



GRIT

“The definition of entrepreneur that I love is ‘do whatever it takes to make it work.’” —Jack Dorsey

WHAT IS IT?

Grit is the strength of character that allows someone to persist through tough challenges. Angela Duckworth, the University of Pennsylvania psychology professor who won a MacArthur Genius Grant for her work on grit, describes it as the mix of passion and perseverance that ultimately leads to success. And, unlike innate ability, grit is something that we can improve upon by staying in touch with our purpose and instituting routines that bring us closer to our goals.

WHY TEACH IT?

In the same way that an aspiring orchestral musician is willing to hear 20 “no’s” to get to one “yes,” an entrepreneur has to fight many naysayers to bring his or her idea to life. This process can feel a lot like swimming upstream. In this exercise, we evaluate our relationship with the two key components of grit, purpose and routine.

LESSON PLAN: “P.A.R.” (Duration: 30 minutes)

BACKGROUND: People with grit know their purpose and are willing to do what it takes to achieve their goals. By aligning your routines with your purpose, you’ll find that practicing grit becomes part of your daily life.

MATERIALS:

- Your calendar (Google calendar, physical planner, whatever you use for scheduling)
- Paper
- Pen/pencil

INSTRUCTIONS:

Part 1: Purpose

- Spend 5-10 minutes free-writing about your goals. What are your professional goals (musical or otherwise)? If you could spend the next five years on any project, what would it be? What about the next twenty? What would you do with your time if money were taken out of the equation?
- Read what you wrote. Distill these ideas into one short statement of purpose. It doesn’t have to be perfect, and you can always do this exercise again with another goal in mind!

Part 2: Alignment

- With your purpose in mind, go through the last 30 days in your calendar. How much time did you spend working towards your goal? Tally the hours each day. What distracted you the most? Take note of these activities as well.
Note: If you don’t use a calendar, you may find it helpful to go back through old emails and texts to jog your memory.

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Part 3: Routine

- If you're like most people, going through your calendar revealed some habits or distractions you weren't aware of. Perhaps you realized you take on a lot of side projects that aren't directly related to what you want to be doing. Or maybe you simply find it challenging to make time in your busy day to work towards a longer-term goal. That's okay! Awareness is the first step towards progress and change.
- With this increased awareness of how you spend your time, create ONE new routine for yourself to try for 30 days. It can be anything, big or small, as long as it helps you towards your long-term goals.
- After 30 days, evaluate. If you feel that the new routine isn't working for you or doesn't really help you towards the goal, you may choose to revise or remove it from your schedule. Don't give up on it before the 30 days are over!
- Recommended: Create an incentive system to help you stick to your routine. You could share the goal with a friend who will keep you accountable, or create a financial reward using a website like stickk.com.

APPLICATION

This exercise gave you a chance to evaluate how you can better align your daily routines with your long-term goals. A cellist friend of mine who recently completed this exercise found an extra 2-3 hours in his day by saying no to all but a few new gigs and projects. He's been using this extra time to read music with more local musicians with the goal of starting a successful chamber orchestra in his area.

Goals change, as do people, and new routines have a way of creeping into your life without your noticing. I recommend doing this exercise a few times a year to make sure you're staying on track with your goals and making the best use of your time!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

[Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance](#)

[A Navy SEAL Explains 8 Secrets to Grit and Resilience](#)

[HBR: What Having a "Growth Mindset" Actually Means](#)