the grit of the others, which in turn inspires more grit in that person, and so on, without end.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth (speaker), Jeff Bezos

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 263

Explanation and Analysis

Gritty teams create gritty members because they create a pressure to conform, thus shaping people's identities and, perhaps most importantly, providing opportunities for mentorship and learning. As a result, just like gritty individuals, gritty organizations fall into a virtuous cycle that makes them even grittier over time. For individuals, this cycle involves overcoming challenges, growing from the experience, and then enthusiastically taking on more challenges in the future. But for organization, this cycle depends on the way team members emulate, learn from, and compete with one another—whether consciously or not. Once the team values grit, team members are likely to admire whoever is grittiest, look for ways to develop their own grit, and share their secrets with their peers. For instance, Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll encourages his team to value grit, while the star player Earl Thomas teaches his teammates tips for building their grit.

Over time, in organizations, grit grows through a "social multiplier"—everyone on the team values grit, works together to develop it, and treats everyone else with the combination of support and high expectations that Duckworth's research indicates is the best way to foster it. Thus, grit snowballs. By taking advantage of this "multiplier" effect, it's possible to build a culture of grit and success in any kind of organization—or even entire societies. Clearly, Duckworth hopes to spark this kind of change through her research.

Chapter 13: Conclusion Quotes

"Failure is probably the most important factor in all of my work. Writing *is* failure. Over and over and over again."

Related Characters: Ta-Nehisi Coates (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 276

Explanation and Analysis

At the very end of *Grit*, Duckworth quotes the writer Ta-Nehisi Coates, who—like her—recently won a MacArthur "Genius Grant." Coates describes writing as a process of refining ideas through failure: no draft ever lives up to the writer's hopes, but each draft is slightly better than the last. Eventually, one draft becomes good enough to publish. Even great writers are never fully satisfied with their work and can always continue to refine it—although some do learn to enjoy the process of constantly striving for improvement.

Needless to say, Coates isn't just explaining how writers work—he's also describing the way that gritty people fundamentally see the world and their place in it. Gritty people see failure as an inevitable stage in the process of self-improvement and self-improvement as the first step towards achievement. Because they are highly motivated to achieve and improve themselves, they learn to embrace failure. In fact, because they build their skills through deliberate practice, they make sure that they *always* fail to meet their own high standards. As they practice, they get better and better, sometimes quickly and sometimes imperceptibly. But over time, their efforts add up to great achievements.

"You're no genius," my dad used to say when I was just a little girl. I realize now he was talking to himself as much as he was talking to me.

If you define genius as being able to accomplish great things in life without effort, then he was right: I'm no genius, and neither is he.

But if, instead, you define genius as working toward excellence, ceaselessly, with every element of your being—then, in fact, my dad *is* a genius, and so am I, and so is Coates, and, if you're willing, so are you.

Related Characters: Angela Duckworth, Duckworth's Father (speaker), Ta-Nehisi Coates

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 277

Explanation and Analysis

In the closing paragraphs of *Grit*, Duckworth returns to the topic that she used to open the book: her childhood conversations with her father about "genius." Over the course of the book, she has led the reader through her journey as a teacher, consultant, and psychologist. She has explained the important lessons she learned about talent, skill, and achievement, and most importantly, she has explained her extensive research into grit. Now, at last, the reader is equipped to understand Duckworth's evidence-based perspective on success—and why it differs so much from the more conventional, talent-oriented mindset that her father's comments embody. In turn, the reader can understand how virtually nobody can simply "accomplish great things in life without effort," but virtually anybody can fully dedicate their time and energy to achieving excellence.

By redefining genius in this way, Duckworth isn't just vindicating herself against her father's narrow-minded insults: she's also showing people who don't believe in their abilities that they actually have far more potential than they think. Genius isn't *easy* to achieve, but it *is* achievable nonetheless. It doesn't depend on magical factors that are outside of people's control—it depends on people themselves. The key is grit, and people who don't have grit can build it by developing their interests, doing deliberate practice, finding a sense of purpose in their work, and forming a growth mindset. The more people who do so, the grittier the world will become and the more humankind will accomplish.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PREFACE

Angela Duckworth remembers how, when she was young, her father constantly talked about "**genius**." He worried that she wouldn't succeed because she didn't have enough inborn talent. Ironically enough, she went on to win a MacArthur "Genius Grant" for her psychology research—which was about how passion and perseverance (but not inherent talent) is the key to achievement. After winning the award, Duckworth imagined going back in time and telling her father what she had learned: while she wasn't a genius, she was *gritty*, and grit is more important than talent. This book explains the evidence that proves this thesis. Her father is now elderly and sick, but when she read the book out loud to him, he smiled.

Duckworth contrasts her research findings about grit with her father's comments about "genius" in order to show the reader how her book will reverse the conventional wisdom about success and achievement. Namely, while most people assume that "genius" is the key to success, grit *actually is. Duckworth hopes that, over time, more people can learn to recognize this fundamental truth. But Duckworth also discusses her father in order to illustrate why shifting from "genius" to grit can transform the way people think about themselves: a focus on "genius" leads young people to think of their abilities and potential as inherently limited, while a focus on grit shows them that they can accomplish great things primarily through hard work. Of course, this also speaks to the value of psychology research, which makes it possible for people to recognize their true potential by rigorously studying which factors actually drive success.*

CHAPTER 1: SHOWING UP

Getting into the US Military Academy at West Point is extremely difficult. Students have to go through a complicated nomination process and stand out academically, personally, and athletically. Every year, 14,000 high schoolers start the application process, but only 1,200 get in. But paradoxically, a huge number of these students drop out of West Point in the summer before they even start classes, leaving during the demanding program called Beast Barracks. For seven weeks, new cadets train intensively from 5 in the morning to 10 in the evening every day. They have no breaks, weekends, or contact with their families.

The US Military Academy is the kind of elite, competitive environment that readers are likely to associate with "grit." Indeed, Duckworth plays on this word's connotations—strength, toughness, and endurance—by starting with the example of Beast Barracks. But by pointing out that many cadets drop out of the program, Duckworth also signals that grit is much, much more than just hard work. As she will eventually argue, grit also requires sustained interest in a certain area, passionate commitment to a certain goal, and the ability to learn from failure.

In the 1950s, one of Duckworth's mentors, the psychologist Jerry Kagan, tried to predict who would drop out of West Point. But he failed, and so did many other psychologists for decades after him. In 2004, as a graduate student, Duckworth took a shot at the same puzzle. The military psychologist Mike Matthews told her that West Point selects students based on an admissions score that measures academic, physical, and leadership ability. But there's no correlation between this score and who drops out. Remembering his own time in the military, Matthews suggested that the cadets who stay are the ones with a "'never give up' attitude."

West Point's highly selective admissions process (and generations of psychologists) couldn't determine which cadets would succeed at the school. The reason they couldn't figure this out was because they were primarily concerned with measuring ability. *But Mike Matthews's observation that successful cadets have a "'never give up' attitude" suggests that performance at West Point isn't about ability at all—instead, it appears to be about how people* apply *their abilities. Duckworth will soon argue that grit is the key measure of whether or not they do so.*

In graduate school, Duckworth also interviewed leaders in fields ranging from business and sports to academia and art. She learned that, in all these fields, the people who succeed are the ones who keep trying when they fail and keep working to improve even when they succeed. Their standards and ambitions are high, but they love chasing their goals. In other words, they have grit: passion combined with perseverance.

Duckworth introduces her book's central thesis: grit is the most important personality trait for success. Of course, this is similar to the "'never give up' attitude" that Mike Matthews described in successful West Point cadets. Duckworth explains how she arrived at her conclusions through a years-long research process, and she notes that her analysis applies to people working in a wide variety of different professional fields and functions.

In 2004, Duckworth developed the Grit Scale, a questionnaire to measure grit, and gave it to West Point's 1,200 new cadets. To her surprise, the cadets' grit scores weren't correlated with their admissions scores. But grit *did* predict who quit during Beast Barracks and who stayed on. Duckworth then took her grit experiments to other settings. She found that grit is the best predictor of whether timeshare salespeople stay in their jobs, whether students graduate high school, and whether people earn graduate degrees. In the army, grit also predicted which soldiers would complete the Special Forces Selection Course, which is so grueling that it "makes Beast Barracks look like summer vacation."

Duckworth's research shows why grit is such a significant concept: it predicts outcomes that ability simply can't. Specifically, grit determines whether people stick with difficult programs that have long-term rewards, but not immediate ones—like Beast Barracks, timeshare sales, and formal education. Duckworth's experiment also shows how psychology can illuminate the true links between personality and behavior by applying the scientific method.

After watching *Spellbound*, a documentary about the Scripps National Spelling Bee, Duckworth began to wonder whether the spellers' success was about talent, grit, or both. So, she tested it by giving the spellers the Grit Scale and a verbal intelligence test. She found that grit and intelligence both predicted success, but that there was no correlation between the two. In other words, talent has nothing to do with grit. In fact, Duckworth found that Ivy League students with higher SAT scores were *less* gritty. All this evidence led Duckworth to an important insight: "*Our potential is one thing. What we do with it is quite another.*"

Like West Point, the National Spelling Bee is another high-pressure setting where performance is both extremely important and very easy to measure. This made it a perfect setting for Duckworth's experiment. Again, Duckworth found not only that grit predicts success, but also that inherent ability doesn't. *This leads to the crucial distinction that she draws at the end of this introductory chapter: people might have varying levels of potential, but their achievement depends on* "what [they] do with" *that potential. In other words, grit is the factor that enables people to translate their potential into performance.*

CHAPTER 2: DISTRACTED BY TALENT

At age 27, Duckworth quit her management consulting job to become a seventh-grade math teacher at a school facing many challenges on the Lower East Side of New York City. Some of her students were obviously talented: they quickly understood new concepts and solved sample problems in class. But many of these talented students earned poor grades. In contrast, less talented but more dedicated students, who kept trying when they didn't understand something, earned the highest grades. This surprised Duckworth, who had been "*distracted by talent*." Realizing that effort mattered much more, she started wondering how to foster it in the classroom. She also noticed that even her worst students were incredibly knowledgeable about the things that actually interested them (like music and baseball).

Duckworth's observations as a teacher foreshadowed her conclusions as a psychologist: effort trumps talent. Yet she emphasizes how she—like her father and, she will argue, the vast majority of the public—was unfairly biased toward defining success in terms of talent. This bias made her a less effective educator: she missed many crucial opportunities to help her students succeed because she underestimated the importance of teaching them grit and hard work. When she points out that even her least successful students were knowledgeable about something, *she suggests that teachers often erroneously see students as untalented in general when, really, they're just talented at something besides school. This also foreshadows Duckworth's key point that gritty people aren't interested in or dedicated to* everything—*in fact, it's quite common for schoolwork to be their lowest priority. Rather, gritty people are those who know how to develop, deepen, and pursue a particular field about which they're passionate.*

After a year in New York, Duckworth moved to San Francisco and started teaching at the academically selective Lowell High School. Most Lowell students were more successful than her previous students simply because of their work ethic, not their intelligence. Duckworth taught a freshman algebra class for students who scored low on the school's placement test. One of her hardest-working students was David Luong, who never spoke up in class but always turned in perfect work. Duckworth helped him switch to a more advanced class, where he struggled at first but kept working to improve. He went on to succeed in high school math, study engineering and economics in college, and earn a PhD at UCLA. Today, Luong is a literal rocket scientist.

David Luong exemplifies how people who work hard can succeed in the long term even if they don't stand out for their extraordinary talents. Indeed, by working hard, he became more skilled at math than his arguably more talented peers. But his placement in the low-level math class also shows how schools, like the people who teach in them, are systematically biased towards talent instead of effort. While David managed to switch classes, it's easy to see how many students wouldn't be so lucky and would miss out on opportunities simply because they're gritty but not talented.


Duckworth decided to become a psychologist to study her hunch that effort matters more than intelligence. In graduate school, she learned about earlier psychologists like Francis Galton, who studied the biographies of exceptional people and concluded that "ability," "zeal," and "the capacity for hard labor" are the keys to success. But Galton's cousin, Charles Darwin, disagreed: he didn't think that ability was very important at all. In fact, Darwin didn't view himself as unusually intelligent—instead, he succeeded because he collected data meticulously and stuck with difficult problems for a long time.

As Duckworth began to develop the foundational ideas for Grit *during her time as a teacher and consultant, she recognized that psychology's experimental methods were the key to actually testing her ideas. She also emphasizes that her approach to achievement isn't new: it has a long history in psychology, and many prominent figures, like Darwin, have advocated for the importance of grit (just by another name).*


Later, American psychologist William James argued that most people fall far short of their potential because they don't use all of their talents and resources. If this is true, Duckworth asks, why do people care so much about talent in the first place? National surveys show that Americans view effort as far more important than intelligence.

James's point helps explain why Duckworth prioritizes grit over talent: people's potential is useless if they never actually realize it. Valuing talent over effort is like caring about potential without even striving for actual achievement. Unfortunately, the surveys that Duckworth cites suggest that the majority of people think this way.

Meanwhile, the psychologist Chia-Jung Tsay has found that while music experts know that effort is more important than talent, they're still biased toward talent. She gave these experts two recordings from the same pianist but told them that one was a naturally talented performer and the other was a hard-working "striver." The experts thought the "natural" would have a more successful career. In another experiment, Tsay found that people were more likely to endorse a business plan when they thought the entrepreneur was a "natural," as opposed to a "striver." Her research shows that people have a hidden "naturalness bias" towards talent and against hard work.

