



Grit for Gains



If you haven't seen Angela

Lee Duckworth's Ted Talk on grit, now is a good time to pull it up. In it, she explains how her study of human performance across multiple industries found

one characteristic to be a significant predictor of success: grit. "Grit is sticking with your future, not just for the week, not just for the month but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality," Duckworth says. "Grit is living life like it's a marathon, not a sprint."

While that sounds good, in reality it's counterintuitive to our culture, which has been built on instant gratification, the demand for solutions, and the need to be in control and be able to predict circumstance—particularly in today's trying times. As humans, we have created a mindset that doesn't want to wait for answers, doesn't like to put in long-term hard work to grow, and doesn't want to devote any energy to something that might not produce good results. We want to know up front

that something is going to be worth it. And while we have become a culture that likes to listen to motivational videos, read inspiring books, and hear stories of resilience to feel like we are participating in that lifestyle, unfortunately we are too often on the sidelines watching.

That's what's so difficult about grit: we inherently know that if we work at something, it will eventually work out. But finding that discipline and resilience is a struggle, and the constant distraction of our lives makes it even harder. There are ways, however, to flex the grit muscle when we are most likely to abandon it. First, we must get in a mindset of evolving. With the constant drumbeat of change in our lives, evolving has become a mandatory way of living. What that means is that we have to change with the changes—adapt, grow, and pivot our thinking and our actions to keep pace with the times.

Part of pivoting is letting go of the need for immediate big wins. This is particularly important during the pandemic, when small wins can help us see progress in a very uncertain time. These

small wins can help you stay focused on the bigger picture and serve as a good reminder that you will receive unexpected gifts throughout your journey in the form of wins, kindness, luck, and moments of joy. Soak in every minute, as it will fuel you for the next mountain you have to climb and make the rejections and setbacks easier to handle.

We also must get comfortable with failing. If you're taking risks and pushing yourself to grow, you're going to fail sometimes. When you fail, it doesn't mean you are a failure; it just means whatever you did didn't work, so you need to adjust. Part of adjusting is being able to analyze mistakes and pay attention to what is working and what is not, and to shift accordingly. Don't hide from what is going wrong; dig deep into your struggles so you can understand them and correct your

We have to rewire our brains to recognize that discomfort means we need to grow and lean in, not avoid and ignore.

course. Naturally, this is incredibly hard because our struggles are driven by fear, and sometimes we hide from these fears so successfully that we can't even identify

that they exist. But uncovering them and working through them is critical—because at the end of the day, grit is really about getting comfortable with discomfort. We have to rewire our brains to recognize that discomfort means we need to grow and lean in, not avoid and ignore.

Think of grit as the bridge between your present and your future, which is of your own making. As Steve Jobs once said in a commencement address, "Have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become." So go after the work you were meant to do—and draw on your grit to get there. ▀

Bentley is an executive coach and the founder of Liz Bentley Associates. She is a regular guest on several national news and business shows.