

## Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance (Duckworth, Angela)

Each was chasing something of unparalleled interest and importance, and it was the chase—as much as the capture—that was gratifying. Even if some of the things they had to do were boring, or frustrating, or even painful, they wouldn't dream of giving up. Their passion was enduring.

It was this combination of passion and perseverance that made high achievers special. In a word, they had grit.

And why do we assume that it is our talent, rather than our effort, that will decide where we end up in the very long run?

“Superlative performance is really a confluence of dozens of small skills or activities, each one learned or stumbled upon, which have been carefully drilled into habit and then are fitted together in a synthesized whole. There is nothing extraordinary or superhuman in any one of those actions; only the fact that they are done consistently and correctly, and all together, produce excellence.”

But mundanity is a hard sell.

In other words, when we can't easily see how experience and training got someone to a level of excellence that is so clearly beyond the norm, we default to labeling that person a “natural.”

“Yes, but the main thing is that greatness is doable.

Greatness is many, many individual feats, and each of them is doable.”

“With everything perfect,” Nietzsche wrote, “we do not ask how it came to be.” Instead, “we rejoice in the present fact as though it came out of the ground by magic.”

“No one can see in the work of the artist how it has become,” Nietzsche said. “That is its advantage, for wherever one can see the act of becoming one grows somewhat cool.” In other words, we want to believe that Mark Spitz was born to swim in a way that none of us were and that none of us could. We don’t want to sit on the pool deck and watch him progress from amateur to expert. We prefer our excellence fully formed. We prefer mystery to mundanity.

“Our vanity, our self-love, promotes the cult of the genius,” Nietzsche said. “For if we think of genius as something magical, we are not obliged to compare ourselves and find ourselves lacking. . . . To call someone ‘divine’ means: ‘here there is no need to compete.’”

In other words, mythologizing natural talent lets us all off the hook. It lets us relax into the status quo.

Great things are accomplished by those “people whose thinking is active in one direction, who employ everything as material, who always zealously observe their own inner life and that of others, who perceive everywhere models and incentives, who never tire of combining together the means available to them.”

Talent is how quickly your skills improve when you invest effort. Achievement is what happens when you take your acquired skills and use them.

What this theory says is that when you consider individuals in identical circumstances, what each achieves depends on just two things, talent and effort. Talent—how fast we improve in skill—absolutely matters.

But effort factors into the calculations twice, not once. Effort builds skill. At the very same time, effort makes skill productive. Let me give you a few examples.

talent x effort = skill

skill x effort = achievement

I began to take my lack of talent seriously.”

There is nothing more interesting than watching people grow.”

As any coach or athlete will tell you, consistency of effort over the long run is everything.

How many of us start something new, full of excitement and good intentions, and then give up—permanently—when we encounter the first real obstacle, the first long plateau in progress?

Even more than the effort a gritty person puts in on a single day, what matters is that they wake up the next day, and the next, ready to get on that treadmill and keep going.

I would add that skill is not the same thing as achievement, either. Without effort, your talent is nothing more than your unmet potential. Without effort, your skill is nothing more than what you could have done but didn't. With effort, talent becomes skill and, at the very same time, effort makes skill productive.

Grit has two components: passion and perseverance.

For a lot of people, passion is synonymous with infatuation or obsession. But in interviews about what it takes to succeed, high achievers often talk about commitment of a different kind. Rather than intensity, what comes up again and again in their remarks is the idea of consistency over time.

Is passion the right word to describe sustained, enduring devotion? Some might say I should find a better word. Maybe so. But the important thing is the idea itself: Enthusiasm is common. Endurance is rare.

There was a spirit here that I wanted to connect with, and I wanted to make it a part of my life.”

for example, to be a doctor or to play basketball in the NBA—and can vividly imagine how wonderful that would be, but they can't point to the mid-level and lower-level goals that will get them there. Their goal hierarchy has a top-level goal but no supporting mid-level or low-level goals:

Any successful person has to decide what to do in part by deciding what not to do.

