

# Free the case for gritty, growing students essay sample

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The questions of learning and intelligence have long been debated since education has ever existed. That learning leads directly to intelligence is an assumption which has not been subject to adequate scrutiny. Typically, an "intelligent" student is one who invests less of almost about everything to not only succeed but also to achieve outstanding results. That is, by studying less an intelligent student is expected to know about study subjects enough, which requires least effort possible of her. Talent, moreover, has long been praised as an exceptional gift which one is helpless to develop, let alone initiate. To help address answer why students should be gritty and adopt a growth mindset, a deeper understanding is required to answer questions of intelligence, talent and independent effort.

The ideas about learning, intelligence and talent are challenged by prominent psychologists and education scholars Angela Lee Duckworth, Assistant Professor of Psychology at University of Pennsylvania and Carol S. Dweck, Lewis and Virginia Eaton Professor of Psychology at Stanford University. Both debunk popular myths about concepts of learning, intelligence and talent. Notably, both focus on effort and growth as critical components in learning and success not only at school but at life as well. More specifically, Duckworth emphasizes "grit" which according to her is "passion and perseverance for very long term goals" (and more, shortly) ("The key to success? Grit"). Meanwhile, Dweck compares growth and fixed mindsets: "Those [students] with a growth mindset were much more interested in learning than in just looking smart in school." This presentation aims, hence, to develop an argument supporting independent, growth-oriented mindset for lifelong learning.

The conventional educational system rewards excellence in examinations and higher IQs. This is an underlying assumption which is currently under further scrutiny given increasing number of success stories which do not conform to official, standard narratives. Indeed, one can find numerous examples of persons showing entrepreneurship, perseverance and grit based not on strict conformity to standard norms of academic achievement but on more innovative means. In her presentation, Duckworth starts out by questioning basic assumptions of current educational system (" The key to success? Grit"). Over her career in New York public schools, Duckworth finds out IQ is one main criterion students are judged for performance. However, what she believes is better is " what we need in education is a much better understanding of students and learning from a motivational perspective, from a psychological perspective" (" The key to success? Grit").

Grit is passion and perseverance for very long term goals. Grit is having stamina. Grot is sticking with your future, day in and day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years and working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it is a marathon, not a sprint (" The key to success? Grit").

Indeed, grit is about growth, not being limited by a handful of criteria, which barely measure actual, multiple intelligences a learner has. Thus, in pursuing one's learning goals one needs to grow as well. If anything, learning process is lifelong and dynamic. This is an observation which Duckworth's later research on Chicago public school students has confirmed for grit as a critical characteristic for learning and success compared to different variables as family income, standardized achievement test scores and

safety. Put differently, grit is centered on a growth mindset which, according to Duckworth, is "the belief that the ability to learn is not fixed, that it can change with your effort" ("The key to success? Grit").

Picking up growth mindset, one can expand further on how reorienting one's learning habits should lead to deeper knowledge and, ultimately, success.

As noted, Dweck emphasizes passion for learning as opposed to looking smart for students of growth mindset. Indeed, as opposed to conventional understanding of intelligence as requiring less effort, learners of growth mentality hold a different view of learning and effort: "Those with a growth mindset had a very straightforward (and correct) idea of effort — the idea that the harder you work, the more your ability will grow and that even geniuses have had to work hard for their accomplishments" (Dweck).

Still, effort is usually accompanied by praise. Typically, learners embrace praise with joy but also with much more reluctance to invest more effort in present or future learning endeavors. This is a pattern which emphasizes underlying assumptions about learning and intelligence. Indeed, learners who are perceived as intelligent are more likely to stop seeking further development, if not learning altogether. Unsurprisingly, if a learner's goal is not to learn but to appear smart having being praised as such would make pursuing further learning a redundant process to prove what, to such learner, is inherently there. In Dweck's own words: "Intelligence praise, compared to effort (or "process") praise, put children into a fixed mindset."

The case for grit and growth in learning cannot, in fact, be overemphasized. In pursuing learning for academic or professional purposes, learners cannot but adjust learning habits as to offset current educational system's gaps and

narrow focus on IQ and standardized exams. This can be achieved by a broad range of adjustments means. For example, in pursuing an educational goal of mastering research skills paper's author has devised a step-by-step plan over a six-month period. In a fashion dissimilar to conventional research skill advancement approach – mainly seeking help from university's Writing Center – paper's author has, first, identified a set of resources for information gathering including, university's library, open-invitation speaking events, multimedia-enhanced webinars, eclectic MOOCs and, not least personal observation. This step has been followed by information gathering strategies which paper's author has sought in academic advisers, peers, recognized research method resources and recommended online platforms. One next practical step has been a brainstorming session on selected area of interest. The next practical step has been note-taking and summarizing skills. Later steps included synthesizing gathered information into an academic format, verifying analysis, instructor's approval and final presentation. To relate personal experience to grit and growth, paper's author has gradually overcome an academic problem by setting up a customized learning process. Indeed, by eschewing not academic proper requirements but customary steps in pursuing a line of research, paper's author has come to show perseverance in achieving a collective goal by personal means. Further, by setting an unconventional plan for learning paper's author has grown her knowledge by seeking to learn how (i. e. experiencing a process and hence accumulating knowledge) to do research rather than to why (i. e. getting higher grades and hence intelligent).

## **Works Cited**

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"The key to success? Grit." TED. TED, 23 May 2013. Web. 15 July 2015.