



# Helping Kids Succeed: The Power of Grit

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Founded  
in 2009

“The Child Mind Institute dares to imagine a world where  
no child suffers from mental illness.”  
-Brooke Garber Neidich, Chair, Child Mind Institute

## Child Mind Institute

The **only independent nonprofit** organization  
exclusively dedicated to transforming mental health care  
for children everywhere.

To help children reach their full potential we must:

- Develop more effective treatments for childhood psychiatric and learning disorders.
- Empower children, families and teachers with the scientifically sound information they need.
- Build the science of healthy brain development.



*The Child Mind Institute does not accept funding from the pharmaceutical industry.*

## Goals

- A review of the psychological concept of grit
- Understanding of the school-based utility of the concept
- Clinical insights into the usefulness of a grit as a concept in intervention



## Outline

- Introduction: Grit in School
- Socioemotional Health and Learning Disorders
- The Concept of Grit
- The Evidence: Duckworth's Study
- Dweck's "Growth Mindset": Fostering Grit
- Grit and Psychiatric Disorders
- Lessons for Parents and Educators



## Risk Factors and Poor Outcomes

- Lack of Intervention or Insufficient Efforts
- Mystification or Inaccurate Labeling
  - “I don’t know why I can’t think on tests” “I’m stupid” “I’m lazy”
- Demoralization and Diminished Academic Interest



## Resilience Factors and Good Outcomes

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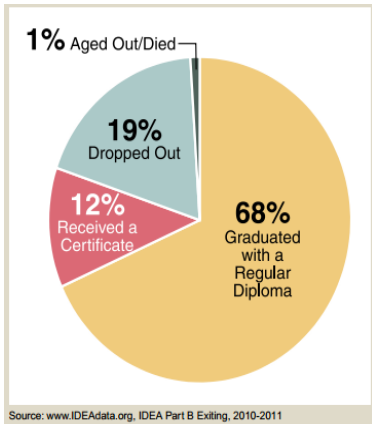
- Demystification
- High Frustration Tolerance
- Understanding the Purpose of Interventions
- A Supportive Environment
- Parental and School Supervision/Mentoring



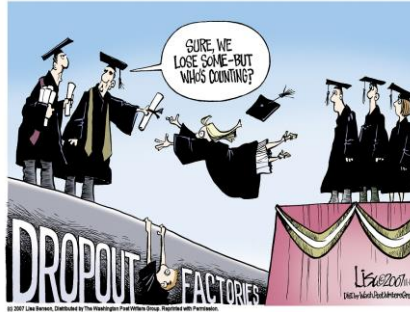
## SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL HEALTH IN LEARNING DISORDERS



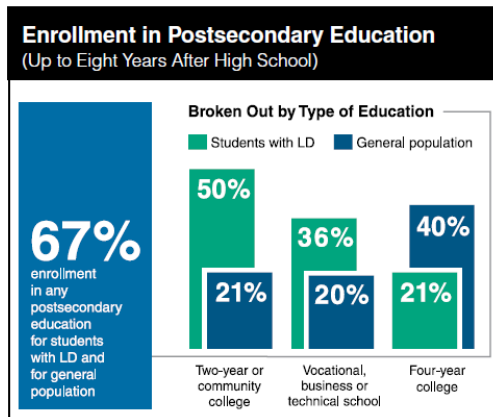
## SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL HEALTH IN READING DISORDERS



68% LD vs. 93% general population graduate from high school (Natl Center for LD)



## SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL HEALTH IN READING DISORDERS



Source: National Longitudinal Transition Study-2, 2011



## SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL HEALTH IN READING DISORDERS



Almost 50% of the prison population displays symptoms of dyslexia

(Bloody et al. 2000)



## SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL HEALTH IN READING DISORDERS

Individuals with learning disabilities are at 2 to 4 times greater risk of developing substance abuse problems than those within the general population

The National Association on Alcohol, Drug, Disability Inc., 2010



## SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIOEMOTIONAL HEALTH IN READING DISORDERS



- Children with reading disorders experience higher levels of
- Generalized anxiety,
  - Social anxiety...
  - And particularly depressed mood

Mammarella et al., (2014)

More than 35% of those with learning disabilities receive counseling therapy

Germann et al. (2010)



What factor(s) set those who  
succeed apart from the rest?

