



Grit...Your Personality Trait to Achieve Greatness

By: F. Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA, TRA

Beyond Insurance has fielded hundreds of calls from insurance agency leaders, producers, and account managers who are dealing with adversity in the midst of COVID-19. In almost all these interactions, the person is in search of a magic bullet to transform their pain into growth opportunities. They are looking for tools and tactics to improve performance on issues ranging from pandemic recovery planning to prospect pipeline development to best practices for a remote workforce to strategies dealing with a hardening market. While each issue is valid and important, it is the opinion of Beyond Insurance that the number one indicator of success in uncertain times is grit!

So, what is grit and why is it so important?

Grit is a personality trait possessed by individuals who demonstrate passion and perseverance toward a goal despite being confronted by significant obstacles, failures, adversities, distractions, and plateaus in progress. Grit is a diligent spirit...a nagging conviction that keeps you pressing on when it would be easier to give up. In a society that has become accustomed to instant gratification, possessing grit is not an easy task. Why? Delayed gratification while working on an issue or task is hard work and not the norm.

In the book, *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*, Angela Duckworth evidences research that grit is what separates those who are successful and those who fail. The daughter of chemist and research fellow at Dupont, she was often told that she lacked "genius." As a researcher in psychology, Duckworth's work showed that grit is a much more reliable indicator of success than intelligence. Consider the following:

- New cadets at West Point endure an intense 7-week boot camp called Beast Barracks. Grit - not SAT score, high school rank, and physical fitness -- predicted completion.
- Children with grit went further in the Scripps spelling bee, likely because they studied more hours and competed in more spelling bees, than those who had higher intelligence.
- More than any other personality trait, salespeople with grit showed a 40% greater workplace retention rate at the end of six months.

In each of these studies, grit had little relationship to IQ.

Passion + Perseverance = Achievement

Instead of talent, Duckworth sees the combination of passion and perseverance as the key ingredients for grit. Passion is a strong or intense feeling or emotion. Passion is loving what you do. It also represents the long-term adherence to a goal. Perseverance means overcoming setbacks, hard work, and finishing things, rather than giving up. It is the persistent determination to adhere to a plan of action. The key to perseverance is to make sure that your goal is a worthy one. What is the outcome of passion and perseverance? Achievement...goal actualization!

Grit requires you to explore your inner self including looking at dark places that may create discomfort. It requires courage as you confront your fear of failure. The grittiest people are not afraid to fail, but rather embrace it as part of the growing process. They understand that vulnerability and perseverance are requisites for high achievement. Teddy Roosevelt spoke to the importance of overcoming fear and managing vulnerability in an address he made in 1907 at the Sorbonne in Paris.

"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly."

The Grit Scale

You may have an interest in completing The Grit Scale - a 12-statement survey created by Angela Duckworth that gives you a score that reflects how passionate and persevering you see yourself.

	Very Much Like Me	Mostly Like Me	Somewhat Like Me	Not Much Like Me	Not Like Me at All
1. I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.					
2. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.					
3. My interests change from year to year.					
4. Setbacks don't discourage me.					
5. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time, but later lose interest.					
6. I am a hard worker.					
7. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.					
8. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.					
9. I finish whatever I begin.					
10. I have achieved a goal that took years of hard work.					
11. I become interested in new pursuits every few months.					
12. I am diligent.					

Scoring System:

For questions 1, 4, 6, 9, 10 and 12 assign the following points:

- 5 = Very much like me.
- 4 = Mostly like me
- 3 = Somewhat like me
- 2 = Not much like me
- 1 = Not like me at all

For questions 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 11 assign the following points:

- 1 = Very much like me
- 2 = Mostly like me
- 3 = Somewhat like me
- 4 = Not much like me
- 5 = Not like me at all

Add up the points and divide by 12. The maximum score is 5 (extremely gritty) and the lowest score on this scale is 1 (not at all gritty).

Anxiety and Trauma

Whether it be COVID-19 or other issues that are causing anxiety in your life, grit is the best solution for posttraumatic growth. Consider the following elements:

- Education: Discover how your mind, body and spirit react to trauma.
- Regulation: Learn coping mechanisms such as breathing, exercise and meditation.
- Disclosure: Openly talk to others about what has happened. Put your fears and concerns out there.
- Future You: Having grown from the trauma, create and tell a story about how you will live the rest of your life.
- Service: Communicate how you will use your story and experience to support and serve others.

Self-regulation is most important as it involves controlling your behavior, emotions, and thoughts. Managing disruptive emotions and impulses is an important element in dealing with anxiety and trauma. You may wish to consider setting up a close network of three to five friends and mentors who are principled and supportive to hold you accountable. Where possible, adhere to usual routines. Creating structure and consistency in your life decreases anxiety and stress. It is also important to exercise as physical activity has a positive impact on mood.

How to Develop a Grittier You?

Grit is a skill that can be learned and practiced over time. If you have a desire to develop a grittier you, I suggest the following five steps:

- **Step 1 - Growth Mindset.** A mindset is a set of assumptions, methods, beliefs, and attitudes you hold that frames your approach to life. A growth mindset is so powerful that it orients the way you think, act, feel, and handle situations.
- **Step 2 - Courage.** You must embrace the challenge confronted by obstacles, failures, adversities, distractions, and plateaus in progress. Your ability to manage fear of failure is imperative and a predictor of future success. It is important to note that supremely gritty people are not afraid to fail. Rather, they embrace failure as part of the growing process.
- **Step 3 - Long-Term Goals.** Your ability to create visions and set goals is an essential component in becoming a grittier you. Goal-setting is a powerful process of becoming clear about your ideal future, designing an action plan to get you there, launching into action, and persisting until you reach your destination.
- **Step 4 - Conscientiousness.** In your quest to enhance your level of grittiness, the qualities of self-discipline, thoroughness, and vigilance are required. Conscientious people display strategic vision and are organized, thoughtful, and forward-thinking.
- **Step 5 - Resilience.** Resilience is that amazing skill that enables you to recover quickly from difficulties. With resilience at your side, you are at peace with humanity. Perhaps because your life experiences have helped you accept your own vulnerabilities. Confucius once said, "Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising every time we fall."

Grit...your personality trait to achieve greatness!

About the Author

Scott Addis, CPCU, CRA, CBWA is the CEO of Beyond Insurance and is recognized as an industry leader having been named a Philadelphia finalist for *Inc. Magazine's* "Entrepreneur of the Year" award as well as one of the "25 Most Innovative Agents in America." Beyond Insurance is a consulting firm that offers leadership training, cultural transformation, and talent and tactical development for enlightened professionals who are looking to take their practice to the next level. Since 2007, the proven and repeatable processes of Beyond Insurance have transformed individuals and organizations as measured by enhanced organic growth, productivity, profitability, and value in the marketplace.