

Benefits of Mental Toughness

Finally, football season is here! Football rivalry and school spirit really seem to bring some healthy competition. It is always impressive to watch star athletes excel amongst their teammates and competing teams. Often, many of these athletes come from a background where much of their life has been difficult and they have faced adversity. The grit that these players have is special and unique, and spectators cannot help but wonder what makes these players elite. Since much of the game of football is not only skill, but mental toughness, too. The athletes who show the most grit do not miss any workouts or practices, they are supportive of their teammates, and do well academically. These same athletes often perform athletically stronger than others on the team. So what exactly is it that makes these high achievers more successful than their other teammates? Mental toughness, otherwise known as grit, “The perseverance and passion to achieve long-term goals” (Quast, 2017).

Researcher Angela Duckworth has spent years studying what exactly makes high achievers as successful as they are. She found that it was not test scores or IQ scores; in fact, “It was this combination of passion and perseverance that made high achievers special,” Duckworth said (Quast, 2017). Her research was able to demonstrate that talent and intelligence did not determine who was the most successful, actually an individual’s effort was the biggest determiner in success.

The Power of Passion

To better understand grit, let's look at the first component: passion and understanding your sense of purpose. This is when the individual really sticks to their mission despite how difficult the journey may become. The journey to the destination is just as important as the final result.

The Ability to Persevere

Individuals that are resilient and hardworking persevere, despite the difficult circumstances they face and even life's failures. To really persevere, the focus needs to be placed on a constant motivation and an internal drive to improve oneself (Quast, 2017).

So how can you develop more grit?

1. Give grit a definition that is true to your individual needs.

This might mean going to the gym every day for one month or writing a distant friend a note or e-mail on the weekends. Make a decision and be clear in what your goals are and strive to diligently meet these goals.

2. Develop grit through small accomplishments.

Mental toughness truly is a muscle; so therefore, this muscle needs to be worked. Push yourself to try harder, try the "Five More" rule, when you want to quit something, try reading five more pages, five more minutes, or even five more exercises.

3. Build good and strong habits, instead of depending on motivation.

Instead of looking for inspiration or motivation, grit can be found in building daily habits that allow you to focus on your schedule despite what distractions and challenges you may face. Consistency is key and will allow you to prevail. “Grit” comes down to your habits. It’s about doing the things you know you’re supposed to do on a more consistent basis. It’s about your dedication to daily practice and your ability to stick to a schedule” (Clear, 2020).

In conclusion, grit is all about effort through the power of passion and perseverance. Remembering that understanding your goals, accomplishing small successes, and building daily habits, will allow you to develop a mental toughness that can help you to excel despite what adversity you might face.

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