Why do some individuals accomplish  
more than others?



Creativity? Vigor? Emotional intelligence?  
Charisma? Self-confidence? Emotional  
stability? Physical attractiveness?



One personal quality is shared by the  
most prominent leaders in every field:

GRIT





# GRIT



Perseverance and passion for long-term goals

Working strenuously toward challenges

Maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress

Whereas disappointment or boredom signals to others that it is time to change trajectory and cut losses, the gritty individual stays the course

Deliberately set extremely long-term objectives and do not swerve from them, even in the absence of positive feedback



Duckworth et al., 2007

# GRIT

I persevere

I have achieved a goal that took years of work

I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge

I finish whatever I begin

Setbacks don't discourage me

I am a hard worker

I am diligent



Duckworth et al., 2007

# GRIT

Grit accounts for success outcomes above and beyond IQ

Grittier individuals attain higher levels of education

Older individuals have more grit than younger individuals

Grittier people make fewer career changes than less gritty peers

Grittier competitors in the Scripps National Spelling Bee outranked less gritty competitors of the same age



Duckworth et al., 2007

# GRIT AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

What does having grit mean for children with learning disorders?

- *Self-discipline* or ability to delay gratification has a bigger effect on academic performance than IQ Duckworth & Seligman, 2005
- *Academic diligence* or ability to direct attention and effort towards a tedious, important academic task over more entertaining, fun activities
  - More predictive than demographics, intelligence, and attitudes towards academic subjects
  - Predictive of outcomes:
    - GPA
    - standardized math/reading achievement tests
    - graduation from high school
    - full-time college enrollment



Galla et al., 2014

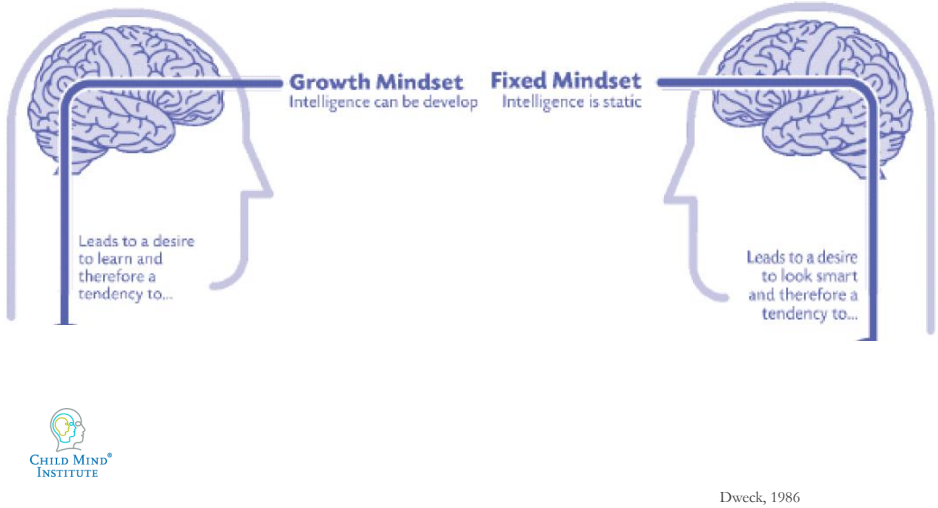
# FOSTERING GRIT



WHAT DISPOSES SOMEONE TO BE GRITTY?



