

GRIT: THE POWER OF PASSION AND PERSEVERANCE

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What Grit Is and Why It Matters: Showing Up

- Combination of passion and perseverance = grit
- Measured by Grit Scale – Self-report on passion and perseverance
- Talent is not a guarantee of grit
- Adults who had earned an advanced college degree were grittier.
- Spelling bee: Winners studied more hours, competed in more spelling bees than losers. There was no relationship between verbal IQ and grit.
- Our potential is one thing; what we do with it is another.

Distracted by Talent

- I began to reflect on how smart even my weakest students sounded when they talked about things that genuinely interested them.
- 1869: Francis Galton, half cousin of Charles Darwin, found that high achievers were remarkable in three ways: they demonstrate unusual ability, combined with exceptional zeal and the capacity for hard labor.
- William James: the human individual lives usually far within his limits; he possesses powers of various sorts that he habitually fails to use. He energizes below his maximum, and he behaves below his optimum. (1907)
- Why do we assume that it is our talent, rather than our effort, that will decide where we end up in the very long run?
- Chia-Jung Tsay found that musical experts reliably endorse effortful training as more important than natural talent, but we admire “natural talent” more than hard work.
- What we say we care about may not correspond with what – deep down – we actually believe to be more valuable.
- The naturalness bias is a hidden prejudice against those who have achieved what they have because they worked for it, and a hidden preference for those whom we think arrived at their place in life because they are naturally talented.
- There is a vast amount of research on what happens when we believe a student is especially talented. We begin to lavish extra attention on them and hold them to higher expectations. We expect them to excel, and that expectation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- Enron had a company culture that encouraged short-term performance, but discouraged long-term learning and growth.
- By shining our spotlight on talent, we risk leaving everything else in the shadows. We inadvertently send the message that these other factors – including grit - do not matter as much as they really do.
- Tests of talent and grit are imperfect, but a focus on talent distracts us from something that is at least as important, and that is effort.

Effort Counts Twice

- With everything perfect, Nietzsche wrote, we do not ask how it came to be. Instead, we rejoice in the present fact as though it came out of the ground by magic.
- No one can see in the work of the artist how it has become, Nietzsche said. That is its advantage for wherever one can see the act of becoming one grows somewhat cool. We want

to believe that Mark Spitz was born to swim in a way that none of us were and that none of us could.

- Our vanity, our self-love promotes the cult of the genius, Nietzsche said. For if we think of genius as something magical, we are not obliged to compare ourselves and find ourselves lacking. To call someone divine means: here there is no need to compete.
- Great things are accomplished by those people whose thinking is active in one direction, who employ every thing as material, who always zealously observe their own inner life and that of others, who perceive everywhere models and incentives, who never tire of combining together the means available to them.
- Talent is how quickly your skills improve when you invest effort. Achievement is what happens when you take your acquired skills and use them. Of course, your opportunities, for example, having a great coach or teacher, matter tremendously, too, and maybe more than anything about the individual. My theory does not address these outside forces, nor does it include luck. It is about the psychology of achievement, but because psychology is not all that matters, it is incomplete.
- Talent – how fast we improve in skill absolutely matters. But effort factors into the calculations twice. Effort builds skill. At the very same time, effort makes skill productive.

How Gritty Are You?

- Talent x effort = skill. Skill x effort = achievement.
- Will Smith: If we get on the treadmill together, there is two things: You are getting off first, or I am going to die. It is really that simple.
- The treadmill Test at age twenty was a surprisingly reliable predictor of psychological adjustment throughout adulthood.
- I would add that skill is not the same thing as achievement, either. Without effort, your talent is nothing more than your unmet potential. Without effort, your skill is nothing more than what you could have done but did not. With effort, talent becomes skill, and at the very same time, effort makes skill productive.
- Grit is more about stamina than intensity.
- Grit Scale – Passion
 - 1) New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones
 - 2) I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.
 - 3) I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.
 - 4) My interest change from year to year.
 - 5) I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.
- Grit Scale - Perseverance
 - 1) Setbacks don't discourage me. I don't give up easily.
 - 2) I am a hard worker.
 - 3) I finish whatever I begin.
 - 4) I am diligent. I never give up
 - 5) I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.
- Perseverance scores more often top passion scores, indicating that they are not the same characteristics.
- Passion is not measured by its intensity, but by its consistency over time. An enthusiasm is common. Endurance is rare.
- Don't just look for your passion, help to create it.
- Passion is a compass, that thing that takes you some time to build tinker with and finally get right, and that then guides you on your long and winding road to where, ultimately, you want to be.

