

COUNSELING CORNER

Monthly School Newsletter from Lutheran Counseling Services

Car Conversations

In the car, classroom or dinner table, try some of these ideas to build this trait in yourself, your family or your class.



- Grit is a blend of passion and perseverance. Want to see how much grit your child has? Dr. Duckworth makes the Grit Scale for Children [available here](#). Interested in your grit score? Check out the [adult grit scale](#).
- As a family or class, look for a chrysalis in nature (or online) and discuss the perseverance needed to break out. Talk with kids of all ages about a task they persisted with despite frustration, mistakes, setbacks or obstacles.



Perseverance

Perseverance is demonstrated by continuing to perform responsibilities and pursue goals with vigor and tenacity despite frustration, mistakes, setbacks and other obstacles making the task difficult. While, by nature, this character trait is challenging to pursue, there are many benefits from practicing perseverance. And we can see several examples of perseverance when we look at the world around us.

Across many school campuses and backyards at this time you will find cocoons and chrysalises containing transformed caterpillars that are ready to emerge as butterflies. Many well meaning children and adults have tried to help by opening the cocoon to help the butterfly have an easier time getting out. Unfortunately, without the struggle of emerging from the cocoon, the butterfly's body and wings will not fully form, and the well-meaning "help" actually limits the butterfly's potential and the heights it can soar to.

How many times as parents or teachers do we have the same well-meaning actions towards the struggles our kids face? The truth is that it is hard to persevere and hard to watch others struggle through this process, especially our loved ones. Do we also limit our children's potential when we deprive them of the experience of perseverance?

Angela Duckworth, author of ***Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*** discusses the importance of this concept. She defines grit as the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals. Put simply, grit is a blend of passion and persistence.

Her book details how higher levels of grit are correlated to higher levels of life satisfaction, higher purpose, and more instances of flow, when you are so absorbed in a task that

- Watch this [video from PassItOn](#). While it talks about hard work, talk about how this is similar to perseverance. What obstacles and frustrations arose? How did they persist towards their goal? With preschoolers, build a wall together with blocks and notice the challenges. With older students, talk about what "bricks" they have to build up their ability to persevere toward a goal. Consider writing them on notecards to stack up as a visual reminder to persevere through difficulty.

- Play a growth mindset ball game by tossing a ball a set number of catches (ex: 10 in a row). With each catch, take one step back, creating more distance between players. With a missed catch, take two steps forward and make a growth mindset statement. When reaching the set goal, talk about how effort and persistence (despite more difficulty) impacted the game. Practice goal mindset statements in other areas of life as challenges arise.

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you lose a sense of time passing. As a former teacher, she noticed that the students who were successful were not always the most intellectually inclined, but those who persevered. But how did she boost this skill in her students (and how can you do so in your kids?)

For this she points to Carol Dweck's concept of a growth mindset, which is a belief that abilities can be developed and, well, grow. This is compared to a fixed mindset (belief that abilities are fixed and cannot change.) How we talk and think about experiences can influence our mindset, and similarly that of our children.

Strategies to boost a growth mindset include seeing challenges as opportunities. Replacing "fail" with "learn". Valuing the process over the end result. Supporting and connecting to your child's purpose and the big picture. Using the word "yet", such as in noting they have "not yet" mastered something. In what ways does your communication with your child (or yourself) promote the idea that abilities can continue to grow? How could you do so more often?

Consider ways to persevere in your perseverance to build this trait in yourself and kids around you!

References:

Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*. New York, NY, US: Scribner/Simon & Schuster. Available from: <https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-book/>

Dweck, C. S. (2006). *Mindset: The new psychology of success*. New York, NY, US: Random House.

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