## WHAT DISPOSES SOMEONE TO BE GRITTY?



## What Kind of Mindset Do You Have?

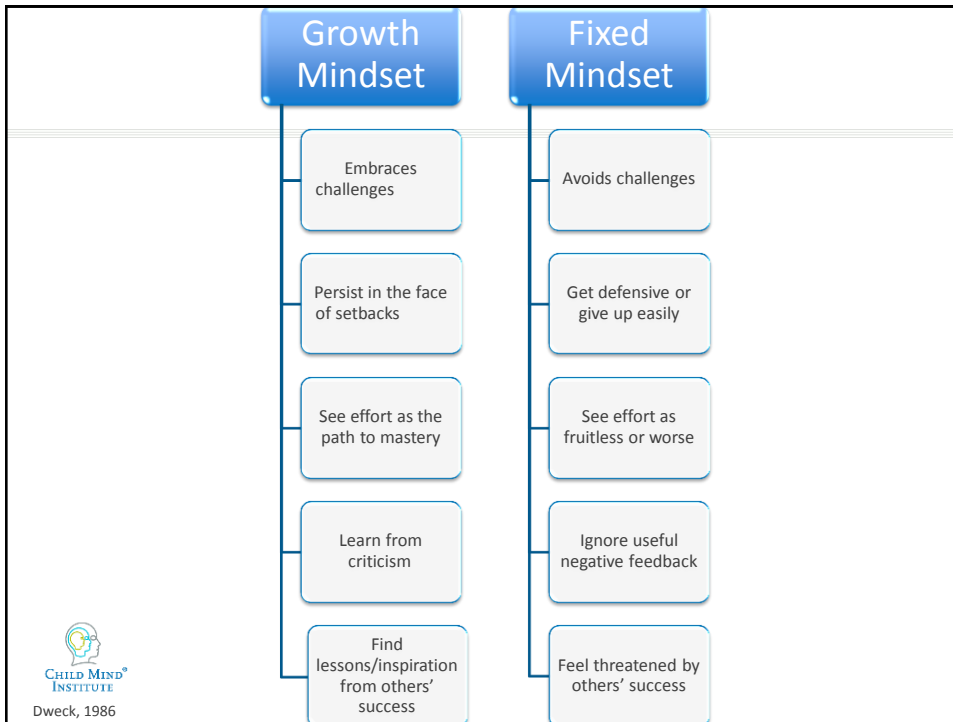


I can learn anything I want to.  
When I'm frustrated, I persevere.  
I want to challenge myself.  
When I fail, I learn.  
Tell me I try hard.  
If you succeed, I'm inspired.  
My effort and attitude determine everything.



I'm either good at it, or I'm not.  
When I'm frustrated, I give up.  
I don't like to be challenged.  
When I fail, I'm no good.  
Tell me I'm smart.  
If you succeed, I feel threatened.  
My abilities determine everything.

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## FOSTERING GRIT

- Start with yourself! Do you have a fixed or growth mindset?
  - Fixed mindset parents/teachers/professionals
    - Convey they value talent/intelligence above all
    - Spend less time with those who seem less talented
    - Less open to feedback
    - Results in students who are eager to impress with their talent/intelligence if possible
  - Growth mindset parents/teachers/professionals
    - Foster teamwork and team spirit
    - Emphasize value on passion, learning, and improvement
    - Results in students wanting to work together to improve



## FOSTERING GRIT

- PRAISE their efforts and strategies not their intelligence or talent
  - Emphasize the *process* they engaged in, the *way* they did something
  - Focus on the process of learning and improvement
  - Remove emphasis from natural talent
- What is praise?
  - A positive evaluation of behavior or products
    - Unlabeled praise: global, nonspecific
      - » Examples: Great! Nice job! Good boy! You're smart!
    - Labeled praise: specific and clear
      - » Tells child exactly what you like
      - » Improves relationship, increases self-esteem
      - » Increases chance that child will repeat desired behavior
      - » Examples: I'm so proud of you for finishing your worksheet!



*Excerpts, McNeil et al.*

## GRIT, MINDSET, AND PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS

- Parallels:
  - Fixed mindset in naturally talented typical child; always told “you’re so smart”
- AND:
  - Fixed mindset in child with learning disorder; always told “you’re so stupid”
- AND:
  - Fixed mindset in child with ADHD; always told “you’re so bad”



# FIXED MINDSET AND MENTAL ILLNESS

- Untreated mental illness can lead children to internalize the disorder
- Expectation is that nothing will change, trying isn't worth it
- Cultivating a growth mindset, and grit, can allow children to effectively engage in treatment and overcome disorders
- Tips:
  - Label praise
  - Acknowledge successes and failures
  - Applaud effort



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