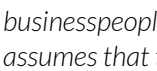
Tsay's research highlights a particularly extreme example of the paradox that Duckworth has just pointed out. Specifically, even experts who understand *that effort supersedes talent still show an unconscious bias toward valuing talent. Whether this bias is based in nature or culture, fighting it—as scholars like Duckworth and Tsay hope to do—is clearly a significant challenge. Making people value effort instead of talent means fundamentally changing the culture of entire societies.*

Chia-Jung Tsay's life also represents the difference between naturals and strivers. She has multiple degrees from Harvard, two PhDs, and a successful piano performance career. Many people might assume she's innately talented. But actually, she chalks her music success up to practice and effort. She learned the piano and continues to play it not because of outside pressure, but because she loves it.

Duckworth's analysis of Tsay's life shows how the difference between talent- and effort-based explanations is in the eye of the beholder. In other words, people can interpret the same story as evidence of genius or evidence of hard work, depending on their personal biases. While this helps explain the popular cultural obsession with genius, it also shows that people can overcome this obsession by teaching people to habitually attribute success to grit and hard work.

McKinsey, the consulting firm where Duckworth once worked, published a famous report called *The War for Talent*. It argued that companies' success depends on attracting inherently talented people. In fact, McKinsey is obsessed with finding "bright" people. Duckworth's McKinsey interview consisted of absurd brain teasers, like estimating the number of tennis balls manufactured in the US. It even sorts candidates by SAT scores. Duckworth and her colleagues knew absolutely nothing about business when they started. And yet they were supposed to advise multibillion-dollar companies on management. These companies hire McKinsey in large part because their employees are supposedly the "best and brightest."

McKinsey's view of achievement is very similar to Duckworth's father's: both think that talent almost exclusively determines whether people succeed or fail. Duckworth points out that this assumption pervades McKinsey's entire culture, from its publications to its interview process. The company places emphasis on SAT scores and a candidate's ability to solve brain teasers, thinking that this is a way to measure people's inherent talent. In other words, McKinsey believes that people who can quickly do mental math will make better business decisions than experienced businesspeople who are somewhat slower at mental math. It also assumes that the business challenges its clients face are the kind of problems that should be solved through individual analytic reasoning alone. But Duckworth's experience working there shows how absurd, ineffective, and unrealistic this theory of talent truly is. She clearly saw that experience *would help her run multinational companies better than anything else.*



Prominent journalists have heavily criticized McKinsey's focus on talent. While McKinsey promotes firing "untalented" employees and paying "talented" ones far more than their peers, in reality, companies tend to perform badly once they start doing so. Some, like Enron, have completely collapsed. When employees fight to show off their talent, Duckworth argues, the most smug, dishonest, and selfish ones tend to get promoted, and companies start to prioritize short-term profits over long-term success. It's little surprise that Enron's CEO, who insisted on firing 15 percent of the company's employees every year, was a former McKinsey consultant.

Duckworth suggests that, because inherent "talent" in the business world is largely a mirage, McKinsey's efforts to identify it often end up rewarding the people most willing to boast about their own perceived talents. (It doesn't help that the executives selecting new "talent" tended to get their jobs through the same process.) In reality, Duckworth implies, companies should train *their employees instead of constantly evaluating them. McKinsey's disastrous effects on the companies it advises—and on society as a whole—show why the bias toward talent can be so dangerous. But its continued success as a consulting firm also shows that corporate leaders still tend to believe in the myth that talent leads to achievement, even if this belief works to their own detriment.*

Talent is certainly a good thing, Duckworth writes, but focusing on it too much is risky because it leads people to neglect everything else. For instance, Scott Barry Kaufman, a successful research psychologist and Duckworth's colleague, was labeled learning disabled in elementary school. But in high school, a teacher showed him that he could actually grow and improve, and he started taking on challenges. He became a star cellist, succeeded in his classes, and ended up graduating with honors from Carnegie Mellon University. Duckworth notes that she, too, initially scored too low on an IQ test for her school's gifted and talented program. But these tests to measure talent are far from perfect.

Duckworth agrees that inherent talent does *exist. She just thinks that its importance tends to get wildly overblown. Scott Barry Kaufman's story shows how people can overcome a lack of inherent talent through moderate effort and a belief in their own capacity to grow. In fact, it only took a few years of serious effort for Kaufman to pull ahead of his supposedly more talented peers. His potential was vastly greater than he thought—and yet most of the people with more potential than him simply never fulfilled that potential.*

CHAPTER 3: EFFORT COUNTS TWICE

American media and popular culture almost always explain achievement through talent. Even Duckworth still thinks "*What a* **genius**!" when people impress her. She asks why people are unconsciously biased toward talent. The sociologist Dan Chambliss, who spent six years studying competitive swimming, noted that the best swimmers succeed because they learn and perfect dozens of small habits. But most laypeople attribute incredible athletic ability to natural talent, because they simply can't explain how it's possible. It's true that some swimmers have natural anatomical advantages, and some improve faster during training. But Chambliss insists that greatness is really just the sum of many smaller, totally achievable accomplishments.

In the last chapter, Duckworth showed that there is a widespread bias toward explaining success in terms of talent and not hard work. Now, she explores where this bias comes from. She suggests that its source is ignorance: people don't understand where greatness comes from, so they assume it must just be natural and inherent. But if the bias toward talent comes from ignorance, then this also means that the bias is easy to correct: people just have to learn about how champions and high achievers actually *develop their expertise. Of course, one way for them to learn that is through research. Chambliss's study, like the surveys that Duckworth described at the end of the first chapter, offers clear-cut evidence that effort makes a greater difference in performance than talent does.*

Still, talent is an appealing explanation. Upon seeing the retired gold medalist Mark Spitz swim, even Dan Chambliss felt like Spitz was somehow extraordinary. Friedrich Nietzsche, the 19th-century German philosopher, wrote that people don't like learning about all the effort that goes into extraordinary accomplishments. They focus on the idea of genius or talent, Nietzsche argued, to protect their own vanity. If successful people are just magical **geniuses**, then ordinary people can't possibly compete with them. But Nietzsche thought that, in reality, genius is a not a quality but a *craft*—something people achieve over time through serious, dedicated work.

Chambliss's reaction to Mark Spitz—like Duckworth's tendency to think "what a genius*!" when people impress her—shows how strong the bias toward talent truly is. Nietzsche helps explain* why *it's so strong: it protects people's feelings. If people admit that genius is really the product of hard work, then they have to justify why* they *haven't also worked hard enough to achieve it. For instance, if Chambliss recognizes that Mark Spitz just practices a lot, he is admitting that he* also *could have been a champion swimmer if he had done the same. This implies that he didn't try hard enough and that his failure to achieve greatness is his fault. In contrast, if he attributes Spitz's success to inborn talent, Chambliss can feel that his own lack of swimming success is just bad luck, and not his own fault. Finally, Nietzsche's view of genius as a craft is a useful metaphor for understanding why grit contributes to success. A craft requires constant dedication over years, and talent doesn't make people into master artisans unless they also put in these years of practice. Grit is like the artisan's* commitment *to their craft.*

Duckworth remembers when her graduate school advisor, the influential but intimidating Marty Seligman, told her that she didn't have any good ideas. She was collecting lots of data, Seligman said, but she had no theory to explain it. After the meeting, Duckworth broke down crying but realized that Seligman was right: she still didn't know how talent, effort, and skill combined to create achievement.

While Seligman's comments might have seemed insensitive, Duckworth admits that they were accurate. In fact, she has reached a point in her book similar to the point she reached before her meeting with Seligman: she has laid out plenty of evidence for grit's importance but not yet provided an overarching theory of how it factors into achievement. Duckworth's meeting with Seligman also points to the difficulty of doing effective research: psychologists have to balance collecting data with effectively analyzing it. Throughout the book, Duckworth tries to maintain this balance by always backing her arguments up with data but avoiding the temptation to get caught up in the details of specific studies.

Now, a decade later, Duckworth finally *does* have a theory. It consists of two principles. The first is "talent × *effort* = skill." (This means that talent is the rate at which people's skills develop when they put effort into improving them.) The second is that "skill × *effort* = achievement." (This means that achievement comes from people applying their skills to real challenges.) Of course, Duckworth's theory isn't perfect—circumstances and luck also affect achievement. But it does explain why effort matters more than talent. Effort both "builds skill" and "makes skill *productive*."

Duckworth's theory points out that achievement is really a two-step process: people first build *skills, then* apply *them. Talent isn't the same as skill—rather, talent refers to inherent abilities, while skill refers to specific knowledge relevant to one's work. For instance, someone can be artistically* talented *but still have to learn specific drawing or painting* skills. *Readers also might find it strange that Duckworth's equations don't mention grit. However, grit is just the personality trait that determines how much effort people are likely to put into their projects. Thus, if effort counts twice, so does grit.*

Duckworth illustrates her theory with several examples. The master potter Warren MacKenzie was in his 90s when Duckworth interviewed him. He made around 50 pots a day but only thought a few were good—meaning they were beautiful and useful enough to sell and count as true art. He measured his achievement as an artist by the number of good pots he created. Over the years, as he improved, more of his pots were good—thus, "talent × *effort* = skill." And as his skill improved, he created more good pots overall—thus, "skill × *effort* = achievement."

Regardless of his innate artistic talents, MacKenzie had to build his skill *as a potter through years of hard work. When more and more of his pots became good enough to sell, this meant that his skills were improving. Next, he still had to effortfully apply his pottery skills in order to actually produce sellable pots. Thus, making pots was both the way MacKenzie trained his pottery skills and the way he applied them to achieve success as an artist.*

The award-winning novelist John Irving constantly rewrites his books. In high school, he struggled in English classes and barely graduated. Teachers viewed him as stupid and lazy, but really, he had severe dyslexia. Today, he still reads with his finger. But he says that fighting dyslexia taught him the stamina that is key to his rewriting today. In fact, Duckworth comments, "precociously talented" people often don't learn this kind of stamina. Like MacKenzie, Irving built his skill through effort, and he became a master novelist by applying these skills.

Irving's dyslexia and trouble in high school show that he has managed to succeed despite having very little *natural writerly talent. In fact, he even suggests that his lack of talent* helped *him because it taught him to work harder (or made him grittier). His constant rewriting is evidence of this work ethic. This is consistent with Duckworth's finding from her study of Ivy League students: early in life, people with more talent don't have to put in as much effort in order to succeed, so they often don't develop grit in the long term.*

Will Smith, the actor and musician, has always attributed his accomplishments to his work ethic. He once joked that he's "not afraid to die on a treadmill." In fact, in the 1940s, Harvard researchers put 130 male undergraduates on a steep treadmill to test their stamina. For decades after, the researchers contacted the men every other year to learn about their careers, social lives, and mental health. The psychiatrist George Vaillant revived the study and contacted all the participants when they were in their sixties. He found that, even after adjusting for physical fitness, the men's running time on the treadmill predicted their success in adulthood. (Ironically, Vaillant told Duckworth that he doesn't think of himself as high-grit at all—except when it comes to pursuing the study.)

The treadmill study shows that stamina—or people's willingness to exert themselves physically and mentally—predicts a series of positive life outcomes. In simpler terms, it shows that effort predicts achievement—which is similar to Duckworth's central argument in this book. By correcting for physical fitness, Vaillant ensured that he was just measuring mental stamina, which is closely connected to grit. Of course, this study shows that one half of grit—perseverance—matters a great deal. But it doesn't say anything about passion, which is the other half of the equation.

Woody Allen famously said that "eighty percent of success in life is showing up." Duckworth comments that if she had run the Harvard study, she would have measured the participants' grit by inviting them to return and run the treadmill again. This is because commitment is the key to effort. People who stop trying give up on improving their skills. According to Duckworth's theory, if person A is "twice as talented but half as hardworking" as person B, both will achieve the same level of skill, but person B will achieve much more over their lifetime. Effort, Duckworth reiterates, turns talent into skill and "makes skill *productive*."

In her version of the treadmill study, Duckworth would have also tested long-term perseverance—or returning to the same challenge over and over, which is an even more essential ingredient of grit than short-term perseverance (like staying on the treadmill for an extra minute). Duckworth's rough comparison between two hypothetical people shows roughly how much more important effort is than talent. Essentially, Duckworth's equations suggest that talent's effect on success is linear, whereas effort's is exponential.

CHAPTER 4: HOW GRITTY ARE YOU?

A young entrepreneur once approached Duckworth before one of her lectures to tell her how long and hard he worked on his start-up. He thought this made him gritty, but Duckworth explained that grit is really about long-term stamina, not short-term intensity. Real grit means not just working super hard but working on the same thing for many years. This doesn't have to mean working on the same exact project or sticking with one particular company. It really means "doing what you love, but not just falling in love—*staying* in love."

The young entrepreneur's commitment to grit may be admirable, but he deeply misunderstands the concept by setting his sights on the short term instead of the long term. Duckworth uses this anecdote to once again emphasize the vast difference between common assumptions about grit and her actual argument: grit is about whether an individual designs their entire life around certain goals, not just whether they work hard while they do it.

Duckworth includes her Grit Scale, which asks people to rate whether 10 different statements, like "I am a hard worker" and "I finish whatever I begin," accurately describe them. She asks the reader to complete the scale, score it, and then compare themselves to the general population. But she emphasizes that grit can change over people's lifetimes. Readers can also score themselves on grit's two key elements: passion and perseverance. Generally, people score somewhat higher for perseverance than for passion. In this chapter, Duckworth will explain why by illustrating the difference between passion and perseverance.

Duckworth gives her readers the Grit Scale so that they can better understand the concept of grit, apply it to their own lives, and evaluate whether they ought to work on building more of it. Notably, the grit scale depends on people's self-reports, which are inherently unreliable. Still, they can be used for studies with large number of participants, and there's no better way to measure grit, which shows how difficult it can be for psychologists to measure personality constructs.