One of the mottos of the Green Berets is: “Improvise, adapt, overcome.” A lot of us were told as children, “If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.” Sound advice, but as they say “try, try again, then try something different.” At lower levels of a goal hierarchy, that's exactly what's needed.

My own experience, and the stories of grit paragons like Jeff Gettleman and Bob Mankoff suggest that, indeed, grit grows as we figure out our life philosophy, learn to dust ourselves off after rejection and disappointment, and learn to tell the difference between low-level goals that should be abandoned quickly and higher-level goals that demand more tenacity. The maturation story is that we develop the capacity for long-term passion and perseverance as we get older.

I learned that being a “promising beginner” is fun, but being an actual expert is infinitely more gratifying. I also learned that years of hard work are often mistaken for innate talent, and that passion is as necessary as perseverance to world-class excellence.

One story says that our grit changes as a function of the cultural era in which we grow up. The other story says that we get grittier as we get older. Both could be true, and I have a suspicion that both are, at least to an extent. Either way, this snapshot reveals that grit is not entirely fixed. Like every aspect of your psychological character, grit is more plastic than you might think.

In fact, when people drop out of things, they do so for a reason. Actually, they do so for different reasons. Any of the following four thoughts might go through your head right before you quit what you're doing: "I'm bored." "The effort isn't worth it." "This isn't important to me." "I can't do this, so I might as well give up."

Most important, paragons of grit don't swap compasses: when it comes to the one, singularly important aim that guides almost everything else they do, the very gritty tend not to utter the statements above.

First comes interest. Passion begins with intrinsically enjoying what you do. Every gritty person I've studied can point to aspects of their work they enjoy less than others, and most have to put up with at least one or two chores they don't enjoy at all. Nevertheless, they're captivated by the endeavor as a whole. With enduring fascination and childlike curiosity, they practically shout out, "I love what I do!"

Next comes the capacity to practice. One form of perseverance is the daily discipline of trying to do things better than we did yesterday. So, after you've discovered and developed interest in a particular area, you must devote yourself to the sort of focused, full-hearted, challenge-exceeding-skill practice that leads to mastery.

You must zero in on your weaknesses, and you must do so over and over again, for hours a day, week after month after year. To be gritty is to resist complacency. "Whatever it takes, I want to improve!" is a refrain of all paragons of grit, no matter their particular interest, and no matter how excellent they already are.

Third is purpose. What ripens passion is the conviction that your work matters. For most people, interest without purpose is nearly impossible to sustain for a lifetime. It is therefore imperative that you identify your work as both personally interesting and, at the same time, integrally connected to the well-being of others.

And, finally, hope. Hope is a rising-to-the-occasion kind of perseverance. In this book, I discuss it after interest, practice, and purpose—but hope does not define the last stage of grit. It defines every stage. From the very beginning to the very end, it is inestimably important to learn to

keep going even when things are difficult, even when we have doubts. At various points, in big ways and small, we get knocked down. If we stay down, grit loses. If we get up, grit prevails.

The four psychological assets of interest, practice, purpose, and hope are not You have it or you don't commodities. You can learn to discover, develop, and deepen your interests. You can acquire the habit of discipline. You can cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning. And you can teach yourself to hope. You can grow your grit from the inside out. If you'd like to know how, read on.

Nobody is interested in everything, and everyone is interested in something.

A related problem, Barry says, is the mythology that falling in love with a career should be sudden and swift: "There are a lot of things where the subtleties and exhilarations come with sticking with it for a while, getting elbow-deep into something. A lot of things seem uninteresting and superficial until you start doing them and, after a while, you realize that there are so many facets you didn't know at the start, and you never can fully solve the problem, or fully understand it, or what have you. Well, that requires that you stick with it."

To the thirty-something on Reddit with a "fleeting interest in everything" and "no career direction," here's what science has to say: passion for your work is a little bit of discovery, followed by a lot of development, and then a lifetime of deepening.

I find that the grittier an individual is, the fewer career changes they're likely to make.

For the beginner, novelty is anything that hasn't been encountered before. For the expert, novelty is nuance.

