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What is Grit?

Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals



Principle

Sticking to a long-term goal you care about creates more success than being smart.

Quote

“The gritty individual approaches achievement as a marathon; his or her advantage is stamina. Whereas disappointment or boredom signals to others that it is time to change trajectory and cut losses, the gritty individual stays the course.”

So What - Application

If grit, or having passion and perseverance for long-term goal is one of the predictors of success, then we may shift how we talk to and support kids.

Schools could support kids with exceptional commitment as much as they support “gifted” students.

We could encourage our kids to not only put forth effort in a given practice, but to have stamina over the long-run.

We could also prepare our kids for the inevitable failures and misfortunes that happen on any goal journey.

We could also help kids understand that true excellence in any field requires years and years of time on task.

The Research Story

Four researchers from University of Pennsylvania, University of Michigan, and West Point did 6 study whether grit, having passion and perseverance for long-term goals, predicts success better than intelligence.

Grit is not dependability, conscientiousness or the need for achievement. Gritty people don't just achieve, they choose one long-term goal and stick with it no matter what. These studies helped them create a grit scale.. The studies that found that grit explained about 4% of why people succeeded.

Study #1 - They started with 27 questions, then rigorously narrowed them down to 12. They surveyed 1,545 adults who clicked the grit survey link from authentic happiness.org. Adults with higher education were also higher in grit. Grit also increases with age. When you're young, changing paths is adaptive to discover what you like. As you age, sticking with one is better.

Study #2 - They surveyed 690 adults 25 and older and found that grit is related to conscientiousness on the Big 5 Scale, but grit still predicts education on its own. Higher grit also predicted fewer career changes.

Study #3 - They surveyed 139 college students and found that Grit scores were associated with higher GPA, even after controlling for SAT scores. Interestingly, they found that grit was associated with lower SAT scores. It could be that “those who are less bright than their peers compensate by working harder and with more determination.”

Study #4 - In a survey of 1,218 West Point Cadets, they found that grit predicted completing the rigorous summer training better than self-control, or the whole candidate score. However, the whole candidate score predicted GPA and military performance.

Study #5 - In another study of 1,308 West Point Cadets, they found that grit was related to conscientiousness, but grit still predicted dropouts better.

Study #6 - They surveyed 175 national spelling bee finalists and found that grit predicted advancing to higher rounds of the competition. Kids with more grit did better partly because they studied longer, especially on week-ends.

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