Duckworth points out that on the Grit Scale, the questions about passion ask about the *consistency* of people's commitments, not the *intensity* of them. High-grit people are curious about the same questions for decades, and this kind of enduring interest is far less common than simple enthusiasm.

Duckworth reiterates her note from the beginning of the chapter: passion means consistently remaining interested in the same issues over time. Thus, in the context of grit, passion is more like a long-term relationship than the kind of short-term infatuation that people might intuitively associate with the word.

Jeffrey Gettleman is now a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who works in East Africa for *The New York Times*. But Duckworth first met him when they were both getting master's degrees at Oxford in their early twenties. Gettleman didn't know what he wanted to do, but he *did* know that he wanted to work in East Africa, where he had first traveled during college. At Oxford, he realized that journalism could get him there, so he made a plan to start reporting and eventually move back to Africa. It took him a decade, but he succeeded. Gettleman's story shows that passion is less like fireworks (which fizzle out), than a **compass** (which consistently guides people in the right direction).

Gettleman's life story exemplifies the kind of passion that gritty people have. He consistently pursued his most important goal—reaching East Africa—for many years before he finally achieved it. But during this time, he never lost his focus. Crucially, Gettleman's story also shows that people's passions don't have to encompass their entire jobs, or even focus on the professional aspect of their work—Gettleman became a journalist to go to Africa, and not vice versa. Similarly, his long path to journalism also shows how people have to actively explore and develop their interests over time, until they are passionate enough about them to fully commit.

Pete Carroll, the coach of the Seattle Seahawks, defines passion in terms of a life philosophy. Some people want many different things, while others know exactly what they want. Carroll developed his own life philosophy after losing his job and reading books by the famous basketball coach John Wooden. Carroll realized that people need an overarching vision of their lives in order to give meaning to their other, smaller and more specific goals.

Carroll's definition of passion is useful because it highlights how passion gives meaning to people's lives. Specifically, passion is an organizing principle for people's goals, plans, and actions. In other words, each person's passion defines the single overarching purpose of their life—and gritty people, like Carroll, organize their entire lives in order to fulfill that purpose.

The smallest goals, like getting to work on time, are really just a means to mid-level goals, like respecting others. These mid-level goals are a means to higher-level goals, like becoming an effective leader, and so on. And the highest-level goals aren't a means to anything: they're ends in and of themselves. These final goals are like a guiding **compass** or a life philosophy. For instance, baseball pitcher Tom Seaver's highest-level goal was to pitch to the best of his ability every day. This structured all of his lower-level goals, like what he ate, how he slept, and even which hand he used to do everyday tasks.

Duckworth offers a more detailed analysis of how passion gives meaning and order to gritty people's lives. Because passion defines gritty people's highest-level, overarching goals, it also helps them understand where all of their other goals and commitments fit into the broader picture. In other words, high-level goals help people plan their lives. Tom Seaver illustrates this process because all of his lower-level goals—like eating well, sleeping consistently, and saving his throwing arm for baseball—were designed to serve his high-level goal of succeeding as a pitcher.

Duckworth concludes that passion means pursuing the "*same* ultimate goal in an abiding, loyal, steady way." Gritty people's lower-level goals serve their higher-level ones, while people who lack grit tend not to have their goals in order. For instance, many people fantasize about successful careers but have no clear idea of how to get there. Others have many separate goal hierarchies that aren't unified by any top-level goals. Of course, to some extent, everyone has multiple goal hierarchies. For instance, Duckworth has two top-level goals: using psychology to help young people and raising her daughters well.

Grit doesn't require just identifying one's top-level goal(s), but also organizing one's life in order to effectively achieve it (or them). This means that passion isn't just about strong feelings and interests: it's also about effective planning. Moreover, avoiding distractions from less important goals and priorities is just as important as following one's primary passion. Duckworth's life shows how it's possible for gritty people to juggle separate personal and professional goals, but this can create difficulties when these goals contradict each other.


Still, Duckworth thinks that people are more likely to succeed if they can narrow down their top-level goals—and especially their professional goals. Allegedly, the billionaire Warren Buffet gave his private pilot an exercise to narrow down his career goals: list 25 of them, choose the five most important, and then avoid the other 20. When Duckworth tried this, she came up with more than 30 goals, then realized that most of them were connected. Rather than five main career goals, she thinks that people need one clear goal *hierarchy* for their careers. By prioritizing their goals, people can learn which ones are really worth their stubborn effort, which ones are worth abandoning, and which ones are merely a means to an end.

While Buffet's exercise is about defining primary goals instead of clear goal hierarchies, *it still emphasizes the importance of prioritization. Moreover, it gives readers clear, actionable advice for doing so, and it's easy to adapt this advice to form a hierarchy instead of just a list. Listing, selecting, and understanding the relationships between different goals is the crucial first step towards finding one's passion. Indeed, Buffet's exercise also affirms that passion is something people must actively develop, not something that simply comes to them.*


The story of legendary *New Yorker* cartoon editor Bob Mankoff also demonstrates how to build an effective goal hierarchy. Mankoff rejects 96 percent of the cartoons by the magazine's official contract cartoonists. (The overall rejection rate, including cartoons from non-contract cartoonists, is even higher.) Mankoff loved drawing as a child, but he quit in high school. Then, after college, he realized that he wanted to be a humorist. He started drawing cartoons and writing comedy routines—but he soon quit stand-up to focus on cartoons. Over two years, the *New Yorker* rejected more than 2,000 of Mankoff's cartoons. But in 1977, it finally accepted one. In the following years, it took dozens. And in 1981, the *New Yorker* hired Mankoff as a contract cartoonist.

Mankoff exemplifies passion and perseverance, the two key elements of grit. First, he discovered and stuck to the same passion: once he figured out that he wanted to be a cartoonist, he stayed focused on his ambitious overarching goal, even if it often seemed distant or unachievable. Meanwhile, he continued to submit new cartoons after thousands of rejections, which required true perseverance. But Mankoff's grit eventually paid off, which neatly illustrates this chapter's central thesis: grit is about people's overall approach to life in the long term. It's not just about whether or not they can drum up passion or perseverance for particular short-term goals.

Based on Mankoff's story, Duckworth argues that people should be willing to give up their lower-level goals when necessary—like when they find an easier, more efficient, or more entertaining alternative. But they should be stubborn about their high-level goals.

Consistency and commitment to high-level goals generally requires serious flexibility about low-level ones. This is why Buffet's exercise asks people to discard *all but their most important career goals. Mankoff illustrates this because he gave up on psychology and stand-up comedy when he realized that comics were a better way to pursue his goal of becoming a humorist.*

In the 1920s, the psychologist Catharine Cox studied 301 historical high achievers, estimated their IQs, and published an 800-page book about her findings. However, her IQ scores didn't predict which **geniuses** were more eminent or influential. Neither did most of the 67 personality traits that she measured. The few that *did* matter were variations on passion and perseverance. In conclusion, Duckworth explains that the Grit Scale is just a tool for reflecting on how gritty people are *now*. The rest of her book will focus on how to strengthen and develop grit.

Ironically, even though she is best known for studying talent and genius, Cox's study actually shows that, across history, in every field, effort predicts success better than IQ. Thus, her research echoes Duckworth and Chambliss's findings: grit (passion and perseverance) trumps talent. Indeed, Cox definitively shows that Duckworth's father was wrong: even genius *depends more on hard work than inherent talent.*

CHAPTER 5: GRIT GROWS

People frequently ask Duckworth the extent to which grit is genetic. But both genes and experience—or nature and nurture—influence every human characteristic. For instance, even though people ordinarily think of height as genetic, improved medicine and nutrition have dramatically increased average human height over the last 150 years. Similarly, talent is partially genetic and partially environmental. For example, Dan Chambliss's swimming career never took off both because his toes aren't flexible enough and because he had bad coaches in high school. Unsurprisingly, then, grit is also both genetic and environmental. When UK researchers gave the Grit Scale to thousands of twins, they found that heritability accounts for 20 percent of differences in passion and 37 percent of differences in perseverance. Of course, this depends on many different genes, not just one.

Understanding where grit comes from is important not only as a matter of scientific curiosity, but also because it can show the extent to which grit is within people's control. Of course, as Duckworth points out, psychologists now widely agree that virtually all *traits have both genetic and environmental components, which means that they are partially (but not entirely) within people's control. This doesn't mean that it's* easy *to change these traits—only that it's possible. In fact, the heritability research on grit suggests that it's* mostly *the result of environmental factors, which suggests that people can become grittier if they take the right steps and experience the right family, social, and cultural influences. Duckworth will explain this in much more detail over the following chapters.*

Moreover, while heritability explains *variation*, it doesn't explain *averages*—or how they can change. For instance, the researcher Jim Flynn famously found that average human IQs are significantly increasing over time. Just like kids got better at basketball when television made the sport more popular, Flynn argued, people's abstract reasoning skills are improving because modern schools and jobs highly value those skills.

Flynn's findings suggest that individual traits like IQ can change over time as part of broader cultural *trends. The implications for grit are clear: if grit became as popular as basketball, then perhaps* everyone *would become grittier together. Of course, the opposite could also happen: cultural shifts could make grit less common or harder to develop.*

Duckworth has found that, unlike IQ scores, grit scores are higher among *older* adults. Perhaps culture change has made younger generations less dedicated and hardworking. Or perhaps people just become grittier as they age, since getting older generally forces people to define their goals, deal with failure, and adapt to new circumstances. For instance, Duckworth's three-year-old daughter, Lucy, potty trained *herself* after moving to a new class, and a friend's teenage daughter suddenly became punctual when her new manager promised to fire anyone who was late. Duckworth still doesn't have enough data to know for sure why aging leads to an increase in grittiness, but she suspects that culture and maturity each partially explain generational differences in grit.

As a scientist, Duckworth must consider all possible explanations for her findings until she has sufficient evidence to set forth just one answer. Certainly, specific cultural changes—like new technologies that make everyday tasks easier—could leave younger generations needing much less grit than their ancestors. But the other explanation, that people become grittier as they age, is also consistent with Duckworth's evidence about how people develop their passions and learn perseverance over time. Regardless, the examples that Duckworth cites here show that grit is clearly learnable—which means that, regardless of society-wide averages, individuals can still build their own grit in the right circumstances.

Next, Duckworth asks how people's grit grows. Many people feel that they lack grit because they are lazy or flaky, but actually, they tend to have real reasons for not finishing things—like boredom, inability, or not caring enough about the goal. All of these thoughts are reasonable, especially when they pertain to unimportant, low-level goals. But Duckworth notes that she's consistently seen four traits in highly gritty people: *interest* in their work, the willingness to *practice* skills constantly in the long term, a sense of *purpose* (or the feeling that their work benefits others), and *hope* that they can overcome obstacles. People can learn all four of these traits, and the next four chapters will explain how.

Readers might find Duckworth's sympathy for quitters to be surprising, but it's helpful to recall that grit is about consistently pursuing one specific overarching *goal rather than stubbornly sticking with everything one does. Therefore, when people choose not to follow through with things, it doesn't always mean they lack grit. Instead, quitting can often be the* solution *that helps people dedicate their time and energy to goals that really matter. The four traits that Duckworth specifies all contribute to success. Interest motivates people to work harder and innovate in their fields. Practice improves people's skills, which enables them to improve their performance. Purpose also motivates people by creating a powerful sense of obligation. This and hope both help people keep going when they hit major obstacles.*

CHAPTER 6: INTEREST

At college graduation ceremonies, speakers like Will Shortz and Jeff Bezos often say things like, "*follow your passion*," as do the high-grit people Duckworth has interviewed. The British journalist Hester Lacey, who interviews "mega successful" people for the *Financial Times*, also constantly hears versions of "I love what I do." In contrast, when Duckworth was growing up, her father encouraged her to choose a prestigious, stable career—not to do what she loved. In fact, her father became a chemist for practical reasons, but he ended up loving his job.

Duckworth opens this chapter with a dilemma that young people face everywhere: should they choose an unstable career that they love or a stable one that they don't? This choice is so common that both sides of it—the commencement speakers' advice and Duckworth's father's—have essentially become clichés. Ordinarily, this dilemma involves choosing between an interesting life and a stable one—but Duckworth views this question from a slightly different angle. Instead, she wants to know whether people are more likely to develop grit and become "mega successful" if they choose passion or practicality.

Which is better, Duckworth asks: choosing a practical job or following one's interests? After aggregating hundreds of studies, psychologists have reached an answer: people who choose jobs related to their interests are happier and higher-performing. However, many people don't have the luxury of doing so. Polling finds that less than a third of American adults—and only 13 percent of adults internationally—are actually engaged at work. This shows that most people "miss the mark" and don't find jobs they love. But this doesn't disprove the importance of following one's passion.

To readers who associate grit with practicality and hard work, Duckworth's conclusion that people should follow their passions might come as a surprise. Yet, while the science on this question is very clear, the majority of people still don't follow it. In the rest of this chapter, Duckworth will investigate why. For instance, as she hints at here, following one's passion can be risky—after all, the research she cites didn't ask whether people tried *to follow their passions, but only whether they actually* succeeded *in finding work in a related field. Thus, the apparent advantage of following one's passion doesn't account for the risk of trying, failing, and ending up in another, potentially worse field. In other words, successfully following one's passion is easier said than done, though it's quite advantageous when it ends up working out.*

However, many people simply don't have a passion to follow yet. They need to *foster* one. The "grit paragons" Duckworth interviews don't generally find their passion in a single flash of insight—like in the movie *Julie & Julia*, which shows Julia Child taking a bite of fish and suddenly falling in love with French food. Instead, Duckworth's subjects generally "spent years exploring several different interests." Swimmer Rowdy Gaines tried several different sports first, and chef Marc Vetri originally wanted to be a musician. In fact, Julia Child didn't *really* decide to become a chef when she tried that delicious fish—instead, she started exploring other aspects of French cooking. For her whole childhood, she wanted to be a novelist.