Kaizen is Japanese for resisting the plateau of arrested development. Its literal translation is: "continuous improvement."

This is how experts practice: First, they set a stretch goal, zeroing in on just one narrow aspect of their overall performance.

Rather than focus on what they already do well, experts strive to improve specific weaknesses. They intentionally seek out challenges they can't yet meet.

As soon as possible, experts hungrily seek feedback on how they did. Necessarily, much of that feedback is negative. This means that experts are more interested in what they did wrong—so they can fix it—than what they did right. The active processing of this feedback is as essential as its immediacy.

The roots of knowledge are bitter, but its fruits are sweet. This always struck him as deeply untrue: “Even when the learning is hard,” he writes, “it is not bitter when you feel that it is worth having, that you can master it, that practicing what you learned will express who you are and help you achieve what you desire.”

Gritty people do more deliberate practice and experience more flow.

Olympic gold medalist rower Mads Rasmussen offered a similar account of his motivation: “It’s about hard work. When it’s not fun, you do what you need to do anyway. Because when you achieve results, it’s incredibly fun. You get to enjoy the ‘Aha’ at the end, and that is what drags you along a lot of the way.”

Lately, I’ve been asking gritty performers and their coaches in diverse fields to elaborate on how it feels to do deliberate practice. Many agree with dancer Martha Graham that attempting to do what you cannot yet do is frustrating, uncomfortable, and even painful.

It’s hard to know for sure what to make of this finding. One possibility is that grittier kids spend more time doing deliberate practice, and that, over the years, they develop a taste for hard work as they experience the rewards of their labor. This is the “learn to love the burn” story. Alternatively, it could be that grittier kids enjoy the hard work more, and that gets them to do more of it. This is the “some people enjoy a challenge” story.

As we'll learn in chapter 11, there's solid scientific evidence that the subjective experience of effort—what it feels like to work hard—can and does change when, for example, effort is rewarded in some way.

In other words, there are different kinds of positive experience: the thrill of getting better is one, and the ecstasy of performing at your best is another.

Each of the basic requirements of deliberate practice is unremarkable: • A clearly defined stretch goal • Full concentration and effort • Immediate and informative feedback • Repetition with reflection and refinement

Eventually, if you keep practicing in the same time and place, what once took conscious thought to initiate becomes automatic. “There is no more miserable human being,” observed William James, than the one for whom “the beginning of every bit of work” must be decided anew each day.

First, know the science. Each of the basic requirements of deliberate practice is unremarkable: • A clearly defined stretch goal • Full concentration and effort • Immediate and informative feedback • Repetition with reflection and refinement

My third suggestion for getting the most out of deliberate practice is to change the way you experience it.

“Deliberate practice can feel wonderful,” Terry told me. “If you try, you can learn to embrace challenge rather than fear it. You can do all the things you're supposed to do during deliberate practice—a clear goal, feedback, all of it—and still feel great while you're doing it.

“It's about relieving yourself of the judgment that gets in the way of enjoying the challenge.”

I began to think about the fact that infants and toddlers spend most of their time trying to do things they can't, again and again—and yet they don't seem especially embarrassed or anxious. No pain, no gain is a rule that doesn't seem to apply to the preschool set.



According to Elena and Deborah, around the time children enter kindergarten, they begin to notice that their mistakes inspire certain reactions in grown-ups. What do we do? We frown. Our cheeks flush a bit. We rush over to our little ones to point out that they've done something wrong. And what's the lesson we're teaching? Embarrassment. Fear. Shame. Coach Bruce Gemmell says that's exactly what happens to many of his swimmers:

Interest is one source of passion. Purpose—the intention to contribute to the well-being of others—is another. The mature passions of gritty people depend on both.

In other words, the more common sequence is to start out with a relatively self-oriented interest, then learn self-disciplined practice, and, finally, integrate that work with an other-centered purpose.

When I talk to grit paragons, and they tell me that what they're pursuing has purpose, they mean something much deeper than mere intention. They're not just goal-oriented; the nature of their goals is special.

