
Grit By Angela Duckworth: The Power Of Passion And Perseverance

One problem our society lives with is the rigid mindset we have, believing that achievement lays in the power of talent or chance and we end up neglecting the real reason why people achieve success: long-term perseverance and passion. GRIT by Angela Duckworth is a book which talks about these principles beside some others like persistence, taking action after failure or hardworking, which she called more simply: GRIT. The book explains where grit comes from, how it can be developed and how our life can be adapted to get a gritty mindset. My personal expectations about this book were that I will become a more persevering person, not letting failure to turn me down. Failure always discouraged me and was a big enemy in my road to success because I often gave up because of the first obstacles in my way.

Grit is structured in three main parts: What is grit and why it matters, which includes the first 5 chapters, Growing grit from the inside out, which includes the next four chapters, and Growing grit from the inside in, which is composed from the last four.

The first chapter of this book is called "SHOWING UP" and, just as its name it reveals how Angela Duckworth, a psychologist and a professor, discovered how it is grit which show up the way to achievement, making all the differences in people's life, rather than the potential we born with. During some years she held a research, trying to figure out what leads people to success in many domains. Instead of talent, which everyone thought was the key, Angela formulated the idea of grit: a combination of passion and perseverance. Moreover, she gave examples of success situations where grit even predicted more than IQ: in army special forces, in sales and in college GPA. This reveals that no matter the field of activity, those with pursuit of achievement are those with the highest results.

"DISTRACTED BY TALENT" (or the second chapter) is how our society is nowadays. Even though we tend to say that hard work is key (because we are actually aware of it), we have a natural-talent bias. This is why, when some study participants were asked about which one of two entrepreneurs they prefer they chose the one who showed natural inclination for the same aptitudes the other one worked for. Beside business, the book gives also an example in politics, which truth strikes me a little: Hillary and Bill Clinton. Most of the people choose Bill to the detriment of Hillary, even if she worked hard to fit the role: he is gifted. Another idea here would be that there is a higher inclination toward grit when people do not perceive themselves as talented. Knowing that you don't have the natural skill makes you want to work more, knowing that this is the only way to achieve the same level of success.

The most interesting thing in this chapter is that it made me realize that this focus on talent was destructive even in my life. When I was 11 I started playing tennis, I loved the sport, especially for its elegance. At that time, the passion was not enough, because I felt that I am not good enough, that I don't have a gift for it and instead of working harder, I gave up. A few years later I found myself terribly regretting it because I could have been playing it even now.

The third chapter, "EFFORT COUNTS TWICE", evolves around a scheme which says that effort invested in TALENT results in SKILL, upon which if you add again TALENT gives back

ACHIEVEMENT. That's why it counts twice. With lack of effort, that mostly cherished talent is nothing. In the book there are few examples of people perceived as un-talented or not smart enough, until they started to put in effort. That was when they had great results. A psychological test called Treadmill Test showed that those able to stick with physical effort are those who will touch their goals, and what is more, if they come back day after day to improve their results success will be a piece of cake, because they have an enormous potential, just because of being gritty. Therefore, natural ability will be suppressed by those being gritty.

"HOW GRITTY ARE YOU" can be determined by completing the Grit Scale, and it can become higher by following the strategy between the Goal Hierarchy in this fourth chapter. Therefore, a 10 questions survey can show the level of grittiness a person has which can be split into a perseverance and a passion score, as these are the two main components of grit. Regarding the Goal Hierarchy, it represents a goal setting structure. The top-level goal is the one who always has to be in your mind, while the mid and low level ones are there only to lead you to the end purpose. They are specific, short term tasks which, most importantly, can be replaced if they cannot be done. In this way, the journey to the purpose is flexible, therefore you can change the path, but never the destination.

I have recently used this learning in an everyday mid-level task which is very important for me: to have a clear mind in the morning and therefore during each and every day. For a week or so I tried to wake up and go to gym at the first hour, but I never managed to wake up early enough. This is why I changed the low-level task: instead of going in the morning, I started to meditate. And it worked very well for me, getting me just to the same goal.

GRIT GROWS. And the 5th chapter of this part teaches the reader how. It is known that there are some genetic factors which determine your grit level, but they are overtaken by those created by environment. Therefore, grit is a power in our hands which can lead us to success and it's only up to us if we want to use it or not.

The survey shows that the more mature a person is, the more grit they have but what I proposed myself is to become gritty long before getting old. The best time to start is right now and this is possible with the help of the next part of the book: Growing grit from the inside out.

The first way of growing grit from the inside out is through INTEREST, or passion. The thing about passion is that work is not felt as work when we are doing it from passion. But in order to find that passion you have to experiment a lot, and don't expect to know it from the very beginning because it is not a must, it just have to be found.

As a personal example, when I was in the 11th grade I was very scared because my colleagues started working for their faculty admission and I still did not know what to do in life. The best thing i could have done was to experiment a lot and fortunately this is what I did. I started pilot courses and I organized a conference, and that was when I realized that this is what I want to do: to create something for this society, to get involved and work with people, to change and grow them and their country, and how else if not through entrepreneurship.