Duckworth dispels the common myth that passion is something that happens to people, captivating them in a way they can't control. Instead, she explains, passion is something that people build over time. It's a process of discovery, not an instant moment of knowledge. In fact, Duckworth's argument about passion is remarkably similar to her point about genius: most people mistake the result of a long, painstaking process for a person's inherent qualities. (For instance, people might assume that Rowdy Gaines is a born swimmer rather than acknowledging that he has spent decades developing his interest and honing his skills.) This common mistake teaches people that passion and talent are outside of their control, despite the fact that this isn't really the case.

Duckworth quotes a Reddit post from a 30-something who says they have no idea what direction to take their career. She mentions that many of her undergraduate students feel the same way. Psychologist Barry Schwartz, who has been teaching for 45 years, told Duckworth that many young people unrealistically wish for a career that's perfect in every way, and that they fall in love with instantly. In reality, no career is perfect, and people often have to try new things for some time before they become interesting. This is similar to how people tend to desire a perfect romantic partner, when they should really start by finding good-enough potential matches.

The Reddit poster and Duckworth's students think in terms of Julie & Julia*: they assume that the right passion and perfect career direction will materialize out of thin air. But in reality, they have to actively* create *a passion and career direction over time. This is why Duckworth compares passion to romance: while love at first sight is an appealing idea, it's naïve and impractical. In reality, people build love over time, by developing successful relationships through their own effort. Similarly, people also tend to idealize grit itself—they assume that gritty people always know and achieve exactly what they want. But in reality, it's just the opposite: gritty people constantly cope with setbacks, confusion, and imperfection. Just like everyone else, they start out not knowing about their passions—but unlike others, gritty people work hard to develop them.*

While psychologists can't say *why* certain people become interested in certain subjects, they do know that passion follows three stages: initial discovery, a long period of development, and then life-long deepening. *Discovery*, which almost never starts before middle school, is a gradual, messy process. It doesn't depend on introspection, but rather on experimenting and interacting with the world. And people usually don't even realize when they've started to discover a new interest.

Psychologists' three-stage model shows that, far from being instantaneous, the process of building passion is actually endless—it continues throughout people's entire lives. Of course, as with so many of the other common assumptions that Duckworth disproves through her research, this is actually cause for optimism: it shows that people ultimately have control over whether they cultivate a passion, and that it is never too late to do so.

Next, *development* is an even longer process. It depends on repeatedly encountering the new interest over the course of years. Other people can help support the development of interests by providing information and positive feedback. For instance, Marc Vetri developed his interest in food by cooking with his Sicilian grandmother, washing dishes in a restaurant, and meeting numerous people in the restaurant world.

Even though a single encounter can spark an enduring interest *in an area, it simply isn't enough to generate enduring* passion. *Marc Vetri's experience shows how repeated exposure is key. This shows that, while passion partially depends on influences that people control, it also largely depends on ones that they don't—like their environment and the people around them. And the importance of role models shows how people can help others develop passion and grit—as well as how both can spread throughout a broader society or culture.*

Parents frequently forget that their children have to be *interested* in what they do in order to work hard at it. While most people don't work hard at what they love, they tend to work even less at what they *don't* love. Duckworth concludes that "*before hard work comes play*." People have to have fun as beginners, trying out new interests, before they can hope to pursue serious goals and become experts. Psychologist Benjamin Bloom says that skills develop in three periods. In "the early years," people require supportive mentors and autonomy in order to develop their skills. Young people who rush out of this phase are generally less successful in the long term. (Duckworth will discuss Bloom's concepts of "middle years" and "later years" in other chapters.)

The parents that Duckworth describes here make the same mistake as the young entrepreneur she mentioned at the beginning of Chapter Four: they forget that passion is just as important to grit as perseverance. In Duckworth's estimation, it's better for people to flounder as adolescents but discover and eventually apply themselves to a passion, than for them to learn the value of hard work but never figure out what genuinely interests them. Clearly, parents can make or break these tendencies, which is why Duckworth advises them to prioritize the long term over the short term if they want to raise innovative high achievers (rather than just respectable but mediocre professionals). Specifically, they should support their kids and give them space to develop gradually, rather than pressuring them to immediately succeed in the short term.

As case studies, Duckworth turns to the commencement speakers she mentioned, *New York Times* crossword editor Will Shortz and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. Shortz's mother, a writer who loved crosswords, bought him endless puzzle books and taught him how to make and sell puzzles. Similarly, Bezos's young mother supported his wild inventions—like the alarm he built in middle school, which went off whenever his siblings entered his room. She even supported him when he started skipping high school to do research with a professor.

Shortz and Bezos's mothers embody Duckworth's advice for parents: they both gave their sons sufficient autonomy to develop their own interests, then supported their sons' interests while keeping them accountable for their actions. In particular, they recognized that academic achievement isn't the only measure of potential or success, and they served as role models to show their sons that unconventional paths to success are possible.

High-grit people tend to change careers fewer times. For instance, Jane Golden has directed Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program for over 30 years. While many people get bored and move on to new projects every few years, gritty people find ways to deepen their interests over time. For instance, Golden used to be a painter, but she learned to see the Mural Arts Program as a new creative endeavor that would let her engage with art and her community.

Gritty people tend to identify their interests and seek out work that fulfills and deepens them. Thus, they have little need to switch career paths. Jane Golden's long-term commitment to the Mural Arts Program embodies this: she never gets bored of her job because it fits her passion. Her story again demonstrates that grit is more about long-term commitment to a particular passion than intense short-term interest in a given area.

The psychologist Paul Silva has pointed out that babies learn about the world by seeking out novelty. While lots of people pursue novelty by constantly exploring new interests, high-grit people find novelty in the nuances within their field. For instance, art experts learn to appreciate minor details that most viewers would never notice.

Silva's research shows that people have a constant need for novelty and change, but also that they can fulfill this need in multiple ways. For instance, Jane Golden shows how gritty people deepen their interests instead of distracting themselves with new ones: she prefers to learn more about art and activism than pursue entirely new projects.

People who haven't yet fostered their passion must start with the *discovery* phase. They should ask themselves what they enjoy and care about, then start experimenting. Meanwhile, people who have already discovered their interests ought to *develop* them. They should try to continually engage with their interests, ask lots of questions, and look for peers and mentors who share those interests. Finally, people who have already developed their interests ought to *deepen* them. If possible, they should look for novelty within their field, not outside of it.

Duckworth ends by translating her analysis of psychology research on passion into concrete advice for people at different stages in their lives and careers. Of course, she reiterates that people can start discovering their passion at any point in life—but they should expect a long process of discovery rather than assuming their passion will develop instantaneously. Even though people tend to associate passion with strong determination, open-mindedness and flexibility are actually more important in the early stages.

CHAPTER 7: PRACTICE

At the National Spelling Bee, Duckworth found that high-grit contestants practiced more—and this practice explained their success. Similarly, her math students who studied the longest were generally the most successful. Yet many people also work the same jobs for decades, without significantly improving at them. In their interviews, Duckworth and Hester Lacey have both found that gritty people constantly try to improve, no matter how skilled they already are.

After interest, practice *is the second key trait of gritty people. This is the* effort *that goes into Duckworth's two equations: talent multiplied by effort equals skill, and skill multiplied by effort equals achievement. In other words, practice enables people to develop the skills necessary for success and then apply those skills in a consistent and effective way in order to actually succeed.*

Psychologist Anders Ericsson famously found that becoming a world-class expert requires an average of 10,000 hours of practice over 10 years. However, his research is actually more about how "experts practice *differently*." When Duckworth told Ericsson that she has been jogging for years but hasn't improved, he replied that she doesn't practice the right way.

Ericsson's research explains Duckworth's insight that simply doing *something repetitively for years isn't enough to develop genuine* skill *at it. Specifically, Ericsson explains why practicing* effectively *is just as important as practicing* a lot.

Ericsson argues that experts improve through "deliberate practice." They identify their weaknesses, then try to improve them by setting specific stretch goals—meaning goals that are just beyond their current ability. Then, they practice hard to achieve those goals. Often, experts practice best alone. They also crave feedback, especially negative feedback about what they've done wrong. It helps when this feedback is immediate. And they also have to *actively process* this feedback. For example, on a computer training program, a doctor kept repeating the same mistakes and ignoring the computer's feedback until he actively reflected on all of his decisions. After receiving feedback, experts keep practicing until they achieve their goals. Then, they set new ones. Over time, this process leads to mastery.

Deliberate practice is a specific, intentional, evidence-based technique for developing skills. While most people simply practice the skill they want to improve and hope that they automatically get better over time, gritty people analyze their goals and determine which specific abilities they have to improve in order to build their overall skills. For example, whereas Duckworth jogs every day but doesn't get faster, professional runners intensively train particular muscles, distances, and parts of a race—and carefully track their progress over time.

Anyone can use deliberate practice to improve. For instance, Benjamin Franklin became a better writer by repeatedly trying to recreate his favorite essays from his notes. The business expert Peter Drucker, the surgeon Atul Gawande, and the magician David Blaine have all argued that practice is the key to succeeding in their fields.

Duckworth gives these examples in order to illustrate two key principles. First, that even the most accomplished people have had to develop their skills through practice. And second, that readers can also *use deliberate practice in their own lives—no matter what stage they're at in developing their skills, and no matter what kind of skills they specifically want to improve.*

Duckworth teamed up with Ericsson to try and understand whether deliberate practice was the key to success at the National Spelling Bee. Spellers practiced in many ways, but only solitary, intensive study really counted as deliberate practice. Duckworth and Ericsson sent spellers the Grit Scale and a log to record their practice time. The winner, Kerry Close, spent thousands of hours doing deliberate practice, and the overall results showed that deliberate practice was the best predictor of success in the spelling bee. However, spellers also viewed it as much harder and less fun than other kinds of practice. This is consistent with Ericsson's findings: deliberate practice is exhausting. Even world-renowned experts can only handle about an hour at a time, a few times per day.

Duckworth and Ericsson's experiment confirmed both of their hunches: it supported Ericsson's hypothesis that deliberate practice is the key to developing skills and Duckworth's hypothesis that gritty people are more likely to use deliberate practice techniques. In particular, gritty people appear to be more willing to withstand the discomfort associated with deliberate practice. This may be because they feel that the benefits of deliberate practice are worth the costs—or because they simply aren't as averse to pain or boredom as most people. Regardless, this experiment confirms that short-term stamina is an important part of grit—although it's not the only aspect of true grit. Still, this is the dimension of grit that most closely conforms to the word's popular connotations of toughness, endurance, and a tolerance for pain.

The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi connects expertise to the state of automatic, spontaneous, total concentration known as flow. Ericsson believes that flow is impossible during deliberate practice, which by definition involves planning and suffering. But Csikszentmihalyi disagrees with Ericsson: when people understand that they're learning something valuable, he argues, they can still enjoy deliberate practice. To see who was right, Duckworth arranged a public debate the two men. However, while they respectfully summarized their research, they didn't reach a clear resolution.

Csikszentmihalyi and Ericsson fundamentally disagree about whether highly skilled people enjoy *practicing or merely* endure *it. This disagreement is significant because it speaks to gritty people's motivations—and what kind of approaches people who wish to develop grit should take towards their lives and work. If Csikszentmihalyi is right, and deliberate practice is inherently enjoyable for gritty people, then practice is its own reward. In contrast, if Ericsson is right, then deliberate practice is inherently unpleasant and people who want to be gritty should work on building their stamina when they start a deliberate practice routine.*

Duckworth decided to study the relationship between grit and flow on her own. After giving thousands of people both the Grit Scale and a questionnaire about flow, she found that grittier people are more likely to experience flow. Of course, they're also more likely to do deliberate practice. But this makes sense—they practice in order to *improve* their skills, and they experience flow when they *use* those skills in a performance.

Duckworth's experiment showed her that she was wrong to view deliberate practice and flow as opposites. In reality, practice and flow are two sides of the same coin, so Ericsson and Csikszentmihalyi are both *right. In fact, deliberate practice and flow correspond to the two equations Duckworth used to describe the relationship between talent, effort, and achievement. First, talent multiplied by effort equals skill: deliberate practice is part of this arduous process of skill-building. Second, skill multiplied by effort equals achievement: this is the performance, the enjoyable part when gritty people experience flow.*

For instance, Rowdy Gaines swam thousands of miles to practice for the Olympics, and he didn't enjoy it at all. But he *did* love racing, which made all the practice worth it. Meanwhile, when swimmer Katie Ledecky set a new world record, she said that she felt totally relaxed during the race but knew that practice was the key to her success. Similarly, when Duckworth prepared to give a TED Talk, she got hours of negative feedback from TED producers and her family. But her talk vastly improved, and she delivered the finished product in a state of flow.

Gaines, Ledecky, and Duckworth all feel that the rewards of flow and performance make up for the pain of deliberate practice. In other words, for them, the pleasure of exercising *skills makes up for the pain of* developing *them. Thus, gritty people's work encompasses both pain and flow, just at different times. The issue for people who want to develop grit is that the pain of deliberate practice often comes* first.

