

How to Give Your Child GRIT

David Benzel

Research has determined that something called GRIT is the single most reliable predictor of success in life; much more so than talent or graduating from the right school. We're talking about perseverance, tenacity, and never giving up. Through the use of a grit assessment the experts can predict which freshman cadets at West Point, or first year medical students in med-school, are most likely to make it through to graduation. It turns out that having talent is beneficial, but only if you have the persistence to use it repeatedly over time. Psychologist Angela Duckworth says, "Grit is not just having resilience in the face of failure, but also having deep commitments that you remain loyal to over many years."

The purpose of participating in any extra-curricular activity is to do something voluntarily that is both enjoyable and challenging --- meaning that learning and growth take place while you do something that's fun. In her book, "Grit" Angela Duckworth explains that perseverance, or "grit" is demonstrated when kids sign up for the same extra-curricular activity a minimum of two years in a row and see it through. Duckworth points out that much of what our kids do every day does not qualify as grit-building because it doesn't meet the criteria of enjoyable AND challenging. For most kids the classroom is challenging but not enjoyable, and spending time with friends – on or off Facebook – is enjoyable but not challenging. Activities like sports provide both!

The most important question is "How can we teach our children grit?" It turns out the answer is two-fold.

1. **Use a HERO parenting style:** Earn the respect of your children by delivering unconditional love AND holding them to high behavioral standards. Establish your credibility with your children by explaining the reasons why certain rules exist in your family and how those high standards benefit everyone. At the same time that consequences are dished out, demonstrate compassion and grace for your children when they mess up. You will be revered at some point for coupling forgiveness with tough love.
2. **Show some grit in your life:** Check yourself for the level of passion and tenacity you have for your goals in life. Are you demonstrating grit to your children so that they have a living example coming from someone they look up to? You're probably parenting for grit if you are persistently striving – in spite of all obstacles – for your goals, and have done so over a pro-longed period of time.

It's probably becoming clear that grit is not sticking with something for one season and then quitting. It's not trying something for a few months and then moving on. Both of those things happen sometimes because we just want to try something different. But true grit is the commitment to see things through with passion and perseverance, while being challenged at the same time. Sit down with your children tonight and think of examples of people with grit. It's an easy concept to talk about....and much easier to spell than "perseverance!"