The next thing after discovering a direction is to stick with it, to find people with same interests, to find a mentor in that field, to dig deeper. This is just why I applied to the university where I am now, without reading grit at that time.

The second way of growing grit is PRACTICE, but not the quantity of practice matters here but the quality, which makes the difference between improvement and stagnation. An effective way of practicing is deliberate practice, setting a goal which cannot be immediately achieved and in which you really believe. I have truly experienced the difference of working on something while having a goal in which I believe beyond or while not having it. In high-school for example when I had to learn on subjects like economics which pursued my purpose in entrepreneurship rather than physics or geometry where I had to force myself. The writer says that after working you get feedback, then you practice more relying on it, until you achieve your goal. Then you do like this with every goal until reaching the greatest purpose. This deliberate practice can be a painful challenge mentally, but it has a reward called Flow, which is enjoyable and effortless. This is a state of mind when you experience ease and enjoyment when doing something which felt really difficult at the beginning. Everyone experiences flow in different ways, the first experience of mine with it was in middle school with mathematics. At the beginning it felt horribly hard and I felt stuck, but after regular practice and work it became my favorite subject, becoming really good at it.

The third way is by PURPOSE. There are two large ways of achieving happiness, the personal interest, which releases pleasure and the purpose, which is a way of serving the society, other people's need. Our society lacks of many things and finding a way of changing it for better gives one the sense of having a mission, in this way wanting to work more and more for it. As described in the book of doing this is finding the spark, the interest, then watching someone who lives with purpose, as a role model and afterwards dedicating to make a difference.

On a personal level, I love entrepreneurship (the domain in which I want to exceed) because through it I can change some things in the country that I live. One role model I have is Mihai Marcu, the entrepreneur who developed the first private hospital in Romania, where universal healthcare is so neglectful and poor.

The last but certainly not least component of grit is HOPE. This hope has nothing to do with expecting and waiting for things to fall from the sky. This kind of hope relies on personal power. The difference stays in perspective, because if you believe that you are not able to change the circumstances, you will end up suffering and living with it, instead of believing that you are in control, and solving the problem. Gritty people take responsibility of the cause, only in this way they can stop it. After reading this I am never thinking that I am just not good at some things, like public speaking. The first times when I tried to present something in public I just started rambling and my face turned red, when I finished I thought that I am just not good at it. But then, after few experiences I started taking some notes and repeating by myself the speech and the pitch went very well. The situation was not hopeless, only we make it feel like this when we are not taking responsibility of the reason.

The second part of the book "GROWING GRIT FROM THE OUTSIDE IN" is moving from the internal components of grit to the external ones: parenting, coaching and culture. The first two are designated mostly for parents and teachers but there are a few lessons to keep in mind for everyone. For example, it is better to aim bigger goals, especially for children which would work through challenge and develop a growth mindset. Another interesting fact is that extra-curricular activities develop grit in a sense that teenagers which are doing them learn to stay committed to a task which is not mandatory. The children mindset is not fixed yet, it is flexible and has a lot of potential for growing. Adults have it too but unfortunately in our culture there is the belief that we can not grow more than who we already are.

The “CULTURE” you live in is the main way of growing grit from the outside in if you are an adult. Surrounding yourself with persevering people who have big goals is an efficient way to become grittier, because even as mature people we tend to internalize the behaviors of those around us. A nice example from the book was given by the Finnish word: “sisu” which is a national trait of a people that believe in determination and accomplishment beyond obstacles. I always felt that that becoming friend with people with accomplishments is a way of growing, but now I realize it is also a way of becoming grittier.

After reading this book I realized that passion, purpose and culture are elements that I do not lack in my stage of grittiness and I am proud of it. Where my learnings laid was in consistency, in perseverance and in hope. Regarding consistency, I realized that I should not jump from one business idea to another, as I will end up doing no business. I have to stick to one, develop the concept and not give up even there are difficulties encountered. This is taking me to the concept of perseverance. Since I read the book I am always repeating myself “To be gritty means to fall down seven times and rise eight”. Because no obstacles should ever stop myself from encountering the higher goals, even if the little tasks on the way will be changed. Another thing to improve for me is hope, and I am doing this by constantly talking to myself when I’m encountering difficulties, saying that everything can be changed, that the situation is not forever stuck and that I can do something for sure in order to change it.

In my opinion Grit was exactly what every entrepreneur at the beginning of the journey should read. Knowing that only you and only your perseverance and effort is what gets you and your future business to success is a truly meaningful lesson. For me the purpose of the book was met, my grit score showing 3.5 instead of 3.3 reading it. Grit also opened my mind for a “follow through” mindset. Effort and persistence are the most meaningful ways to success and my perception of hard work changed a lot. Before, I thought that if I am smart accomplishment will follow me, but it’s the opposite, I have to follow it. Sometimes hard work can lead to procrastination and doubt but here comes the motivation, the passion and the purpose, generating flow.

To conclude, I can say that this is a book which can change lives and I am so grateful that I have read it. Grit is a way of living, of approaching every challenge as an opportunity to grow.