Most of the world-class experts Duckworth has interviewed say that deliberate practice is extremely difficult. But many think it's a positive experience anyway. According to Duckworth's spelling bee data, high-grit competitors rated deliberate practice "as both more *enjoyable* and more *effortful*." But it's unclear if they enjoy hard work because they do so much of it, or if they do so much of it because they enjoy it. While Duckworth has seen her daughters learn to enjoy hard work, for instance, Katie Ledecky's coach says that she has *always* worked hard to improve her weaknesses. Regardless, even if deliberate practice can be enjoyable and rewarding, it's unlikely that it can ever truly feel like flow.

These experiments and anecdotes suggest another explanation for why gritty people are more willing to undertake deliberate practice. Namely, they aren't just more willing to withstand pain—they're also less likely to experience this pain in the first place. However, as Duckworth notes, psychologists need to perform more research in order to determine whether people can learn *this reduced sensitivity to pain. If so, this would further support Duckworth's conclusion that, for the most part, gritty people are not born but made.*

Duckworth identifies three key steps people must take to benefit from deliberate practice and achieve flow. First, people have to follow the science. They must define specific stretch goals, maximize their concentration and effort, receive immediate and useful feedback, and repeat this process many times. Doing high-quality, intense practice is more important than just doing a *lot* of practice. But it's possible to learn how to practice better. For example, when Duckworth developed a curriculum to teach children deliberate practice, they performed better in school.

Thanks to generations of dedicated research, psychologists have essentially boiled deliberate practice down to an algorithm. This shows why psychology benefits the public in significant ways: by showing people how to make the most of deliberate practice, researchers can help them save vast amounts of time and energy.

What's more, people must make deliberate practice into a habit. If possible, they should do it at the same time and place every day. In his book *Daily Rituals*, Mason Currey pointed out that accomplished creative people generally follow consistent routines. In fact, Duckworth only managed to finish *Grit* by making a morning ritual out of rereading her drafts.

Habits are an effective tool for developing grit: they make difficult, tiring, and even undesirable behaviors (like deliberate practice) into automatic routines. This makes it significantly easier to do them over and over. In addition to helping people develop consistent practice routines, habits can also help them build their interests, passions, and hope by automating the behaviors that make this possible.

People should also try to change their experience of deliberate practice. The swimming coach Terry Laughlin pointed out that swimmers can make practice more pleasurable by learning to embrace challenges and avoid self-judgment. Similarly, child psychologists Elene Bodrova and Deborah Leong know that babies can learn from their mistakes without feeling shame or embarrassment. Adults will learn more effectively from deliberate practice if they can do the same.

Duckworth recognizes that it's difficult for people to actively enjoy *deliberate practice, but she suggests that they can still make it* less painful *by changing the way they think about it. In fact, her advice foreshadows her central argument in Chapter 9, which is about how to cultivate hope—or learn to maintain confidence and continue improving despite failure. After all, deliberate practice is really just a process of continual improvement through continual failure: people set stretch goals that they* know *they won't meet because* reaching *for these goals allows them to gradually improve. Thus, gritty people must learn to befriend failure—or at least be comfortable with it.*

CHAPTER 8: PURPOSE

High-grit people's passions usually depend both on their interest and on a sense of purpose—or "the intention to contribute to the well-being of others." Some people prioritize purpose—like the childhood cancer patient Alex Scott, who raised millions of dollars for cancer research. But, as Benjamin Bloom pointed out, most people start with their interests in their "early years," practice and improve in their "middle years," and finally find purpose in their work during their "later years."

Interests motivate people by encouraging them to do things for themselves, whereas purpose *motivates them by encouraging them to do things for* other *people. Of course, the strongest motivation of all depends on interest and purpose coming together: that is, when people find their work inherently interesting while also believing that it benefits others. But Bloom's analysis suggests that it's unrealistic to expect to find a sense of purpose right away. Instead, people generally choose work that interests them and then look for a sense of purpose in that work later on.*

In interviews, when Duckworth's "grit paragons" mention purpose, they always mean that their work benefits other people. For instance, after recovering from lupus in her twenties, artist Jane Golden moved home to Philadelphia to work on the Mural Arts Program. Thirty years later, she still works on the program, which she views as a way to serve others. Even people in less service-oriented jobs can find a sense of purpose—for instance, the wine critic Antonio Galloni views his job as a way "to help people understand their own palates."

Golden's work demonstrates how gritty people combine their interests with a sense of purpose: she brought her personal interest in art into a job that benefits others. Meanwhile, Galloni's more unconventional sense of purpose shows how virtually every job affects others in some way, and it's up to the people to identify how—and whether—this matches their values.

During her research, Duckworth started to wonder if high-grit people give priority to selfish goals or selfless ones. Even Aristotle recognized that some people seek happiness through pleasure, while others do so by finding purpose. Indeed, humans evolved to seek pleasurable things like food and sex, but also to connect and cooperate with others. To understand which motivates people *more*, Duckworth gave a questionnaire to 16,000 adults. She found that, while people tend to value pleasure equally regardless of grit, grittier people tend to value purpose much more. Of course, not *all* gritty people are altruists—many evil dictators have been gritty.

Duckworth's research backs up the anecdotes she has provided so far in this chapter. Gritty people aren't totally selfish or totally selfless; rather, they balance selfish and *selfless goals. Still, this research doesn't indicate whether selflessness makes people gritty, grit makes people selfless, or both. And the answer to this question is significant because it suggests that people can learn to find a sense of purpose, just like they can learn to develop their interests and improve through deliberate practice.*

Most people view their work as a job or career, but a small minority sees it as a true calling. People in this minority tend to have more grit and be more satisfied with their lives. As the legendary journalist Studs Terkel discovered after interviewing hundreds of workers, most people *wish* their job were a calling. But management professor Amy Wrzesniewski has found that the kind of work people do doesn't determine whether they feel they have a job, career, or calling—instead, their *perspective* on their work does. People often think that they need to go out and discover their calling, when in reality, they just have to develop it by changing their own perspective.

Studs Terkel's interviews and Wrzesniewski's research suggest that, just as most people don't find their work interesting, most people also *don't find their work purposeful. But while the solution to uninteresting work is often developing new interests and finding a new job, the solution to purposeless work is often finding a new* perspective *on one's existing work (especially if it's interesting). Indeed, Wrzesniewski's research suggests that* anyone *can find a sense of purpose in their work if they learn to understand how it helps others. This indicates that purpose—like all the other aspects of grit—is learnable under the right circumstances.*

For instance, Joe Leader, the New York City subway's head engineer, started working in transit because it was the first job he got. He found the subways interesting and enjoyed planning out projects. Soon, he started to view transit engineering as a long-term career, and then as a way to contribute to society as a whole. Similarly, the medicine professor Michael Baime found his calling by merging his lifelong passion for mindfulness with his purpose—helping people become healthier. He first became interested in meditation as a teenager, and he nearly quit medical school because he wasn't engaged in it. But he enjoyed helping people by working as a doctor, and he eventually realized that he could combine it with mindfulness by teaching meditation classes.

Joe Leader and Michael Baime's stories demonstrate how, over time, people can develop a sense of purpose in the areas that interest them. Moreover, they also serve as a reminder of Duckworth's main idea from Chapter Six: following one's interests is a long process. Leader and Baime didn't initially choose their career paths because of interest and passion—instead, they became interested in a particular aspect of their work after *starting. This is when they began feeling the need to give back to others, and that feeling led them to identify connections between their interests and the common good. In other words, following one's interests and developing a sense of purpose are really two halves of a much longer self-discovery process.*

Duckworth first felt a sense of purpose in college, when she taught at a summer program for disadvantaged middle schoolers. After the program, she saw how teachers can change children's lives, so she and another student founded their own summer enrichment program. Their sense of purpose helped them stubbornly push through the administrative and fundraising work they needed to do. Ever since, the program has grown dramatically. However, Duckworth wasn't satisfied with teaching: she also wanted to do science and understand human nature through psychology. Like many people, then, she had a sense of her interests as a teenager, but she didn't clarify her purpose until her 20s or seriously integrate her interests and purpose into a "life-organizing goal" until her 30s.

Duckworth's personal investment in her summer program demonstrates how the desire to help others can strongly motivate people to succeed. But it also shows how people often feel and start pursuing a sense of purpose without fully combining it with their interests, since her work with the summer program didn't involve her interest in science. Thus, Duckworth has identified two distinct paths to connecting one's interests with a sense of purpose. First, people can follow their interests and eventually look for a way to serve others through them (like Wrzesniewski recommends). Second, people can also pursue their interests and their sense of purpose in parallel until they find a way to integrate them. This is what Duckworth did: she pursued her purpose—helping young people—through the summer program, all the while pursuing her interests in talent and achievement by studying psychology and neuroscience. Eventually, she managed to integrate them into her "life-organizing goal" of helping young people through psychological science.

It's easy to assume that people have to choose between their "self-oriented" and "other-oriented" goals, but business professor Adam Grant knows that this isn't true. For instance, he found that firefighters and fundraisers work harder only if they're both interested in their jobs *and* invested in helping others. Similarly, developmental psychologists David Yeager and Matt Bundick have found that young people with both selfish and other-oriented interests find their schoolwork more meaningful.

Grant, Yeagar, and Bundick offer more clear-cut empirical evidence for the basic insight driving this chapter: gritty people succeed by connecting their interests to a sense of purpose. Indeed, since interest and purpose are the two halves of passion, any true long-term "life-organizing goal" must incorporate both. Yeagar and Bundick's research suggests that even young people begin to balance selfish interest with their selfless purpose—but this doesn't mean that the balance can't change over time.

"Grit paragons" often don't find a sense of purpose immediately or directly. For instance, Aurora and Franco Fonte started cleaning buildings to pay the bills, then founded a building maintenance company. But today, they see their company as a way to help their clients and employees. Developmental psychologist Bill Damon argues that people can and should *cultivate* a sense of purpose. First, they need to spark their interests. Second, they need inspiration from a role model who shows them what a purposeful life looks like. Then, they need to discover the problem that matters to them and see how they can personally change it.

Duckworth reiterates that grit is a long-term goal, not a constant personality trait. In other words, grit is like a muscle that people must work to develop over time, not a quality that they can simply acquire in a single moment. The same is true of its components, including purpose. Damon's guidelines for cultivating purpose can point people in the right direction—but they're not a foolproof formula for pulling purpose out of thin air. However, these guidelines overlap substantially with Duckworth's advice for cultivating interest, which again shows that it's possible to develop both interest and purpose in parallel.

Kat Cole's story demonstrates why people need role models for purpose. Cole's single mother juggled three jobs and three daughters but still helped out others in her community as much as she could. This inspired Cole to work hard and help others. After joining Hooters as a waitress, Cole moved up the company hierarchy. She eventually got recruited to be Cinnabon's president at just 32 years old. As a waitress, Cole took on extra responsibilities like helping cook and train employees—both because she would earn more and because she could help others. Management rewarded her for her initiative. Eventually, she realized that her passion is helping people recognize their greatness and succeed.

Kat Cole is special because her primary interest is *her sense of purpose—she wants to help others* both *because she personally enjoys it and because she believes in the inherent value of doing it. As Duckworth points out, Cole's mother taught her to balance her own needs and wellbeing with other people's, which shows how effective parenting can pass grit on to young people. Notably, this lesson was also the key to Cole's professional success, because it led her to work hard and get noticed by her managers.*

Duckworth concludes with three psychologists' recommendations for "cultivating a sense of purpose" at any age. David Yeager suggests reflecting on the purpose of one's current work, while Amy Wrzesniewski suggests "job crafting," or looking for ways to connect one's current work to one's values. And Bill Damon suggests identifying "purposeful role models" and explaining in writing why they're so inspirational. When Duckworth tried this exercise, she realized that her mother is her greatest inspiration. Duckworth's mother's kindness showed Duckworth the power of devotion to others and led her to create the summer education program after college.

Duckworth concludes the chapter by focusing on what her readers can actually do *to become grittier. Yeager, Wrzesniewski, and Damon's ideas are all actionable and evidence-based. Crucially, all of them start with* reflection, *which again shows how purpose is mostly about* perspective. *But these exercises don't have to* end *with reflection—they can also encourage people to make key changes in their lives. In particular, reflecting on one's work and "job crafting" can lead people to look for new positions or job functions that better fulfill their sense of purpose, while identifying role models can help people* become *role models and help others.*

CHAPTER 9: HOPE

Many people define hope as expecting the future to be better than the present. Grit requires hope, but specifically hope "that our own efforts can improve our future." Duckworth remembers struggling in her first college neurobiology course, despite studying hard. She failed her first two tests, but when her teaching assistant suggested she drop the course rather than risk getting an F, she resolved to stay in the class and try even harder instead. She managed to ace the final and get a B in the class.

Duckworth distinguishes between a passive kind of hope, which involves blind faith in some external power, with a more active one, which is really about believing in oneself. *This is kind of hope is one of perseverance's key elements. Her anecdote demonstrates how this kind of hope can drive people to succeed, even when the odds are stacked against them: if she hadn't believed in herself, she never would have mobilized all of her available resources to pass the class.*

In the 1960s, psychology students Marty Seligman and Steve Maier gave dogs electric shocks but let half of them reduce the length of the shocks by pressing on a panel. The next day, the dogs who had control over their shocks were more likely to successfully escape further shocks by leaping over a barrier. But a third of the dogs from the other group *also* jumped the barrier.

Seligman and Maier's experiment demonstrates that the kind of hope Duckworth discusses in this chapter depends to a significant extent on experience. Specifically, it shows that living things that have some control over the adversity they face are more likely to believe in their own ability to confront future problems, so they actively look for ways to improve their situations—they've learned to embody hope because they believe in their ability to change their circumstances for the better.