- Envision goals in a hierarchy. At the bottom of this hierarchy are our most concrete and specific goals – the tasks we have on our short-term to-do list. The low-level goals exist merely as means to ends. In contrast, the higher the goal in the hierarchy, the more abstract, general, and important it is. The higher the goal, the more it is an end in itself, and the less it is merely a means to an end.
- The top-level goal is not a means to any other end. It is, instead, an end in itself.
- What I mean by passion is not just that you have something you care about. What I mean is that you care about that same ultimate goal in an abiding, loyal, steady way.
- In very gritty people, most mid-level and low-level goals are, in some way or another, related to that ultimate goal. In contrast, a lack of grit can come from having less coherent goal structures.
- Gabriele Oettingen – positive fantasizing: Indulging in visions of a positive future without figuring out how to get there, chiefly by considering what obstacles stand in the way, has short-term payoffs but long-term costs. In the short-term, you feel pretty great about your aspiration to be a doctor. In the long-term, you live with the disappointment of not having achieved your goal.
- Even more common, is having a bunch of mid-level goals that do not correspond to any unifying, top-level goal. Or having a few competing goal hierarchies that are not in any way connected with each other.
- To some extent, goal conflict is a necessary feature of human existence.
- The idea that every waking moment in our lives should be guided by one top-level goal is an idealized extreme that may not be desirable even for the grittiest. One top-level professional goal, rather than any other number is ideal. The more unified, aligned, and coordinated our goal hierarchies, the better.
- Warren Buffett’s three-step process for prioritizing.
- Write down a list of twenty-five career goals
- Duckworth’s fourth step: Ask To what extent do these goals serve a common purpose?
- DO some soul-searching and circle the five highest priority goals.
- Take a good hard look at the twenty goals you did not circle. These you avoid at all costs. They are what distract you; they eat away time and energy, taking your eye from the goals that matter more.
- Any successful person has to decide what to do in part by deciding what not to do.
- Write the highest level goal in ink, and the lower-level goals in pencil so that they can be revised.
- Improvise, adapt, and overcome. If at first you do not succeed, try, try again. Use this strategy at lower levels of the hierarchy.
- Catherine Cox, 1026, persistence motive:
- Degree to which he works with distant objects in view (as opposed to living from hand to mouth). Active preparation for later life. Working toward a definite goal
- Tendency not to abandon tasks from mere changeability. Not seeking something fresh because of novelty. Not “looking for a change.”
- Degree of strength of will or perseverance. Quiet determination to stick to a course once decided upon.
- Tendency not to abandon tasks in the face of obstacles. Perseverance, tenacity, doggedness.
- Cox’s summary: High but not the highest intelligence combined with the greatest degree of persistence, will achieve greater eminence than the highest degree of intelligence with somewhat less persistence.

