Building Student Skills that Lead to Resilience and Academic Tenacity

Webinar 2: The Hidden Power of Grit and Self-Control

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Learning Objectives

Participants will:
• Learn the importance of grit, self-control and deliberate practice for academic success
• Become aware of goal-setting and planning techniques that are more likely to cultivate self-control and produce goal attainment

What is Academic Tenacity?

“...academic tenacity is about working hard, and working smart, for a long time. More specifically, academic tenacity is about the mindset and skills that allow students to:
• look beyond short-term concerns to longer-term goals.
• withstand challenges and setbacks to persevere toward these goals.”

(Dweck, Walton & Cohen, 2004)
How Do We Promote Academic Tenacity?

PART I:
- Mindset

PART II:
- Grit and Self-Control
  - Goal setting
  - Mental contrasting with implementation intentions
  - Deliberate practice

PART III:
- Optimism and Resilience

Growth Mindset
- Value learning over looking smart or being right
- Believe in effort as a virtue
- Are resilient in the face of setback
- Welcome new challenges

Fixed Mindset
- Value looking smart over the process of learning
- Believe effort indicates low ability
- View setbacks as evidence of inability
- Less likely to welcome challenges

Mindset Summary
- Be aware of your own mindset
- Be careful to praise effort, strategy or process as opposed to talent or intelligence
- Celebrate mistakes
- Teach children about the brain
- Use the word “yet”
- Encourage self-reflection
- Consider using student mentors to reinforce these concepts with other students
Thinking
- It begins with a growth mindset
- Students need to think of themselves in certain ways to want to learn and to learn successfully

Self-Regulation
- They need to regulate themselves in ways that promote learning

(Dweck, Walton, & Cohen, 2014)

Perseverance and passion for long-term goals
- Being gritty means:
  - Finishing what you start
  - Staying committed to your goals
  - Working hard even after experiencing failure or when you feel like quitting
  - Staying the course for more than a few weeks

What is Grit?

(A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007)

How Important is Grit?
- Ability alone does not bring about success in any field
- Grit is more predictive than IQ in academic performance
  - Smarter students may be less gritty
- Research at West Point Military Academy
- National Spelling Bee Research

(A. L. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007)
(A. L. Duckworth & Seligman, 2005)
Strategy #1: Encourage Students to Dream Big

- Ask students: “What kind of adult would you like to be?” “What is your wish?”
- Provide exposure to various careers and activities.
  - Not the sole responsibility of the guidance counselor
  - Make connections between students and mentors, coaches, and role models
- Offer examples of people who succeeded but had to struggle to achieve success.
- Student research / presentations

“If your dreams are big enough, you can see past your circumstances.”

– Dr. John Hodge

Dream Boards

Materials you need:
- A paper board
- A glue stick
- Magazines that you can cut up like these
- Scissors

Courtesy of Ted Geary:
https://app.box.com/s/r5p9jpyriku
Let’s “Chat”

In what ways do you currently provide exposure to various careers and activities?

Strategy #2: Connections between Academics and Long Term Goals

- 2009 study:
  - Intervention with high school students
  - Intended to show relevance of science to their lives
- Results:
  - Intervention group expressed more interest in science
  - Earned higher grades

*Important note: gains in grades ONLY seen when students came up with the reasons themselves*

Chef

Math?
Science?
Language Arts?
Social Studies?
Other?
Forensic Investigator
Math?
Science?
Language Arts?
Social Studies?
Other?

Video Discussion
• What is one thing that Dr. Duckworth said that resonated with you?
• Describe the components of effective feedback.
• When do you think that kids should be allowed to quit an activity?

Self-Control vs. Grit
• Grit deals - perseverance in pursuit of long-term goals
• Self-control - the ability to resist the “hourly temptation” and control impulses in the short-term
• The “marshmallow studies”
Other Benefits of Self-Control

- Self-control measured during first decade of life predicts the following in adulthood:
  - Income
  - Savings behavior
  - Financial security
  - Physical and mental health
  - Substance use/abuse
  - Criminal convictions

(Moffitt et al., 2011)

“Even Einstein wasn’t Einstein before he put in years of passionate, relentless effort.”