Seligman and Maier's experiment shows that suffering makes people hopeless only when they believe they can't control it. Duckworth compares herself to the minority of dogs who couldn't control their shocks but still jumped the barrier: she failed repeatedly but still maintained a sense of hope that she could succeed in the future. In fact, while Seligman and Maier's experiment confirmed that helplessness is something people and animals learn, the opposite is also true: people can also learn *optimism*. When optimists suffer, they blame "temporary and specific causes," but pessimists blame "permanent and pervasive causes." For instance, if pessimists don't submit work on time, they might think of themselves as hopeless losers, while optimists would blame their own poor time management and try to fix it.

If Seligman and Maier's results can be fairly extrapolated to humans, then their experiment suggests that a sizable minority of people share Duckworth's stubborn hope and optimism. However, as Duckworth notes, it also means that anyone can develop *the same optimism if their experiences reinforce their sense of control over adversity. Clearly, people who want to become grittier and more optimistic ought to seek out such experiences. As Duckworth explains it here, optimism is essentially the belief in one's own power to overcome obstacles—so it's no wonder that optimists tend to overcome more obstacles (and pessimists fewer).*

Unsurprisingly, optimists have better mental health than pessimists. But they also do better in school and work, live longer, and bounce back from setbacks faster. In their interviews, Duckworth and Hester Lacey have both noticed that successful, high-grit people are usually optimistic: they see failure as a learning experience, not a disappointment. In fact, Seligman's mentor, Aaron Beck, realized that mental illness often depends on the way people *interpret* their circumstances. In response, he helped develop cognitive behavioral therapy, a highly effective method that depends on helping people change the way they interpret their negative experiences.

The evidence that Duckworth cites in this section strongly supports Seligman and Maier's conclusions: people who learn optimism tend to be grittier and more successful because they treat failure as an obstacle to overcome. In contrast, pessimists avoid *failure—which, as Duckworth's analysis of deliberate practice suggested, is the best opportunity to improve many skills. Meanwhile, Beck's research on mental illness shows how, much like purpose, hope often depends primarily on the way people think—and his innovations in cognitive-behavioral therapy show that it's possible to change these thoughts through structured interventions. While Duckworth clearly doesn't think that everyone needs therapy to become grittier, it clearly demonstrates that doing so is possible.*

In graduate school, Duckworth attended a meeting with Seligman and Wendy Kopp, the founder and CEO of Teach For America (an organization that sends college graduates to teach in under-resourced US schools). Duckworth, Seligman, and Kopp hypothesized that optimistic teachers were likely to be grittier and more successful. They gave 400 new teachers questionnaires to measure grit, optimism, and happiness. A year later, they measured students' academic growth and confirmed that grittier, happier, and more optimistic teachers were more effective. Reflecting on this data and her own experience as a teacher, Duckworth concludes that people are more likely to succeed when they keep looking for solutions to the challenges they face.

Duckworth's Teach For America research again reaffirms the principle that optimism fosters grit and therefore leads to success. Of course, it also shows how Duckworth has combined her interests and sense of purpose into research that fulfills her overarching life goal of helping young people through psychology. Teaching is an important case study for understanding grit because of the way it affects others. Effective, optimistic teachers not only help their students learn better, but can also pass on their attitudes—including their grit.

In the late 1960s, after reading Seligman and Maier's work, psychology student Carol Dweck started wondering *why* some people become optimists and others become pessimists. To answer this question, she put a group of pessimistic middle schoolers in a math program. After each session, half the students always received praise, while the other half were always told to try harder. At the end of the program, the students in the second group put far more effort into challenging math problems. This suggests that pessimism is really about the way people *interpret* failure—and not just how much they fail.

Duckworth has already established that people learn optimistic and pessimistic worldviews depending on their experiences. But Dweck's research helps illuminate what particular kinds *of experiences lead to each mindset—and what kinds of experiences people should seek out (and create for others) in order to foster optimism. Dweck's schoolroom experiment shows that, at least among children, optimism and pessimism are remarkably flexible: students can switch from pessimism to optimism in a short period of time if trusted adults teach them to view challenges as an opportunity to grow. Of course, this implies that the opposite is also true: if children learn to feel proud of succeeding and ashamed of failing at every task they face, they are less likely to seek out challenges and grow.*

Through decades of research, Dweck learned that people have varying theories about how traits like intelligence work. Some people have a *fixed mindset*—for instance, they think that an individual's intelligence doesn't change over time. But others have a growth mindset—they believe that people can improve their intelligence through effort. When people with fixed mindsets fail, they often simply decide that they're "not good enough." In fact, growth mindsets have all the same benefits as optimism. In several studies, Duckworth has repeatedly found that a growth mindset strongly correlates with grit.

The fixed and growth mindsets are similar, but not identical, to optimism and pessimism. While people with a fixed mindset might not always be pessimists, they are essentially pessimistic about the possibility of improving their basic talents. Similarly, while people with a growth mindset might not always be cheery or bounce back from obstacles, they fundamentally believe in their capacity *for improvement. In other words, they have the precise kind of hope that Duckworth thinks is key to grit. Crucially, the principles behind the growth mindset aren't just more conducive to optimism and success—they're also* true, *at least according to all of the psychological research that Duckworth has compiled in this book. Namely, as a matter of scientific fact, people* can *improve their skills (including their intelligence). Thus, simply understanding current psychological research is likely to push people toward a growth mindset.*

Dweck's research suggests that people develop fixed or growth mindsets based on how authority figures responded to their successes and failures. For instance, at the KIPP network of charter schools, teachers help students develop a growth mindset by praising them for their effort (rather than their skill) and encouraging them to challenge themselves. How authority figures *act* is even more important than what they say. Psychologist Daeun Park has found that teachers teach their students a fixed mindset by comparing high performers to the rest of the class. And Dweck has found that parents who treat mistakes as harmful problems also teach their children a fixed mindset. In fact, even large companies tend to follow either a fixed or a growth mindset, depending on how they're managed.

Dweck's research has important implications: if children learn their worldviews based on how authority figures treat them, then adults—especially parents and educators—can make a significant difference in young people's lives by modeling grit, optimism, and a growth mindset. Arguably, they also have a responsibility *to do so. In fact, Duckworth's comment about large corporations suggests that this modeling effect might not end with childhood: institutions' mindsets can shape how their members view themselves and respond to challenges well into adulthood. And KIPP demonstrates how such institutions apply psychology research in order to function more effectively.*

Duckworth argues that most people "default to a fixed mindset," even if they *want* to believe in a growth mindset. Everyone has both an inner pessimist and an inner optimist, and people can tip the balance toward the optimist by trying to catch and correct themselves when they slip into a fixed mindset. Ultimately, a growth mindset is necessary to truly develop grit.

The bias towards fixed mindsets partially explains the tendency many people have to associate skill with natural talent rather than effort. In turn, the benefits of growth mindsets also explain many other differences between ordinary people and gritty people—including gritty people's tendency to view deliberate practice as less strenuous. To develop grit, Duckworth suggests, people have to tip their inner scales toward optimism, which she argues is absolutely possible. It just requires substantial effort.

Bill McNabb, CEO of the investment company Vanguard, told Duckworth that his most successful employees are the ones who continue growing over time. Actually, McNabb started life with a fixed mindset—for a long time, he was proud of putting in less effort but doing better than his peers. But when he started rowing in college, he learned that hard work was actually the key to success. By practicing endlessly, he even made it onto the varsity team. He realized that learning from challenges and staying optimistic are the keys to growth.

McNabb's explanation illustrates the benefits of a growth mindset and the clear dangers of a fixed one. Both are self-fulfilling prophecies: people who believe in growth give themselves the tools to grow, while those who believe in fixed ability tend to stay at the same level. McNabb also shows how people who face, confront, and successfully grow from challenges can switch from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset over time. Finally, his comments demonstrate how organizations can build effective, cohesive cultures that help their members develop grit.

Nietzsche famously said that "what doesn't kill you makes you stronger." In other words, some challenges help people grow. For example, wilderness programs like Outward Bound make adolescents more independent and confident. But other challenges make people weaker—like the "pessimistic" dogs from Seligman and Maier's experiment. Duckworth asks *why*: which challenges strengthen people, and which ones weaken them? Recently, Maier repeated his electric shock experiment with adolescent rats. When rats who had no control over their shocks grew into adults, they were timid and helpless. But rats who *did* control their shocks were actually *more* resilient and adventurous. This suggests that challenges make us stronger when we can *control* them.

Like fixed and growth mindsets, people's early experiences with difficult challenges are also self-fulfilling prophecies. Namely, people who overcome challenges early on learn to enthusiastically tackle other challenges later in life. But people who don't overcome early challenges end up learning to give up when they face serious challenges. The implications are clear: young people need appropriate challenges—meaning ones that are difficult with their existing abilities but can be overcome if they work to improve *those abilities. In fact, such challenges are exactly like the stretch goals necessary for deliberate practice. Because they're difficult (but not unachievable), such challenges both help people grow and teach them to* believe *in their capacity for growth.*

To better understand Maier's research, Duckworth visited him. Maier explained that stress automatically activates primitive limbic areas in the brain, and then higher-order areas like the prefrontal cortex decide how to respond to this stress. If someone overcomes significant adversity in their youth, their cortex learns to respond to stress by saying, essentially, "I can do this." But when someone grows up feeling helpless, the cortex learns that it can't do anything about adversity.

Maier's research identifies the neurological reasons that some challenges help people grow. His results also support Duckworth's recommendations for building hope through cognitive and behavioral change. While this might not seem immediately relevant to the reader's life, its long-term implications are clear: if researchers can understand how the brain learns attitudes like optimism and pessimism, they can design medical interventions to rewire these attitudes.

Meanwhile, many people never experience adversity at all—especially the kind of high achievers whom Duckworth calls "fragile perfects" because they "know how to succeed but not how to fail." But not all high achievers are like this. For instance, Duckworth's student Kayvon Asemani succeeded in high school but struggled in his first two semesters at the University of Pennsylvania. Yet he's also optimistic and gritty: he refused to change his major and insisted on taking challenging classes instead.

"Fragile perfects" risk either plateauing or crashing. Because they don't know how to grow from their failures, either they stop pushing themselves to grow at all or they completely fall apart when they encounter difficult challenges. But there's also a third option: "fragile perfects" can believe in themselves and view the first major setbacks they face as opportunities to develop grit.

Duckworth summarizes the argument of this chapter: a fixed mindset makes people pessimistic about their ability to overcome adversity, which leads them to avoid challenges. But a growth mindset makes people approach adversity with optimism, which leads them to embrace and learn from challenges. To develop hope, Duckworth argues, people should do three things. First, they should remember that talent and intelligence aren't fixed because the brain changes and adapts over people's lives. Second, they should "*practice optimistic self-talk*." Highly pessimistic people should try cognitive behavioral therapy. And third, people should seek help from others. For instance, the mathematician Rhonda Hughes succeeded in her male-dominated field because her committed mentors encouraged her to keep trying.

Optimism, hope, and the growth mindset are really three different terms for the same kind of constructive attitude towards challenges. By choosing this attitude, which is backed up by all the available scientific evidence, people set the foundation for the perseverance that is crucial to developing true grit. Duckworth's advice for fostering hope echoes her advice about developing purpose: people ought to reevaluate their lives from a new perspective, and it's easier to do this with help from other people. Indeed, this foreshadows Duckworth's last three chapters, which are about how people can help spread grit to others.

CHAPTER 10: PARENTING FOR GRIT

People constantly ask Duckworth how they can help others develop grit. Most are parents, but some are also teachers, managers, and even military generals. Many of these people assume that young people should face as much adversity as possible to become gritty. They sound like the early-20th-century psychologist John Watson, who thought that parents shouldn't show their children affection or help them with the challenges they face. Meanwhile, other parents think that the key to raising gritty children is "unconditional affection and support."

The last four chapters have focused on how people can build grit for themselves, but the next three explain how they can help others*—especially young people—do the same. The debate over parenting that Duckworth describes here reflects how controversial a topic this is; and yet both theories are partially consistent with the evidence that Duckworth has presented so far. But, as she noted in the previous chapter, the* kind *of challenges that people face is much more important than the* number *of challenges they encounter. This is why neither strict, authoritarian parenting nor completely lax, permissive parenting is the obvious solution to raising gritty kids.*

Duckworth asks whether strict parents or supportive ones end up helping children develop grit. She offers two contrasting examples, starting with the star quarterback Steve Young, who attributes his success to his strict Mormon parents. In college, Young wanted to quit football, but his father refused to let him move home. Instead, he practiced hard and eventually became the country's best college quarterback. Young's parents wanted to raise persistent and disciplined kids, but they were warm and supportive, not authoritarian. Young's father—who, fittingly, goes by the nickname "Grit"—did everything he could to spend weekends with his children. He also helped Young work through his childhood anxiety attacks. Young recognizes that his parents' tough love was actually selfless: they wanted him to have more opportunities than they did.

Duckworth notes that Young's parents might seem overly strict and authoritarian at first. Upon further examination, though, they were clearly fair, loving, and deeply committed to their children. The clearest evidence of this is that Young fully appreciates their parenting style in retrospect. Thus, Young's father didn't ban Young from returning home out of cruelty, but rather because he believed it was best for his son. This was really just Young's parents' way of expressing their high expectations and belief in their children's ability to succeed. In short, Young's story shows that parents can raise gritty children through a combination of high expectations and support.