Grit Grows

- Traits like honesty and generosity and grit are genetically influenced and, in addition, influenced by experience. Ditto for IQ, extroversion, enjoying the great outdoors, having a sweet tooth, the likelihood that you'll end up a chain-smoker, your risk of getting skin cancer, and really any other trait you can think of. Nature matters, and so does nurture.
- A UK study estimated that the heritability of the perseverance subscale to be 37%, and the passion subscale to be 20%. These estimates are on par for heritability estimates for other personality traits, and in the simplest terms, this means that some of the variation in grit in the population can be attributed to genetic factors, and the rest can be attributed to experience.
- Almost all human traits are polygenic, meaning that traits are influenced by more than one gene. Height for example, is influenced by at least 697 different genes. In total, the human genome contains as many as twenty-five thousand different genes, and they tend to interact with one another and with environmental influence in complicated, still poorly understood ways.
- Grit, talent, and all other psychological traits relevant to success in life are influenced by genes and also by experience. Second, there is no single gene for grit, or indeed any other psychological trait.
- Gains in the Wechsler IQ Scale for children and adults have averaged a more than 15 point gain in the last 50 years, in more than 30 countries. Scores for abstract reasoning have climbed most sharply.
- Flynn called this virtuous cycle of skill improvement the social multiplier effect, and he used the same logic to explain generational changes in abstract reasoning. More and more, over the past century, our jobs and daily lives ask us to think analytically, logically. Either small environmental differences or genetic ones can trigger a virtuous cycle. Either way, the effects are multiplied socially, through culture, because each of us enriches the environment of all of us.
- It is possible, in a reverse "Flynn effect," that adults in their seventh decade of life are grittier because they grew up in a very different cultural era, perhaps one whose values and norms emphasized sustained passion and perseverance more than has been the case recently.
- Grit grows as we figure out our life philosophy, learn to dust ourselves off after rejection and disappointment, and learn to tell the difference between low-level goals that should be abandoned quickly and higher-level goals that demand more tenacity. The maturation story is that we develop the capacity for long-term passions and perseverance, as we get older.
- Most of us become more conscientious, confident, caring, and calm with life experience.
- We change when we need. Necessity is the mother of adaptation.
- Over time, we learn life lessons we do not forget, and we adapt in response to the growing demands of our circumstances. Eventually, new ways of thinking and acting become habitual.
- One story says that our grit changes as a function of the cultural era in which we grow up. The other story says that we get grittier as we get older. Both could be true, and I have a suspicion that both are, at least to an extent.
- Either way, this snapshot reveals that grit is not entirely fixed.
- First comes interest. Passion begins with intrinsically enjoying what you do.
- Next comes the capacity to practice. One form of perseverance is the daily discipline of trying to do things better than we did yesterday.
- Third is purpose. What ripens passion is the conviction that your work matters. For most people, interest without purpose is nearly impossible to sustain for a lifetime. For a few, a sense of purpose dawns early, but for many, the motivation to serve others heightens after the development of interest and years of disciplined practice.
- Finally is hope. Hope is a rising-to-the occasion kind of perseverance. It does not define the last stage of grit; it defines every stage. From the very beginning to the very end, it is

inestimably important to learn to keep going even when things are difficult, even when we have doubts.

- The four psychological assets of interest, practice, purpose, and hope are not you have it or you don't commodities. You can learn to discover, develop and deepen your interest. You can acquire the habit of discipline. You can cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning. And you can teach yourself to hope.

Growing Grit from the Inside Out: Interest

- Research shows that people are enormously more satisfied with their jobs when they do something that fits their personal interests.
- People perform better at work when what they do interests them.
- In 2014, Gallup found that more than two-thirds of adults said they were not engaged at work. Worldwide only 13% of adults call themselves “engaged” at work.
- Passion for your work is a little bit of discovery, followed by a lot of development, and then a lifetime of deepening.
- People only begin to gravitate toward certain vocational interests, and away from others around middle school.
- Interests are not discovered through introspection. Instead interests are triggered by interactions with the outside world. The process of interest discovery can be messy, serendipitous, and inefficient.
- What follows the initial discovery of an interest is a much lengthier and increasingly proactive period of interest development. Crucially, the initial triggering of a new interest must be followed by subsequent encounters that retrigger your attention again and again.
- Interests thrive when there is a crew of encouraging supporters, including parents, teachers, coaches, and peers.
- Before hard work comes play. Even the most accomplished of experts start out as unserious beginners.
- The best mentors at the early stage are especially warm and supportive: Perhaps the major quality of these teachers was that they made the initial learning very pleasant and rewarding. Much of the introduction to the field was as playful activity, and the learning at the beginning of this stage was much like a game.
- A degree of autonomy during the early years is also important. Longitudinal studies tracking learns confirm that overbearing parents and teachers erode intrinsic motivation. Kids whose parents let them make their own choices about they like are more likely to develop interests later identified as a passion.
- Experts and beginners have different motivational needs. At the start of an endeavor, we need encouragement and freedom to figure out what we enjoy. We need small wins; we need applause. Rush a beginner and you will bludgeon their budding interest. It is very, very hard to get that back once you do.
- Interest, the desire to learn new things, to explore the world, to seek novelty, to be on the lookout for change and variety is a basic drive.
- For the beginner, novelty is anything that has not been encountered before. For the expert, novelty is nuance.
- Questions to help discover passion: What do I like to think about? Where does my mind wander? What do I really care about? What matters most to me? How do I enjoy spending my time?