However they say it, the message is the same: the long days and evenings of toil, the setbacks and disappointments and struggle, the sacrifice—all this is worth it because, ultimately, their efforts pay dividends to other people.

At its core, the idea of purpose is the idea that what we do matters to people other than ourselves.

In my “grit lexicon,” therefore, purpose means “the intention to contribute to the well-being of others.”

As you can see, gritty people aren't monks, nor are they hedonists. In terms of pleasure-seeking, they're just like anyone else; pleasure is moderately important no matter how gritty you are. In sharp contrast, you can see that grittier people are dramatically more motivated than others to seek a meaningful, other-centered life. Higher scores on purpose correlate with higher scores on the Grit Scale.

How many millions of innocent people have perished at the hands of demagogues whose stated intention was to contribute to the well-being of others?

All of us, Terkel concluded, are looking for “daily meaning as well as daily bread . . . for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.”

Whatever you do—whether you’re a janitor or the CEO—you can continually look at what you do and ask how it connects to other people, how it connects to the bigger picture, how it can be an expression of your deepest values.”

In other words, you can want to be a top dog and, at the same time, be driven to help others.

Next, you need to observe someone who is purposeful. The purposeful role model could be a family member, a historical figure, a political figure. It doesn’t really matter who it is, and it doesn’t even matter whether that purpose is related to what the child will end up doing. “What matters,” Bill explained, “is that someone demonstrates that it’s possible to accomplish something on behalf of others.”

“Ideally,” he said, “the child really gets to see how difficult a life of purpose is—all the frustrations and the obstacles—but also how gratifying, ultimately, it can be.”

Purpose requires a second revelation: “I personally can make a difference.” This conviction, this intention to take action, he says, is why it’s so important to have observed a role model enact purpose in their own life. “You have to believe that your efforts will not be in vain.”

“Gradually, I became more and more aware that I was very good at going into new environments and helping people realize they’re capable of more than they know.

Not long ago, Kat posted an essay on her blog, titled “See What’s Possible, and Help Others Do the Same.” “When I am around people,” Kat wrote, “my heart and soul radiate with the awareness that I am in the presence of greatness. Maybe greatness unfound, or greatness underdeveloped, but the potential or existence of greatness nevertheless. You never know who will go on to do good or even great things or become the next great influencer in the world—so treat everyone like they are that person.”

David Yeager recommends reflecting on how the work you’re already doing can make a positive contribution to society.

Amy Wrzesniewski recommends thinking about how, in small but meaningful ways, you can change your current work to enhance its connection to your core values.

Finally, Bill Damon recommends finding inspiration in a purposeful role model.

He’d like you to respond in writing to some of the questions he uses in his interview research, including, “Imagine yourself fifteen years from now. What do you think will be most important to you then?” and “Can you think of someone whose life inspires you to be a better person? Who? Why?”

There’s an old Japanese saying: Fall seven, rise eight. If I were ever to get a tattoo, I’d get these four simple words indelibly inked.

One kind of hope is the expectation that tomorrow will be better than today. It’s the kind of hope that has us yearning for sunnier weather, or a smoother path ahead. It comes without the burden of responsibility. The onus is on the universe to make things better.

Grit depends on a different kind of hope. It rests on the expectation that our own efforts can improve our future. I have a feeling tomorrow will be better is different from I resolve to make tomorrow better. The hope that gritty people have has nothing to do with luck and everything to do with getting up again.

This, of course, was a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more my mind was crowded by those heart-palpitating thoughts, the less I could concentrate. Time ran out before I'd even read the last problem.

This seminal experiment proved for the first time that it isn't suffering that leads to hopelessness. It's suffering you think you can't control.

When you keep searching for ways to change your situation for the better, you stand a chance of finding them.