While unlike Steve Young in many ways, the British comedian Francesca Martinez also has lots of grit. She has built a successful career despite her cerebral palsy, which makes performing onstage difficult. She blames her loving, supportive family for her success. When she wanted to drop out of high school to pursue comedy, her parents encouraged her. Martinez's parents explained their philosophy to Duckworth: they believe that nurturing, supportive parenting naturally helps children find their calling and thrive. But they also refused to spoil their children. Instead, they taught their children to finish what they start and live according to moral principles.

Martinez's parents tended toward the opposite side of the spectrum from Young's. They gave her more autonomy and fewer rules than Young received. But they still expected her to behave ethically and work hard towards her goals. Although they expressed it very differently, then, both Young's and Martinez's parents were loving and supportive in ways that helped their children succeed.

Young and Martinez's parents were very different, but they fit into the pattern that Duckworth has seen produce high-grit kids time and time again. While psychologists still need to research this topic further, Duckworth offers some clear insights. First, parents don't have to choose between being supportive or demanding—all around the world, for decades, study after study has found that the most successful parents do *both*. Duckworth calls these parents "wise parents." She gives her readers a checklist for determining if they are appropriately demanding and supportive (or warm and respectful).

Duckworth carefully notes the limits of psychologists' current knowledge in order to emphasize that the claims she does *make are clearly supported by reliable evidence. While Young's parents were demanding, they were also supported, and while Martinez's parents were supportive, they were also demanding. The parents' emotional tone didn't actually matter very much—Young's strict, clean-cut parents managed to support Young and help him grow just as much as Martinez's lax, unconventional parents did for her.*

Wise parents raise gritty children because they serve as effective role models for grit. Of course, all children imitate the adults around them—especially their parents. In a famous Stanford study, young children watched an adult either play with toys or attack an inflatable doll, then did the exact same thing as the adult they saw. But as children grow up, they stop *imitating* adults and start *emulating* them: they decide whether they want to be the same kind of people as the adults around them. When he studied successful performers, Benjamin Bloom found that most had wise parents who modeled a strong work ethic and passed on their own interests. This suggests that wise parents also have to *model* passion and perseverance in order to raise gritty children.

Demanding but supportive parents automatically model grit for their children because the hallmark of grit is adopting a demanding but supportive attitude towards oneself. *For instance, in deliberate practice, people set very high goals for themselves and then work gradually towards those goals without judging themselves when they fall short. Duckworth's distinction between imitation and emulation essentially means that, while young people might initially absorb whatever surrounds them, at a certain point, they have to actively* choose *what kind of people to become based on the models available to them. And this process of emulation is what truly shapes their personality in the long run.*

Other adults besides parents can also model grit for children. For instance, Spotify founder Tobi Lütke dropped out of high school and took an apprenticeship with an engineering company. A programmer at the company taught Lütke how to write code, gave him consistent feedback, and helped him face challenges like presenting his work to General Motors.

While parents generally influence their children's development more than anyone else, this doesn't always have *to be the case—rather, children can also learn key lessons about grit from other influential adults around them. Of course, this also means that adults should think about whether they model grit for the young people in their lives, even if they don't have kids. After all, Tobi Lütke benefited profoundly from his supportive relationship with the programmer at his company, who had no familial obligation to help him.*

Similarly, wise teachers can influence young people just like wise parents. Harvard economist Ron Ferguson has found that students perform better, participate more in class, and feel happier when their teachers are both supportive and demanding. Similarly, David Yeager and Geoff Cohen ran an experiment by returning some students' graded essays with a post-it note that said, "*I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them.*" Eighty percent of the students who received this feedback revised and resubmitted their essays, compared to forty percent in the control group. They also made much more substantial edits.

Besides parents, teachers are usually the most important influences and role models in young people's lives. This means that they have a unique opportunity to help young people build grit—and, clearly, Duckworth hopes that they will apply psychology research in order to do so. Yeager and Cohen's experiment shows how straightforward this can be: even modest interventions that communicate a supportive but demanding attitude can help young people adopt a growth mindset and a more expansive view of their own potential.

Not every high-grit person has parents who are able to be present and supportive, but they all have *some* mentor at a crucial point in their life. For instance, Cody Coleman was born to an incarcerated mother and raised by his impoverished, aging grandmother. He wasn't a great student at the underperforming school he attended, and he assumed he couldn't get into an elite college. But his older brother told him that he might as well try. Cody ended up earning perfect grades in high school and getting into MIT. His math teacher supported and challenged him through high school, as did his professors and peers once he reached MIT. He graduated with honors, and now he's starting a PhD at Stanford. His experience shows how *any* adult can change young people's lives by understanding and supporting them.

Coleman's story shows how small encounters with supportive-but-demanding role models can have ripple effects across young people's lives. A single conversation with his brother and a few key interactions with teachers and professors totally changed the course of his life. Specifically, these interventions taught Coleman to believe in his own potential, and this helped him develop the grit that got him all the way through college and into his PhD program. Duckworth's message to her readers is clear: people shouldn't underestimate their power to improve the world by spreading the values, perspectives, and practices that lead to grit. While the majority of grit depends on non-genetic factors, not all of these factors are fully within people's control—instead, many of them depend on other *people, like the adults who influenced Coleman.*

CHAPTER 11: THE PLAYING FIELDS OF GRIT

When Duckworth saw her four-year-old daughter Lucy give up on opening a stubborn box of raisins, she started to worry that Lucy wouldn't grow up to be gritty, so she signed her up for ballet classes. Extracurricular activities teach children to follow a supportive, demanding adult who isn't their parent and develop the four key components of grit (interest, practice, purpose, and hope). This is why Duckworth strongly recommends signing children up for activities that they enjoy.

Duckworth's panic over four-year-old Lucy's box of raisins might seem overblown, but what really matters is her proposal that young people can develop grit by pursuing activities outside of school. Of course, the underlying principle behind this idea is that parents can raise gritty children by putting them in environments that are appropriately interesting, challenging, and *supportive, all at the same time.*

There are relatively few studies on extracurriculars because research on children is ethically complex. One study has shown that children find school challenging but not interesting, social time interesting but not challenging, and extracurricular activities *both* interesting and challenging. Others have found a clear link between extracurriculars, higher grades, and better mental health. And all children have time for extracurriculars—most already waste many hours on TV, video games, and social media every day.

Duckworth again emphasizes the limits of the existing research in the psychology field. In this case, she points out how the ethical requirements of psychology research make adequately testing her hypothesis very difficult. Therefore, she encourages her readers to approach this chapter with more skepticism than the rest of her book. She argues that activities teach passion *because they're interesting and teach* perseverance *because they're challenging. If young people don't get to experience both halves of this equation together in the same setting, they might grow up to prefer interesting but easy things and avoid the kind of hard, uninteresting things that they're asked to do at school.*

Sticking with extracurriculars for multiple years helps students set and stick with long-term goals (which are key to grit). Psychologist Margo Gardner found that teenagers are more successful in college and more likely to get jobs after graduation if they spend two years in the same high school activity (rather than one).

Duckworth cites this evidence about the benefits of multi-year commitments in order to again emphasize that grit depends on taking a long-term *interest in certain interesting and purposeful goals.*

Similarly, in the 1970s, the psychologist Warren Willingham studied thousands of students from the end of high school through college. Among the 100 traits he studied, *follow-through* was the most important in determining success. Specifically, high schoolers who stuck with several extracurricular activities over multiple years were more likely to graduate college, succeed academically, reach leadership positions, and make significant achievements in their fields. Duckworth noticed that the meaning of the term "follow-through" seemed to be pretty similar to the meaning of "grit," so she decided to replicate Willingham's research.

As Duckworth has noted, psychologists cannot conduct specific experimental studies on the effects of sticking with extracurriculars over multiple years, which would be the gold standard for psychological evidence. Still, Willingham's research comes close: it shows that a consistent commitment to activities benefits students. In fact, this kind of commitment is the single best predictor of academic and career success. Of course, this echoes Duckworth's research on academic achievement and the Grit Scale.

Bill and Melinda Gates funded Duckworth to study whether involvement in high-school extracurriculars can predict college drop-out rates. She asked 1,200 high schoolers to describe their extracurriculars, then calculated a grit score from zero to six for each student. Two years later, students with higher scores were far more likely to stay in college: there was an apparent connection between high grit scores and heavy extracurricular involvement. Duckworth notices that following through with extracurriculars might build grit, though gritty people might also just be more likely to follow through with extracurriculars—but it's probably *both*.

Duckworth replicated Willingham's findings and showed that commitment to extracurriculars is a useful proxy for grit in young people. Again, however, she carefully separates correlation from causation: on its own, the link between extracurriculars and grit is not enough to prove that young people will become grittier simply by joining activities. Yet the other research that Duckworth has cited does support this point—such as Seligman and Maier's experiments, which show that overcoming challenges makes people more likely to develop what Carol Dweck calls a growth mindset.

Psychologist Brent Roberts has shown that people reinforce their personality traits through the "corresponsive principle." People's traits influence the situations they end up in, and these situations reinforce their traits. For instance, sociable teenagers are more likely to take well-paying, high-status jobs, and these jobs make them *more* sociable over time. Similarly, Duckworth suspects that young people who learn to quit difficult tasks (like opening a box of raisins) end up avoiding the exact situations that would help them build grit. In contrast, young people who succeed at difficult tasks (like ballet) learn to embrace other challenges in the future.

The corresponsive principle is really just a scholarly way of saying that people's personalities and experiences reinforce one another in a positive feedback cycle. This is why people tend to become more extreme versions of themselves as they age—their traits become more pronounced over time because they make decisions that reinforce them. Of course, it also helps explain many of the key findings that Duckworth has cited, such as the observation that gritty people are more likely to be optimistic—gritty people are more likely to overcome challenges and learn to view failure as a temporary obstacle. Similarly, optimists are likely to develop grit because *challenges don't derail them. The corresponsive principle also illustrates why Duckworth thinks gritty young people are more likely to follow through with extracurriculars, while extracurriculars* also *help them build grit.*

Harvard admissions dean Bill Fitzsimmons told Duckworth that he agrees with Willingham's research and strongly values follow-through in his applicants. Students who have made a sustained commitment to something they care about are likely to bring the same grit to Harvard, Fitzsimmons explained, even if they switch to different activities. In fact, he remembers admitting Duckworth because of *her* extracurricular activities. And even when a student joins an activity because of parental pressure, Fitzsimmons added, the activity can still transform the student. However, Fitzsimmons also worried that too few poor students get to participate in extracurriculars. In fact, this participation is actually *declining*, in part because extracurriculars are increasingly expensive and time-consuming. This explains why income strongly correlated with grit scores in Duckworth's study.

Even if there still isn't sufficiently robust evidence on the link between grit and extracurriculars, experts on the issue—like Fitzsimmons, who has dedicated his life to evaluating young people's potential—clearly see this connection. Moreover, Fitzsimmons's comments about the transferability of grit and students' capacity to learn it even when parents pressure them into joining activities support Duckworth's hypothesis that extracurriculars help build *grit (in addition to reflecting it). Of course, it also suggests that grit is something that affluent parents can buy—and this helps explain why Fitzsimmons and Duckworth predict a dangerous social trend of inequality in grit. Of course, it's impossible to reverse this trend simply by teaching everyone grit. In fact, Duckworth's book might do just the opposite: while she hopes to help more people become gritty through this book, affluent families are far more likely to buy her work and heed her advice.*

Geoffrey Canada runs the Harlem Children's Zone, a supplemental education program for poor children in New York City. After giving Penn's commencement speech, he met with Duckworth and told her that the key to getting children out of poverty is giving them "a decent childhood." During a TED talk, Canada explained that extracurricular activities clearly help children grow, learn, and enjoy their childhoods—even if there still aren't enough scientific studies to prove it.

Like Fitzsimmons, Canada strongly believes that activities foster grit because of his deep expertise in youth development. But unlike Fitzsimmons, Canada primarily works with under-resourced students who lack the opportunity to participate in such activities. Of course, these students face plenty of challenges—but not necessarily the kind of structured, surmountable challenges that Duckworth's research has found are crucial to building grit.

Duckworth agrees: the scientific evidence on extracurriculars isn't sufficient yet, but their benefit is still obvious. And there *are* studies showing that people who work hard at one task tend to work harder at another. Robert Eisenberger has shown that if rats are assigned a hard task (like eating their food through dense wire mesh), they're better at other hard tasks (like running on a plank). He repeated his experiment with his wife's elementary school class: children who received hard memory tasks worked harder at a subsequent task than students who received easy ones. Just like Seligman and Maier discovered "learned helplessness," Eisenberger discovered "learned industriousness."

Eisenberger's research again supports Duckworth's hypothesis that children can develop grit by participating in challenging, structured activities—even if they only start these activities because of parental pressure. Of course, Duckworth has already shown that all the components of grit—interest, practice, purpose, and hope—are learnable. But, in one way or another, commitment and hard work are foundational to all of these elements: people have to commit in order to develop their interests, build a routine of deliberate practice, find a sense of purpose in their work, and learn to approach setbacks with optimism. Thus, by showing that industriousness is learnable, too, Duckworth affirms that it truly is possible to build grit from the ground up.

As a new mother, Duckworth struggled to apply Eisenberger's conclusions—rather than just rewarding her daughters when they worked hard, she tended to praise them all the time. But their ballet teacher had very high standards and taught them the key components of grit: interest, practice, purpose, and hope. Duckworth's family follows "the Hard Thing Rule": everyone has to do something hard (like yoga, running, or piano), nobody can quit in the middle of their season or semester, and everyone chooses their own hard thing depending on their interests. When Duckworth's daughters reach high school, they will have to add a *second* activity for two years. Duckworth recommends using this rule to raise gritty children.