Practice

- Drive to excel is a positive state of mind, not a negative one. It is not looking backward with dissatisfaction. It is looking forward and wanting to row.

- The real crucial insight of Ericsson's research is not that experts log more hours of practice. Rather, it is that experts practice differently.
- Deliberate practice of experts:
 - Set a stretch goal, zeroing in on just one narrow aspect of the overall performance.
 - With undivided attention and great effort, experts strive to reach their stretch goal.
- The amount of time musicians devote to practicing alone is a much better predictor of how quickly they develop than time spent practicing with other musicians.
- Experts hungrily seek feedback on how they did. They are more interested in what they did wrong so they can fix it than what they did right.
- Experts practice until conscious incompetence becomes unconscious competence.
- One by one, subtle refinements add up to dazzling mastery.
- Deliberate practice predicted advancing to further rounds in final competition far better than any other kind of preparation.
- There are many learning benefits to being quizzed. Shining a light on what you think you know but actually have not yet mastered is one.
- If you judge practice by how much it improves your skill, deliberate practice has no rival. If you judge practice by what it feels like, you might come to a different conclusion. On average spellers rated deliberate practice as significantly more effortful, and significantly less enjoyable than anything else they did to prepare for competition.
- Even world-class performers at the peak of their careers can only handle a maximum of one hour of deliberate practice before needing a break, and in total, can only do about three to five hours of deliberate practice per day.
- World-class performers who retire tend not to keep up nearly the same deliberate practice schedule. If practice was intrinsically pleasurable, you would expect them to keep doing it.
- Skilled people can sometimes experience highly enjoyable states called flow during their performance. These states are, however, incompatible with deliberate practice. Deliberate practice requires working where challenges exceed skills, and flow is most commonly experienced when challenge and skill are in balance. Deliberate practice is exceptionally effortful, and flow is, by definition, effortless.
- Across diverse occupations, grittier adults reported experiencing more flow, not less. Flow and grit go hand in hand.
- Gritty people do more deliberate practice and experience more flow. Deliberate practice is a behavior, and flow is an experience. Deliberate practice is for preparation, and flow is for performance.
- The idea of years of challenge-exceeding-skill practice leading to moments of challenge-meeting-skill flow explains why elite performance can look so effortless: in a sense it is.
- Basic requirements of deliberate practice
 - A clearly defined stretch goal
 - Full concentration and effort
 - Immediate and informative feedback
 - Repetition with reflection and refinement
- Noa Kageyama, performance psychologist at Juilliard
- Students can change the way they think about practice and achievement. It responds to instruction.
- Deliberate practice needs to be a habit. When you have a habit of practicing at the same time and in the same place every day, you hardly have to think about getting started; you just do.
- Deliberate practice is self-awareness without judgment. It is about relieving yourself of the judgment that gets in the way of enjoying the challenge.
- Teachers need to model emotion-free mistake making

Purpose

- Interest is one source of passion. Purpose – the intention to contribute to the well being of others – is another. The mature passions of gritty people depend on both.
- Bloom: Self-oriented interest, learn self-disciplined practice, and finally integrate that work with an other-centered purpose.
- Purpose = the intention to contribute to the well being of others.
- Grittier people are dramatically more motivated than others to seek a meaningful, other-centered life.
- For most people, purpose is a tremendously powerful source of motivation.
- Three bricklayers: I am laying bricks. (Job) I am building a church. (Career) I am building the house of God. (Calling)
- Only a minority of workers consider their occupations a calling. Those who do are significantly grittier than those who feel that “job” or “career” more aptly describes their work.
- Adults who felt their work was a calling missed at least a third fewer days of work than those with a job or a career.
- Just about any occupation can be a job, career or calling.
- A calling is not some fully formed thing that you find. It is much more dynamic. Whatever you do, whether you are a janitor or the CEO, you can continually look at what you do and ask how it connects to other people, how it connects to the bigger picture, how it can be an expression of your deepest values.
- It is possible to grow from having a career to having a calling.
- Most people think self-oriented and other-oriented motivations are opposite ends of a continuum. Yet I have consistently found that they are completely independent. You can have neither, and you can have both. You can want to be a top dog and, at the same, time driven to help others.
- Young people who mentioned both self and other-oriented motives rated their schoolwork as more personally meaningful than classmates who had named either motive alone.
- Bill Damon: Study of Purpose
- Role model is needed; someone who demonstrates that it is possible to accomplish something on behalf of others.
- Seeing that someone needs our help is not enough. Purpose requires a second revelation: I personally can make a difference.
- You never know who will go on to do good or even great things or become the net great influencer in the world – so treat everyone like they are that person.
- David Yeager recommends reflecting on how the work you are already doing can make a positive contribution to society.
- Compared to a placebo control exercise, reflecting on purpose led students to double the amount of time they spent studying for an upcoming exam, work harder on tedious math problems when given the option to watch entertaining videos instead.
- Think about how, in small but meaningful ways, you can change your current work to enhance its connection to your core values.
- Imagine yourself fifteen years from now. What do you think will be most important to you then? Can you think of someone whose life inspires you to be a better person?