Undermines Growth Mindset and Grit Promotes Growth Mindset and Grit "You're a natural! I love that." "You're a learner! I love that." "Well, at least you tried!" "That didn't work. Let's talk about how you approached it and what might work better." "Great job! You're so talented!" "Great job! What's one thing that could have been even better?" "This is hard. Don't feel bad if you can't do it." "This is hard. Don't feel bad if you can't do it yet." "Maybe this just isn't your strength. Don't worry—you have other things to contribute." "I have high standards. I'm holding you to them because I know we can reach them together." Language is one way to cultivate hope. But modeling a growth mindset—demonstrating by our actions that we truly believe people can learn to learn—may be even more important.

Similarly, Carol and her collaborators are finding that children develop more of a fixed mindset when their parents react to mistakes as though they're harmful and problematic. This is true even when these parents say they have a growth mindset. Our children are watching us, and they're imitating what we do.

I used to use the word 'complacency' to describe the ones who didn't work out, but the more I reflect on it, the more I realize that's not quite it. It's really a belief that 'I can't learn anymore. I am what I am. This is how I do things.'"

The lesson was that, when you have setbacks and failures, you can't overreact to them. You need to step back, analyze them, and learn from them. But you also need to stay optimistic."

The urgent question becomes: When? When does struggle lead to hope, and when does struggle lead to hopelessness?

If you experience adversity—something pretty potent—that you overcome on your own during your youth, you develop a different way of dealing with adversity later on. It's important that the adversity be pretty potent. Because these brain areas really have to wire together in some fashion, and that doesn't happen with just minor inconveniences.”

And what about a life history of challenge without control? “I worry a lot about kids in poverty,” Steve said. “They're getting a lot of helplessness experiences. They're not getting enough mastery experiences. They're not learning: 'I can do this. I can succeed in that.' My speculation is that those earlier experiences can have really enduring effects. You need to learn that there's a contingency between your actions and what happens to you: 'If I do something, then something will happen.'”

The scientific research is very clear that experiencing trauma without control can be debilitating.

Collectively, the evidence I've presented tells the following story: A fixed mindset about ability leads to pessimistic explanations of adversity, and that, in turn, leads to both giving up on challenges and avoiding them in the first place. In contrast, a growth mindset leads to optimistic ways of explaining adversity, and that, in turn, leads to perseverance and seeking out new challenges that will ultimately make you even stronger.

When Carol and her collaborators try to convince people that intelligence, or any other talent, can improve with effort, she starts by explaining the brain.

The point is that you can, in fact, modify your self-talk, and you can learn to not let it interfere with you moving toward your goals. With practice and guidance, you can change the way you think, feel, and, most important, act when the going gets rough.

There's an expression in sports: "Race your strengths and train your weaknesses." I agree with the wisdom of this adage, but I also think it's important that people recognize that skills improve with practice.

Clearly, these exemplars of grit grew up not just imitating their parents but also emulating them.

If you want to bring forth grit in your child, first ask how much passion and perseverance you have for your own life goals. Then ask yourself how likely it is that your approach to parenting encourages your child to emulate you. If the answer to the first question is "a great deal," and your answer to the second is "very likely," you're already parenting for grit.

"This taught me not to tangle my ego up in the code I write," Tobi said. "There are always ways to improve it and getting this feedback is a gift."

In fact, emerging research on teaching suggests uncanny parallels to parenting. It seems that psychologically wise teachers can make a huge difference in the lives of their students.

He found that teachers who are demanding—whose students say of them, "My teacher accepts nothing less than our best effort," and "Students in this class behave the way my teacher wants them to"—produce measurable year-to-year gains in the academic skills of their students. Teachers who are supportive and respectful—whose students say, "My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me," and "My teacher wants us to share our thoughts"—enhance students' happiness, voluntary effort in class, and college aspirations.

When the essays were collected, David discovered that about 40 percent of the students who'd received the placebo control Post-it note decided to turn in a revised essay, compared to about twice that number—80 percent of the students—who'd received the Post-it note communicating wise feedback. In a replication study with a different sample, students who received the wise feedback Post-it—"I'm giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them"—made twice as many edits to their essays as students in the placebo control condition.