Duckworth's experience shows how difficult it can be for parents to maintain the balance of support and high expectations that is necessary to foster grit. But this helps explain why extracurriculars can be so valuable: when parents fail to provide the right environment for grit, activities can do so instead. "The Hard Thing Rule" is Duckworth's way of ensuring that her children always spend time in enriching extracurricular environments. And the Rule's different components help foster different parts of grit: by banning quitting, the Rule teaches perseverance, and by giving young people the power to choose their own activities, the Rule helps them discover and develop their interests.

CHAPTER 12: A CULTURE OF GRIT

After the Seattle Seahawks won the Super Bowl in 2014, coach Pete Carroll explained that his coaching philosophy is to look for players with grit. In fact, he had called Duckworth a few months before, just after she released her TED talk, to ask about how to build a culture of grit at the Seahawks. Duckworth explains that people's lives are strongly shaped by culture—or the shared values and norms of the in-group to which they belong. This in-group can be a nation, a school, a company, or anything else that people commit themselves to. Duckworth's advice about culture is straightforward: "*to be grittier, find a gritty culture and join it.*" And to make people gritter, make the group culture grittier.

So far, Duckworth has primarily focused on grit as an individual personality trait—she has discussed how to build it and how to help others do the same. But now, she views it from another perspective: as a shared cultural value. As Duckworth pointed out in the chapter on "Parenting for Grit," people often develop their personalities by emulating the traits of the individuals around them, which is why gritty people can help spread grit to others. Carroll's coaching style demonstrates how this phenomenon can take hold of an entire organization and help systematically make people grittier.

The sociologist Dan Chambliss, who famously studied champion swimmers, told Duckworth that he still stands by all of his conclusions. But he wishes he could add one more: "the real way to become a great swimmer is to join a great team." Newcomers quickly meet the standards of their team, so when a team is slightly above a newcomer's level, they tend to adapt and improve. At base, people feel a need to fit in with the people around them, so people are likely to develop grit if they join a gritty group.

Like Duckworth, Chambliss views grit's cultural power as particularly underrated. Indeed, his comments echo the common advice that people should surround themselves with the kind of people they want to become. In short, Chambliss and Duckworth suggest that conformity is a powerful force, and people ought to use it to their advantage in order to achieve their other goals.

Beyond conformity, Duckworth argues, culture is also extraordinary because it shapes people's identities, and identity is key to grit because it determines how people make "critical gritty-or-not decisions." As scholar James March explained it, people sometimes make decisions by weighing the costs and benefits, and they sometimes decide by asking a version of the question "*What does someone like me do in a situation like this?*"

Just as people can use the power of conformity to make themselves grittier, they can do the same through the power of identity. Specifically, since people's sense of identity controls so much of how they live and act, tying one's identity to grit is a surefire way to develop it. Identities can be individual, but most often, they're collective—which means that, by joining a gritty group, people can start to think of themselves as gritty people.

For instance, after the soldier Tom Deierlein got shot in the pelvis in Iraq, he insisted on going above and beyond in his physical training because he wanted to recover and run a 10-mile race. He succeeded. He explained that his decision was driven by his sense of identity: giving up, he said, is "not who I am." This exemplifies the connection between grit and identity: gritty behavior often doesn't make sense in terms of short-term costs and benefits, but it does in terms of the ways in which it can confirm or shape a person's identity.

Deierlein recovered quickly because grit was central to his identity as a soldier. Giving up (or failing to be gritty) would have meant betraying his own sense of self. As Duckworth points out, one of the central challenges for developing grit is how to get people to choose gritty behaviors that benefit them in the long run, but not the short term. Identity is a useful solution to this problem because it's one of the only long-term considerations that consistently affects people's decisions.

Finland is small, cold, and full of people who view themselves as particularly high-grit. Finns use the word *sisu*, which really means perseverance, to explain their national character. In one classic example of *sisu*, Finland's tiny army fended off the much larger Soviet army for many months in the 1939 Winter War. One of Duckworth's students, who is Finnish, studied *sisu* for her master's thesis and found that most Finns believe *sisu* is learnable. Thus, *sisu* shows how grit can become part of a people's cultural identity.

Sisu shows how grit can spread very widely—to the point that it even defines a whole nation's sense of identity. Duckworth's student's research implies that it's possible to actively create this kind of collective grit by teaching people to value it. Needless to say, this is one of Duckworth's goals as a psychologist: by changing the cultural conversation about grit and achievement in the US, she hopes to make grit more prestigious and, eventually, more popular.

Organizations can also create cultures of grit. For instance, JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon has tried to build a gritty culture at his bank, and this helped it weather the 2008 financial crisis. Learning from failure—which he calls fortitude—is his core value, and he tries to spread it throughout the bank through "relentless communication." He frequently visits employees around the country and even incorporated a Teddy Roosevelt quote about tenacity into a company manual.

Dimon's leadership demonstrates one way that traits like grit can become cultural values in the first place. Just like parents who want to raise gritty children, leaders who want to create gritty organizations have to model grit. Dimon succeeded by clearly communicating his values and setting high expectations while supporting his employees and tolerating their failures.

Anson Dorrance is the coach of UNC-Chapel Hill's nationally dominant women's soccer team. He attributes the team's success not to the players' talent, but to the culture that he has built. Every year, Dorrance makes his team complete the Grit Scale and take the Beep Test, a running assessment that he treats as a measure of self-discipline and toughness. He constantly communicates his team's 12 core values, which are based around teamwork and grit. But to make sure these values are actually implemented, he makes his players memorize a literary quote that corresponds to each of them.

Just like Dimon, Dorrance illustrates how leaders can build a culture of grit by effectively communicating their values and expectations. He also shows how they can make deliberate practice a collective routine: he helps his players identify their current abilities, work on their weaknesses, and measure their improvement over time. Dimon and Dorrance provide tangible examples for anyone who has power in a group or organization and wants to make its culture grittier.

Like Dorrance's soccer players, West Point students also have to memorize all sorts of "songs, poems, codes, creeds, and miscellany" that represent the institution's values. But they're also expected to embody those values through their actions. While cadets have to memorize a passage about the importance of leaders respecting their subordinates, for many years, violent hazing was the norm. This helped explain why so many cadets dropped out of Beast Barracks—only the toughest made it through. By 1990, West Point brought its actions in line with its values by banning hazing. The proportion of Beast Barracks dropouts started falling dramatically.

West Point clearly understands how to pass down values through institutional culture and tradition. But Duckworth also uses it to illustrate the crucial difference between professing *values like grit and actually* living them out. *Clearly, institutions need to do the latter if they actually want their members to internalize those values. In other words, institutions have to* model *the values they wish to spread by making leadership, organization, and policy decisions based on them. Violent hazing doesn't model particularly respectable behavior, so it detracted from the overall culture at West Point. Therefore, the academy banned hazing, thus bringing its practices in line with its actual values.*

But the Beast Barracks dropout rate has continued to fall, even since the hazing ban. This isn't because West Point is admitting students with more grit, but rather because it has started to focus on *making* its students grittier. Its educators now lead by example, rather than through fear. But West Point's standards remain just as high, and it maintains many of the other traditions that hold together its culture—like decorum, the dress code, and slang.

West Point appears to have shifted from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset: it now tries to fix certain cadets' lack of grit, instead of just punishing them for it. Clearly, it has benefited from this shift as an institution. This shows how powerful psychology research can be when it's faithfully applied in policies that affect large numbers of people.

A couple years after their first conversation, Duckworth visited Pete Carroll in Seattle. Carroll had praised grit in his autobiography and media appearances. He said that he tries to make his players grittier by having them compete against and teach one another. To that end, star player Earl Thomas noted that he and his teammates help one another improve over time. By the time Duckworth visited, the Seahawks had reached two consecutive Super Bowls but lost the second because of a serious coaching error in the last 30 seconds. She wanted to know how the team was responding to this failure.

Duckworth returns to the Seahawks, who—like the UNC soccer team and JPMorgan—have built an organizational culture around the concept of grit. Pete Carroll reinforces this culture by applying Dan Chambliss's observation from the beginning of this chapter: people who are surrounded by grittier teammates will generally become grittier over time. But the Seahawks' response to their Super Bowl blunder would also be a measure of their grit—as Duckworth has repeatedly noted, bouncing back from failure is one of the key aspects of grittiness.

During her visit, Duckworth noticed important elements of the Seahawks' culture. Most notably, the team uses Pete Carroll's specific language. Seahawks define competition not as defeating their opponents, but as working together for excellence. They care about "finishing strong"—which really means always maintaining the same level of effort and excellence. During a meeting, they even chanted, "*No whining. No complaining. No excuses.*" Around lunchtime, Duckworth lectured the team about grit and helped one player decide how to help his younger brother succeed in school. On her way out, she realized she didn't ask Pete Carroll about his "worst call ever." But in a magazine article, he later explained that he would face his mistake and use it to improve.

Carroll's specific language is designed to shape the way his team evaluates and thinks about its performance. Specifically, it encourages the team to try and meet independent standards for excellence—the players always focus on improvement, regardless of whether or not they win their games. In other words, they compete with themselves rather than their opponents, which gives them an intrinsic motivation to succeed. Similarly, the players' chants show that they value effortful practice, and Carroll's attitude towards failure demonstrates the hope that is key to grit. Finally, the players' shared language gives them something to bond over, which helps them build a communal sense of purpose. Thus, under Carroll's leadership, the Seahawks have managed to build and spread all the key components of grit.

CHAPTER 13: CONCLUSION

This book has been a guide to succeeding "in the marathon of life" by using grit. In this conclusion, Duckworth offers some final ideas. First, people can become grittier in two ways: "from the inside out" by working on interest, practice, purpose, and hope; or "from the outside in" by learning from other people. Second, success isn't the same thing as happiness—but Duckworth's research shows that grit is strongly correlated with both.

Duckworth summarizes the central arguments in her book. First, the key to long-term success is grit, a personality trait that combines a consistent passion for a specific field with a tendency to persevere against obstacles. Second, grit isn't set in stone—instead, it's something people can develop over time, especially if they find the right resources and strategies to do so.

Grit also may have some downsides—for example, gritty people might make their families and colleagues unhappy. For instance, Duckworth's children often complain that she makes *everything* about grit. At the same time, all in all, they clearly appreciate their gritty mom and want to grow up to be like her.

Grit is the key to success, but only when success is defined as personal and professional achievement. Of course, this covers most people's goals, especially in the US's achievement-oriented culture. Moreover, most of Duckworth's advice (like how to discover and develop one's interests) can apply to everyone. Still, some people might not want to organize their lives around achieving particular goals, and so they might not need to focus on grit.

Next, Duckworth wonders if it's possible to be *too* gritty. Psychologists know that with most personality traits (like courage, generosity, and self-control), the ideal state is a balance, not an extreme. And while Duckworth's research suggests that more grit is generally better, she also knows that sometimes it's smarter to give up. For instance, she quit playing the piano and learning French so she could focus on more important goals. Still, Duckworth's research suggests that nobody wants to *decrease* their grit, and most people will benefit from improving it.

In theory, it's possible to imagine people who are so gritty that they stick with things they should give up, or so singularly focused on particular professional goals that they miss out on essential life experiences, relationships, and so on. But grit doesn't necessitate any of this, and as a practical matter, Duckworth implies that almost nobody actually reaches this level of gritty workaholism. Her readers may or may not fully agree—and if they don't, they can simply apply the parts of Duckworth's research that they find useful and ignore the rest.

Some audiences think Duckworth believes "grit is the only thing that matters." But she doesn't. For instance, she believes that morality is more important than grit. While grit is an important *intrapersonal* virtue (relating to self-control), social and intellectual virtues are also key to people's character. Other audiences think that Duckworth gives children unrealistic expectations by trying to make them all into gritty **geniuses** like Mozart. But grit is about constant self-improvement and fulfilling one's potential—not becoming Mozart.

These misinterpretations of Duckworth's research are understandable, since she constantly talks about grit and almost nothing else. Similarly, gritty people aren't all automatically benevolent, admirable, and accomplished—although Duckworth would argue that they're certainly far more likely to be. Grit is just one component of personality, and while it's possible for everyone to improve their grit, it's not realistic for everyone to become a gritty genius.

Finally, Duckworth describes how writer Ta-Nehisi Coates just won a MacArthur "Genius Grant." But once, he was a struggling, unemployed journalist. Coates says that failure is the key to his work, because writing "*is* failure. Over and over and over again." He describes writing as refining terrible ideas into less terrible ones, day by day, until they're good enough to succeed in print. Duckworth argues that this is how all true accomplishments happen: through grit.

Coates's attitude toward writing neatly encapsulates Duckworth's primary thesis about grit: even when success looks like the product of natural genius, it generally depends on a long, arduous process of practice, improvement, and self-discovery. The key to navigating this process successfully is learning to set high expectations, failing to meet them "over and over and over again," and pushing on anyway. All "geniuses" start out as ordinary people with ordinary problems, with one key difference: they're gritty.

When Duckworth's father called Duckworth "no **genius**," he wrongly thought that genius meant succeeding effortlessly. But nobody can do that. Instead, Duckworth argues, real genius means constantly pushing for excellence and improvement. By this definition, anyone can be a genius, including Duckworth, her father, Coates, and even the reader.

Duckworth concludes Grit *by reiterating how the evidence she has presented throughout the book allows people to reevaluate conventional attitudes about skill and achievement. For Duckworth, her father's ideas about genius represent these conventional attitudes. But learning the truth about grit and achievement has shown her that people's ability is not fixed. In fact, just the opposite is true: ability and achievement depend more on effort than any other factor. And by learning to view achievement as the result of hard work, people can begin to truly recognize and fulfill their own potential.*

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