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Grit Needs Perseverance & Passion

Why grit requires perseverance and passion to positively predict performance



Principle

To reach long-term goals you need more than perseverance; you need passion.

Quote

“I mean, if you are really, really tenacious and dogged about a goal that’s not meaningful to you, and not interesting to you—then that’s just drudgery. It’s not just determination—it’s having a direction that you care about.”

So What - Application

If passion is just as important as perseverance in attaining long-term goals, then clearly in research, using both scales would be important to capture grit.

If we want to succeed in long-term goals we would pay attention to both perseverance and how much we care about what we are doing.

At crossroads in our lives we could ask ourselves if we’ve been hopping from project to project or job to job when sticking with one choice for a long time could produce more results.

We could also ask ourselves, or get a coach to explore, what we actually like doing, what we care about, and what we are willing to commit to for the long run.

The Research Story

Four researchers from Columbia Business School and Frankfurt School of Finance & Management studied the passion side of grit. Grit is passion and perseverance for long-term goals. Researchers created a grit scale over a decade ago, but when they use the scale, grit gets mixed results in predicting success in long-term goals. These researchers think that and these researchers think that the grit scale only measures perseverance, but you also have to measure passion. So they created a new scale called “passion attainment” and use that with the grit scale to predict long-term goal attainment.

When perseverance and compassion combine, people can become immersed in an activity. They spend more time, invest more, concentrate more, and put forth more effort in the activities. That heightened immersion creates momentum for sticking with a goal.

Study #1 - First they reviewed 127 studies that used the grit scale. In studies where the participants were more likely to experience passion, like entrepreneurs started a business, there were stronger results compared with participants likely to experience less passion, like students taking a required class. So maybe prior research was missing the element of passion in the studies.

Study #2 - They asked 422 employees of a tech company about their perseverance and passion using the grit scale and passion attainment scale. Then they got their supervisor ratings. High perseverance and high passion predicted higher supervisor ratings where perseverance alone didn’t.

Study #3 - They had 248 students answer questions about grit, passion attainment, and how immersed they get in their coursework. They also had them upload their transcripts. Again they found that the combination of high passion and high perseverance predicted higher major GPA. They also found that the combination of high passion and high perseverance predicted higher immersion. Perseverance predicted immersion which predicted higher GPA, but only when passion attainment was high.

Grit has become a controversial concept with mixed research results. This proposal suggests that the way they measure grit with their grit scale only measured one part of grit, perseverance. This is now a new data point saying when you measure true grit with perseverance and passion, it does predict goal attainment.

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