In a meeting with Bill and Melinda Gates, I had an opportunity to explain my perspective in person. Learning to follow through on something hard in high school, I said, seemed the best-possible preparation for doing the same thing later in life.

Whether we realize it or not, the culture in which we live, and with which we identify, powerfully shapes just about every aspect of our being.

How do you know you're part of a culture that, in a very real sense, has become part of you? When you adopt a culture, you make a categorical allegiance to that in-group. You're not "sort of" a Seahawk, or "sort of" a West Pointer. You either are or you aren't. You're in the group, or out of it. You can use a noun, not just an adjective or a verb, to describe your commitment. So much depends, as it turns out, on which in-group you commit to.

If you want to be grittier, find a gritty culture and join it. If you're a leader, and you want the people in your organization to be grittier, create a gritty culture.

What excites me most is the idea that, in the long run, culture has the power to shape our identity. Over time and under the right circumstances, the norms and values of the group to which we belong become our own. We internalize them. We carry them with us. The way we do things around here and why eventually becomes The way I do things and why.

Identity influences every aspect of our character, but it has special relevance to grit. Often, the critical gritty-or-not decisions we make—to get up one more time; to stick it out through this miserable, exhausting summer; to run five miles with our teammates when on our own we might only run three—are a matter of identity more than anything else.

But other times, March says, we don't think through the consequences of our actions at all. We don't ask ourselves: What are the benefits? What are the costs? What are the risks? Instead, we ask ourselves: Who am I? What is this situation? What does someone like me do in a situation like this?

First, thinking of yourself as someone who is able to overcome tremendous adversity often leads to behavior that confirms that self-conception. If you're a Finn with that "sisu spirit," you get up again no matter what. Likewise, if you're a Seattle Seahawk, you're a competitor. You have what it takes to succeed. You don't let setbacks hold you back. Grit is who you are.

It sometimes feels like we have nothing left to give, and yet, in those dark and desperate moments, we find that if we just keep putting one foot in front of the other, there is a way to accomplish what all reason seems to argue against.

"Absolutely," Jamie says. "It takes relentless—absolutely relentless—communication. It's what you say and how you say it."

"If you do well, either you have self-discipline because you've trained all summer, or you have the mental toughness to handle the pain that most people can't. Ideally, of course, you have both." Just before the first beep, Anson announces, "Ladies, this is a test of your mentality. Go!"

Half the team's core values are about teamwork. Half are about grit. Together, they define a culture Anson and his players refer to as "the competitive cauldron."

Rather than read this anecdote and quickly forget it, Anson immediately appreciated its relevance to the top-level goal he was trying to accomplish. Like just about everything else he reads, sees, or does, he asked himself, How can this help me develop the culture I want? Each year that you play soccer for Anson Dorrance, you must memorize three different literary quotes, each handpicked to communicate a different core value. "You will be tested in front of the team in preseason," his memo to the team reads, "and then tested again in every player conference. Not only do you have to memorize them, but you have to understand them. So reflect on them as well. . . ." By senior year, Anson's athletes know all twelve by heart, beginning with the first core value—We don't whine—and its corresponding quote, courtesy of playwright George Bernard Shaw: "The true joy in life is to be a force of fortune instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy."



Pete said, his coaching staff reinforces a culture of grit through innumerable “competitive opportunities and moments and illustrations. . . . Really what we’re doing is we’re just trying to make them more gritty. We’re trying to teach them how to persevere. We’re trying to illustrate to them how they can demonstrate more passion.”

“If you thought of it as who was winning and who was losing, you’d miss the whole point. . . . It’s really the guy across from us that makes us who we are.” Our opponent, Pete explained, creates challenges that help us become our best selves.

If each person’s grit enhances grit in others, then, over time, you might expect what social scientist Jim Flynn calls a “social multiplier” effect. In a sense, it’s the motivational analogue of the infinity cube of self-reflecting mirrors Jeff Bezos built as a boy—one person’s grit enhances the grit of the others, which in turn inspires more grit in that person, and so on, without end.

