



GU101 Student Success

Week 2 Lecture

“Grit”

Years ago, when I started my college experience, I attended new student orientation. The speaker said that she could promise me one thing – there would be a day that I would want to quit.

That was not what I was ready to hear. There I was, ready to embark on a journey to earn my degree, and before I even got started, I was being told that I would want to quit. Was she serious??? I couldn't believe it. I have to admit, I was angry that the speaker would say such a thing. In my mind, she was supposed to be making me feel welcome and excited instead of telling me that I would be at the end of my rope. I wasn't a quitter! After all, I was investing my time, my talent, my money, and I was sacrificing other things so that I could earn a degree. Quit??? Never!

And then, after a few terms of balancing two jobs, three children, the ongoing needs of my aging parents, and my schoolwork, I *did* want to quit. Her words came flying back to me. It was 10:30 at night when I was finally able to start my homework, and I had to work the next day. I wanted to crawl into bed. I didn't want to post again. I didn't want to write another paper. I was worn out. As I reached inside my bag to get my binder, a sheet of paper fell out. I picked it up off the kitchen floor. It was my goal sheet from that new student orientation class. I spent a moment reading my goals and what I wanted my job title to be when I graduated.

At that moment, I made up my mind: I turned on the computer and kept my eyes on the prize. Today, my diploma hangs on my wall, and I have the career I wanted.

What is it that keeps you going when you want to give up? This is our core question for the week. To find an answer, we are going to tap into the work of Angela Duckworth, a psychologist who has studied grit. Yes, grit.

What exactly is grit? Duckworth and her colleagues defined grit in their scholarly article published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (2007), p. 1187-8:

We define grit as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress. The gritty individual approaches achievement as a marathon; his or her advantage is stamina. Whereas disappointment or boredom signals to others that it is time to change trajectory and cut losses, the gritty individual stays the course

Earning your degree is a long term goal. There will be “failure, adversity and plateaus”. Do you have stamina – can you stay the course? How do you plan to get through those challenges? Do you have a support system? What are your plans for sticking with your pursuit of your degree?

Did you watch this week’s video? In this video, Duckworth describes how she started to research the concept of grit. She also mentions Dr. Carol Dweck’s concept of a “growth mindset” which feeds into the concept of grit. (There is a video with Dr. Dweck for you to watch this week, as well).

In her book, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, Dr. Carol Dweck described a growth mindset as a viewpoint that all people (even though she referred to children) can learn, given the proper feedback and putting forth the appropriate effort. The opposite of a growth mindset is the fixed mindset, which is the viewpoint that people believe intelligence is a fixed quantity, and that if someone is “born dumb” they will not ever be able to become smart or learn like other people who were “born smart.”

Part of our job at Grantham University is to help you adopt a growth mindset, and to see that regardless of your current viewpoint (i.e. “Some people are just smarter than I am; I’ll never learn math!”) you can change the way you think about yourself, and thus change the outcome of your effort. Let’s put it this way: WE have a growth mindset about YOU! We believe in your ability to learn, to grow, to change, to meet your goals, and to overcome the obstacles that will surely come along.

Part of successfully navigating challenge is to prepare for it before it happens. One way of doing that is knowing what resources can help you navigate a challenge. For example, do you know the name of your advisor, and how to contact him or her? Do you know how to get some tutoring? Do you know your instructor’s office hours? Knowing how to access your resources BEFORE you need them helps you during a crisis situation. It’s kind of the same reasoning behind fire drills in elementary school – when you practice beforehand, you are more likely to be successful when the crisis comes.

Another way of successfully navigating challenges is to prevent some events from ever happening. For example, do you know Grantham University’s attendance policy? Do you know that you can be withdrawn if you do not participate for a certain amount of days? This is why we are asking you to tour the catalog and watch the videos that our student advisors and faculty have made for you.

By attending your courses and making the most of them, you are investing in yourself. Although you only have to respond to two of your classmates in threaded discussions (posts), make sure you read what other students have posted. Get as much information as you can!

One more way of helping yourself is by knowing the best ways to study so that you can demonstrate mastery of what you learned. One of the things that can surprise a college

student is that the study strategies that used to work in high school or in a face-to-face university classes are not as successful when taking an online course. Here are some tips to help you study and learn in an online environment.

1. Read the textbook!
2. Watch the videos.
3. Take notes. You can even highlight information in your textbook. Online textbooks allow you to copy and paste definitions, main ideas, and other things you may want to keep.
4. Link your learning to your real life experiences. How does the information in class relate to your current job, family, or community organization?
5. Determine why the information is important. Figure out your reason to learn it.
6. Find out more. When a topic is presented, you do not have to stop learning about it when the textbook stops mentioning it. Google the topic. Find a way to apply it.
7. Use the tutoring center. The tutoring center can help you with your papers. APA style is something most students get better at over time and with practice. The tutoring center can support your learning in multiple areas, including APA.
8. "Ask the Instructor." In the discussion forum area, in every course, there is a forum called "Ask the Instructor: Asynchronous Office Hours." Make use of that feature, and check it often to see what other students are asking. You might have the same questions.
9. Do a little bit each day rather than trying to cram 10 hours in one day. Your brain will retain the information better.

This week we have taken a look at grit, determined how gritty you are, and have given you some resources and tips for success. Develop your passion and perseverance!

References

- Duckworth, A.L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M.D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: Perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1087-1101.
- Dweck, C.S. (2016). *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books.