Hope

- The hope that gritty people have has nothing to do with luck and everything to do with getting up again.

- It is not suffering that leads to hopelessness. It is suffering you think you cannot control.
- Learned optimism
- Optimists habitually search for temporary and specific causes of their suffering, whereas pessimists assume permanent and pervasive causes are to blame.
- I tend to think that everything that happens is something I can learn from.
- There was a small but growing body of scientific evidence that happiness is not just the consequence of performing well at work, it might also be an important cause.
- Optimistic teachers are grittier and happier, and grit and happiness in turn explained why optimistic teachers got their students to achieve more during the school year.
- When you keep searching for ways to change your situation for the better, you stand a chance of finding them. When you stop searching, assuming they cannot be found, you guarantee they won't
- Dweck found that the children in success only programs gave up just as easily after encountering very difficult problems as they had before training. Children in the attribution retraining program tried harder after encountering difficulty. They had learned to interpret failure as a cue to try harder rather than as confirmation that they lacked the ability to succeed.
- Growth mindset and grit go together. Language is one way to cultivate hope, but modeling a growth mindset – demonstrating by our actions that we truly believe people can learn to learn – may be even more important.
- Park found that teachers who gave special privileges to higher performing students and emphasized how they compared to others inadvertently inculcated a fixed mindset among the young students.
- Children develop more of a fixed mindset when their parents react to mistakes as though they are harmful and problematic.
- The reality is that most people have an inner fixed mindset that exists in them right alongside their inner growth-mindset optimist. Recognizing this is important because it is easy to make the mistake of changing what we say without changing our body language, facial expressions, and behavior.
- If you experience adversity – something pretty potent – that you overcome on your own during your youth, you develop a different way of dealing with adversity later on.
- A fixed mindset about ability leads to pessimistic explanations of adversity, and that in turn, leads to both giving up on challenges and avoiding them in the first place. In contrast, a growth mindset leads to optimistic ways of explaining adversity, and that in turn, leads to perseverance and seeking out new challenges that will ultimately make you even stronger.
- The brain changes itself when you struggle to master a new challenge. There is never a time in life when the brain is completely fixed.
- Practice optimistic self-talk.
- Ask for a helping hand.

Growing Grit from the Outside In: Parenting for Grit

- Regardless of gender, ethnicity, social class, or parents' marital status, teens with warm, respectful, and demanding parents earned higher grades in school, were more self-reliant, suffered from less anxiety and depression, and were less likely to engage in delinquent behavior. The same pattern replicates in nearly every nation that has been studied, and at every stage of child development. Longitudinal research indicates that the benefits are measurable across a decade or more.
- If you want to bring forth grit in your child, first ask how much passion and perseverance you have for your own life goals.

- Ron Ferguson found that teachers who are demanding – whose students say of them “My teacher accepts nothing less than our best effort,” and “students in this class behave the way my teacher wants them to” – produce measurable year-to-year gains in the academic skills of their students. Teachers who are supportive and respectful – whose students say, “My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me,” and “My teacher wants us to share our thoughts” enhance students’ happiness, voluntary effort in class, and college aspirations.
- It is possible to be a psychologically wise teacher. And it is the wise teachers who seem to promote competence in addition to well-being, engagement, and high hopes for the future.
- When students received a note that said “I am giving you these comments because I have very high expectations and I know that you can reach them,” turned in twice the number of revisions as students who received comment alone.

