

Book Review

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance

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Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance

Angela Lee Duckworth

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Angela Lee Duckworth's book is the result of many years of research seeking for the reasons why some people are successful in life and others fail. For her, it was quite surprising to observe that success is not related to the usual suspects predictors: the capacity to learn quickly and easily, good luck, IQ scores or physical health. The focus of the book is to convince the audience that success is mostly about something else called grit.

Grit represents passion and perseverance for long time goals, helping humans to stick to their commitments. In other words, it was found that the grit concept it's correlated with well – being, no matter how the latter it's measured. In this case, the author discovered that the grittier a person is, the more likely she will enjoy a healthy emotional life.

The book is divided into three main parts that include a detailed description of what grit is and why it's an important concept, then guidance on how we can grow grit from inside out and, finally, how we can grow grit from outside in.

The first part of the book is focused on defining a theorem to support the grit concept and on developing a measuring instrument named "Grit Scale". The Grit Scale has two components: passion and perseverance and it is believed that a person who will obtain a high score on one dimension, will obtain a high score on the other dimension, too. In reality, perseverance scores often exceeded passion scores. This is a first clue that passion and perseverance aren't exactly the same thing.

A long period of time, it was considered that talent represents one important factor that misleads people from achieving their goals. In this sense, talent should not be perceived as destiny. Therefore, we can talk about the existence of a gap between potential and its actualization. By simply focusing on talent, humans are distracted by something that it's at least as important in achieving success, it's about effort.

The author states a theorem for grit which claims that talent and effort lead to skills and skills combined with effort generates achievements. The equation revealed that effort counts twice in success:

effort builds skill and in the same time effort makes skill productive. In this case, it can be estimated that someone twice as skilled, but half as hard working as another person might reach the same level of ability. However, it's possible for the persons twice as skilled, but less hard working to provide dramatically less over time because as strivers are growing in skill, they are also applying that ability.

Grit, talent, and all other psychological features associated with success in life are influenced by genes and by experience. Nevertheless, grit is not due to a particular gene or to a certain psychological feature but represents a combination of genetic, educational, behavioral and psychological factors.

The second part of the book converges on the idea that people must follow their passion, but this statement must take into consideration the fact that liking something, doesn't mean you'll be great on that thing, especially if you do not work for it (again, it's about effort). So, interest described as a desire to learn new things, to explore the world, to attempt novelty, to be on the lookout for innovation and diversity, represents a fundamental drive in acquiring goals in life.

Interest may be perceived as a source of passion. On the other hand, purpose can be defined as an intention to contribute to the well-being of others and it represents another source of passion. The mature passion of gritty people depends on both.

Furthermore, grit depends on a particular kind of hope. This hope refers to the prospect of having a tomorrow better than today. It rests on the belief that our own efforts can improve our future. Having a feeling that tomorrow will be better is different from choosing to perform tomorrow better. It is believed that the attribute of being a gritty individual is not due to chance, but it is due to perseverance.

The last part of the book tries to determine people to grow grit. The author draws attention to the fact that limits exist everywhere, not just related to own talent, but related to chance or opportunity. After a careful analyses of most situations, it can be observed that many of the human limits are self-imposed, because if people try and fail they will be tempted to believe that their resources and their capacity have reached the highest possible level, especially if they have chosen a reference point and can't reach it in a relatively short time.

Angela Duckworth says that all individuals have the ability to grow their grit if they direct their focus in four specific ways. The first two stages in the process of growing grit imply to develop a fascination with a specific ability and then to try to improve with every circumstance this ability. The third step implies to remind ourselves the greatest purpose, because a higher level of purpose is directly correlated with a higher level of grit and, finally, to adopt a growth mindset.

In the end, it's important to remember that grit matters more than talent and we all have the potential to improve our perseverance in order to become a gritty person. The core message that I gathered from Angela's book is that we can develop the confidence to start taking action despite how untalented we think we are.

In summary, the present book it's a fundamental contribution to the field of behavioral sciences, encapsulating over two decades of research. The language is accessible and the multitude of case studies comes to complete the exposed theories for a better understanding. Also, the results of the studies are presented in a graphic form, so it's easier to observe the phenomenon recorded from a certain research or experiment.

Because of the newness character of the information, it may seem quite hard to understand or to assimilate all concepts from the first reading of the book. But, after a careful analysis, I'm pretty sure that you'll understand the main messages and I believe that it will be quite useful to put theories into practice or to interpret the surrounding information based on what you could learn from the book.

Another aspect that recommends this book is represented by the conclusions. One of these brings attention to the fact that, like all things in life, too much or too little of a good thing is bad. Thus, too much grit can lead you to miss opportunities, to start different and, possibly better projects. So, we must consider that greatness and goodness are different notions, and if you are forced to choose between them, it's suggested to put goodness first.

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