

# Forest Charter School

## OCTOBER CHARACTER TRAIT OF THE MONTH:

### Perseverance or Grit

"Grit" is a term which has been showing up in a lot lately. It is defined by [Angela Lee Duckworth](#) (2013) as "perseverance and passion for long-term goals." Duckworth found that grit may be as important as or more so than IQ in determining children's school success rates. Grit is actually a better indicator of graduation rate predictions than IQ. Grit and perseverance are what keeps us trying to meet long-term goals. Grit is the extra ingredient which helps us reach our goals. It means being able to re-start after experiencing failure. Similar in many ways to resilience, grit is what helps us to try again after not achieving a goal and staying motivated. The concept of grit has implications for how we encourage our children. Can you remember a time yourself when you tried repeatedly to reach a goal and eventually got it, but it was only after failing multiple times? Often those victories mean more than the ones quickly and easily achieved.

### ***TIPS ON TEACHING KIDS NOT TO GIVE UP***

- **Remember the "power of yet" or self-talk.** For example, rather than saying, "I do not understand the Pythagorean and theorem," you can say, "I don't understand that Pythagorean and theorem, yet."
- **Teach grittiness by example.** Try new things and let your child see you struggle and yet keep going. Share age-appropriate stories of when you didn't reach your goal the first time but tried again, maybe even multiple times. Talk about how you set small goals to help you reach a bigger goal and the importance of being resilient.
- **Provide challenging kid activities not easily achieved.** Everything your child tries shouldn't be easy. At the same time, help your child find reasonable challenges, not those which are so outside of her realm of possibility that there is no way she will be successful.
- **Remember that it is OK for your child to get frustrated sometimes.** We tend to want to shield our children from frustration and that may not be helping them. Similarly, remind children it's ok to fail—you get to try again. They may not be great at everything the first time, but it is sticking with something that is important.
- **Offer praise and encouragement for your child's strong effort.** We tend to praise our children for being smart, but also remember to offer encouragement for completing goals, for not giving up, and for being determined. For example, instead of saying, "Great grade that. You are so smart," try "I noticed how you kept on studying for your even though the material was hard."
- **At the same time, recognize that there are times when it is OK to quit.** Be it a sport or after-school activity that your child expressed interest in, sometimes trying multiple times may be more important than actually reaching the goal.

It can be hard for us as parents to see our children struggle, but remember that children learn from the struggle. Ensure that the challenge isn't too big, and offer support and encouragement along the way.

### **Activities to help Kids build Grit**

#### **1. Follow the "Hard Thing Rule"**

The "Hard Thing Rule" combines passion (because you choose what to pursue) and perseverance (because you promise to stick with it), and your child will experience success or improvement with something challenging. This will build their confidence and teach them the benefits of grit. Angela Duckworth teaches grit to her own two daughters using the "Hard Thing Rule." Duckworth's rule has three parts here is a short video on it: <https://globalleadership.org/videos/leading-yourself/the-hard-thing-rule> )

- Each member of the family chooses to do something hard, "something that requires practice, something where you're going to get feedback telling you how you can get better, and you're going to get right back in there and try again and again."
- You promise to finish what you start and not quit in the middle. For example, Duckworth requires her kids to finish a season, a set of lessons that were signed up for, etc.
- Make the hard thing something you really want to do. The "hard thing" can be an instrument, a sport, a subject or area of interest, an activity, and so on.

## 2. Help Your Student Find Purpose

You can help your child develop grit (both passion and perseverance) by discussing their goals and purpose in life and the steps required to reach their goals. Make a dream board which is a powerful visualization tool to help kids imagine and define goals. On a sheet of poster board, your child cuts and pastes images or text that reflect their passions, hopes, and goals. Here's a great resource <https://www.kiddiematters.com/teaching-children-how-to-set-goals-and-use-a-vision-board/> Visualizing what they want to achieve will help your child develop a positive mental attitude and focus on their passion and purpose. For high schoolers, Road Trip Nation is a great resource to explore careers and the future. <https://roadtripnation.com/>

## 3. Have your Student Conduct “Grit Interviews”

Children learn pessimism or optimism from the adults in their lives, so providing opportunities for your child to learn from positive resilient adults is key. Your child can interview you, grandparents, neighbors, or other acquaintances who have worked hard toward a long-term goal. As your child hears stories about grit from people they admire (including you), they'll want to mirror these values in their own life. It's a great writing exercise, too.

## 4. Share Stories of Resilient Famous People

Your child can also learn from stories about famous people who used passion and perseverance to reach long-term goals, often with failures or setbacks along the way. Stories like Michael Jordan not making his Varsity team, or J.K. Rowling's manuscript for Harry Potter being rejected almost a dozen times, will show your child perseverance through failure can lead to great success. If any of these famous people had given up when they experienced failure, they would never have achieved their fame and success. “Luck” is an illusion; success is about hard work and persistence toward something you're passionate about. Check out the League of Extraordinary Losers at

<https://choices.scholastic.com/issues/2016-17/020117/the-league-of-extraordinary-losers.html>

## 5. Teach About Grit Through Literature

Similarly, you can help your child learn about grit by reading relevant books, poems, or short stories. For instance, read stories of perseverance such as “The Little Engine That Could” or Chelsea Clinton's “She Persisted Around the World: 13 Women Who Changed History”. For older students books like The Hunger Games Trilogy by Suzanne Collins, Night Flying Woman: An Ojibway Narrative (Native Voices) by Ignatia Broker, Out of My Mind by Sharon M. Draper and Hatchet by Gary Paulsen. As you talk about these stories, you can also help your child form connections to their own life. Talk about their challenges, their response to failures, and how to live their own life with grit.

## HOW TO FAIL UP!

*Disappointed in your final grade? Bummed about your performance? Try this!*

### 1. SIT WITH YOUR FEELINGS.

*It's OK to be mad, hurt, embarrassed, angry; it's pretty unrealistic to try to instantly move on. But when you're ready...*

### 2. REFLECT.

*Ask yourself why you didn't get the outcome you wanted. Think of the factors (like studying or practicing) that could possibly be under your control next time.*

### 3. SET A GOAL.

*Do you want to practice more? Ask for help next time? Shift gears to a new sport or hobby? Take a different class? Come up with a plan!*

### 4. ACT.

*Get going on your new goal. And if you don't reach it? Start this process again, knowing that you are learning from it—and building up grit!*