The Playing Fields of Grit

- When kids are playing sports or music or rehearsing for the school play, they are both challenged and having fun. There is no other experience in the lives of young people that reliably provides this combination of challenge and intrinsic motivation.
- More participation in activities predicts better outcomes.
- Kids who spend more than a year in extra-curriculars are significantly more likely to graduate from college, and as young adults, to volunteer in their communities. The hours per week kids devote to extracurricular also predict having a job and earning more money, but only for kids who participate in activities for two years rather than one.
- Warren Willingham: Personal Qualities Project (1978). The predictive power of follow-through was striking: After controlling for high school grades and SAT scores, follow-through in high school extra-curriculars predicted graduating from college with academic honors better than any variable. It was also the single best predictor of holding an appointed or elected leadership position in young adulthood. Finally, it predicted notable accomplishments for a young adult in all domains.
- The key was that students had signed up for something, signed up again the following year, and during that time had made some kind of progress.
- Teachers who in college had demonstrated productive follow-through in a few extracurricular commitments were more likely to stay in teaching and, furthermore, were more effective in producing academic gains in their students.
- My best guess is that following through on our commitments while we grow up both requires grit, and at the same time, builds it.
- The association between working hard and reward can be learned. Without directly experiencing the connection between effort and reward, animals and people default to laziness.
- Hard thing rule: Everyone has to do a hard thing that requires daily deliberate practice. You can quit, but you cannot quit until the season is over, the tuition payment is up, or some other natural stopping point has arrived. You get to pick your hard thing.

Culture of Grit

- The culture in which we live, and with which we identify, powerfully shapes just about every aspect of our being.
- A culture is defined by the shared norms and values of a group of people.
- If you want to be grittier, find a gritty culture and join it. If you are a leader, and you want the people in your organization to be grittier, create a gritty culture.
- Some of the most important psychology experiments in history have demonstrated how quickly, and usually without conscious awareness, the individual falls in line with a group that is acting or thinking a different way.

- The hard way to get grit is to do it by yourself. The easy way is to use conformity – the basic human drive to fit in – because if you are around a lot of people who are gritty you are going to act grittier.
- Culture has the power to shape our identity. Over time and under the right circumstances, the norms and values of the group to which we belong become our own.
- James March: We do not think through the consequences of our actions. We do not ask ourselves: What are the benefits? What are the costs? What are the risks? Instead, we ask ourselves: Who am I? What is this situation? What does someone like me do in a situation like this? That is why culture and identity are so critical to understanding how gritty people live their lives. The logic of anticipated costs and benefits does not explain their choices very well. The logic of identity does.
- Thinking of yourself as someone who is able to overcome tremendous adversity often leads to behavior that confirms that self-conception.
- In dark and desperate moments, we find that if we just keep putting one foot in front of the other, there is a way to accomplish what all reason seems to argue against.
- If you want to create a great culture, you have to have a collection of core values that everyone lives.
- George Bernard Shaw: The true joy in life is to be a force of fortune instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.
- The origin of great leadership begins with the respect of the commander for his subordinates.
- It is really the guy across from us that makes us who we are. Our opponent creates challenges that help us become our best selves.
- John Wooden: Success is never final; failure is never fatal. It is courage that counts.
- Compete comes from the Latin, and means strive together.
- Two key factors promote excellence in individuals and in teams: deep and rich support and relentless challenge to improve.
- In studies of how people size up others, morality trumps all other aspects of character in importance. We notice if others are lazy, but we are especially offended if they seem to lack qualities like honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness. Grit is not enough.
- Aspects of character
 - Intrapersonal (will): Grit, self-control of what we choose to do– resume virtues get us hired and keep us employed: predict academic achievement
 - Heart (personal): Gratitude, social intelligence, self-control of emotions – eulogy virtues are how people remember us: Predicts positive social functioning
 - Mind (intellectual): Curiosity, zest – active and open engagement with the world of ideas: predicts positive, independent posture toward learning