What does Earl Thomas have to say about being a Seahawk? “My teammates have been pushing me since day one. They’re helping me to get better, and vice versa. You have to have a genuine appreciation for teammates who are willing to put in hard work, buy into the system, and never be satisfied with anything but continuing to evolve. It’s incredible to see the heights we’re reaching from that humble attitude.”

The most obvious is language. One of Pete’s coaches once said, “I speak fluent Carroll.” And to speak Carroll is to speak fluent Seahawk: Always compete. You’re either competing or you’re not. Compete in everything you do. You’re a Seahawk 24-7. Finish strong. Positive self-talk. Team first.

“Compete,” I’m told, is not what I think it is. It’s not about triumphing over others, a notion I’ve always been uneasy about. Compete means excellence. “Compete comes from the Latin,” explains Mike Gervais, the competitive-surfer-turned-sports-psychologist who is one of Pete’s partners in culture building. “Quite literally, it means strive together. It doesn’t have anything in its origins about another person losing.”

Mike tells me that two key factors promote excellence in individuals and in teams: “deep and rich support and relentless challenge to improve.”

I begin to get it. For this professional football team, it’s not solely about defeating other teams, it’s about pushing beyond what you can do today so that tomorrow you’re just a little bit better. It’s about excellence. So, for the Seahawks, Always compete means Be all you can be, whatever that is for you. Reach for your best.

“One thing we really believe in here is the idea of finishing strong.” Then he gives me examples: Seahawks finish a game strong, playing their hearts out to the last second on the clock. Seahawks finish the season strong. Seahawks finish every drill strong. And I ask, “But why just finish strong? Doesn’t it make sense to start strong, too?” “Yes,” the coach says, “but starting strong is easy. And for the Seahawks, ‘finishing’ doesn’t literally mean ‘finishing.’”

Be early? I tell them that, after reading Pete’s book, I made “Be early” a resolution. So far, I had yet to be early for almost anything. This elicited some chuckles. Apparently, I’m not the only who struggles with that one. But just as important, this confession gets one of the guys talking about why it’s important to be early: “It’s about respect. It’s about the details. It’s about excellence.” Okay, okay, I’m getting it.

This reminds me of something Pete said at the start of my visit: “Every time I make a decision or say something to a player, I think, ‘How would I treat my own kid?’ You know what I do best? I’m a great dad. And in a way, that’s the way I coach.”

In fact, Amanda and Lucy aspire to achieve the same. They’ve glimpsed the satisfaction that comes from doing something important—for yourself and others—and doing it well, and doing it even though it’s so very hard. They want more of that. They recognize that complacency has its charms, but none worth trading for the fulfillment of realizing their potential.

You could also call them strengths of will, heart, and mind. Intrapersonal character includes grit. This cluster of virtues also includes self-control, particularly as it relates to resisting temptations like texting and video games. What this means is that gritty people tend to be self-controlled and vice versa. Collectively, virtues that make possible the accomplishment of personally valued goals have also been called “performance character” or “self-management skills.” Social commentator and journalist David Brooks calls these “resume virtues” because they’re the sorts of things that get us hired and keep us employed. Interpersonal character includes gratitude, social intelligence, and self-control over emotions like anger. These virtues help you get along with—and provide assistance to—other people. Sometimes, these virtues are referred to as “moral character.” David Brooks prefers the term “eulogy virtues” because, in the end, they may be more important to how people remember us than anything else. When we speak admiringly of someone being a “deeply good” person, I think it’s this cluster of virtues we’re thinking about. And, finally, intellectual character includes virtues like curiosity and zest. These encourage active and open engagement with the world of ideas.

In the end, the plurality of character operates against any one virtue being uniquely important.

If we can’t be Einstein, is it worth studying physics? If we can’t be Usain Bolt, should we go for a run this morning? Is there any point in trying to run a little faster or longer than we did yesterday? In my view, these are absurd questions.

To be gritty is to keep putting one foot in front of the other. To be gritty is to hold fast to an interesting and purposeful goal. To be gritty is to invest, day after week after year, in challenging practice. To be gritty is to fall down seven times, and rise eight.