(Dweck, 2010)

Strategy #2: Talk about Deliberate Practice

- Vast majority of exceptional adults were never child prodigies (as cited in Ericsson & Charness, 1994)
- Expert performance is acquired SLOWLY over a very long period as a results of deliberate practice (Ericsson, Krampe, & Teich-Romer, 1993)
- 10,000 hour rule (Ericsson, Krampe, & Teich-Romer, 1993)
Strategy #3: Talk about Deliberate Practice

- Characteristics of deliberate practice:
  - Focus on weakness; challenge exceeds current skill
  - Repetition
  - Includes immediate and informative feedback
  - Feels difficult; highly effortful
  - Keep trying; look for new methods
  - Stay focused – limit distractions and avoid multitasking

[Ericsson, Krampe, & Tesch-Romer, 1993]

Deliberate Practice Activity

Let’s “Chat”

What do you think would be most surprising for kids if you replicated this activity with them? Why?
Strategy #4: Goal-Setting
- Start with the students’ “North Star” (or future self)
- Break that down into a manageable SMART goal
  - Start with one written goal
  - S.M.A.R.T.
    - Specific
    - Measurable
    - Attainable
    - Relevant
    - Time-Bound

S.M.A.R.T. Goals
- **Specific**
  - What is it that you want to accomplish?
  - Should be well defined
  - Poor example: I will lose some weight.
  - Better example: I will lose 5 lbs. by June 1st.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals
- **Measurable**
  - How will you know when it has been achieved?
  - Results should be observable and quantifiable
  - Poor example: I will be more motivated in school.
  - Better example: I will complete all of my homework as soon as I get home from school.
S.M.A.R.T. Goals

**Attainable**
- Can the goal be reached with the available resources?
- Should require you to stretch beyond normal abilities and routine but allow for likely success.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

**Relevant**
- Should take you one step closer to your wish.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

**Time-bound**
- Should state the time in which the goal will be accomplished.
1. To study harder
2. To get a 4.0 fall semester GPA
3. To become a better student
4. To maximize my study time each day before social activities
5. To improve my next test grade in Biology by one letter grade
6. To join a club
7. To locate and research at least five possible summer jobs by the end of April

S.M.A.R.T. Goal Activity

*Turn each of the following non-S.M.A.R.T. goals into S.M.A.R.T. goals*
Get S.M.A.R.T

 Goal: I'll bring my math grade up this year.
 New Goal: __________________________

 Get S.M.A.R.T

 Goal: I'll show up to school on time.
 New Goal: __________________________

 Get S.M.A.R.T

 Goal: I'll get involved in more extracurricular activities.
 New Goal: __________________________
Strategy #5: Goal Planning

- Mental Contrasting with Implementation Intentions (MCII)
  - Thinking about the goals AND the obstacles that could stand in the way (MC)
  - Developing a plan that details when, where and how the individual will take action (II)
  - People with plans are more likely to get started and stay on track
  - Combined strategy improves ability to attain goals

Goal Planning Steps

- Start with a wish
- Visualize best outcome
- Write one SMART goal that can be started in the next week
- Develop a plan of action
  - “When......, then.....”

Examples of Implementation Intentions (II)

- My Wish: To be thinner
- Best outcome: I would feel more confident.
- SMART goal: I will lose 5 lbs. by June 1st.
- Action plan:
  - When I get home from work on Tuesdays and Thursdays, then I will put on my sneakers right away and get on the treadmill for twenty minutes.
**Examples of Implementation Intentions (II)**

- My Wish: To go to college
- Best outcome: I would get a college degree and a good job doing something I like.
- SMART goal: I will raise my GPA from a 3.0 to a 3.2 by the end of the year.
- Action plan:
  - **When** I am done with dinner each night, **then** I will complete my homework at my desk in my bedroom.

**Goal Planning Steps**

- Start with a wish
- Visualize best outcome
- Write one SMART goal that can be started in the next week
- Develop a plan of action
  - "**When**..., then..."
- Think about the biggest obstacle
- Develop a plan to deal with the obstacle
  - "If (obstacle)..., then (action)...."

**Examples of Mental Contrasting (MC)**

- My Wish: To be thinner
- Best outcome: I would feel more confident.
- SMART goal: I will lose 5 lbs. by June 1st.
- Action plan:
  - **When** I get home from work on Tuesdays and Thursdays, **then** I will put on my sneakers right away and get on the treadmill for twenty minutes.
- Contingency Plan:
  - **If** I feel unmotivated to exercise, **then** I will put on some music to get me going.
Examples of Mental Contrasting (MC)

- My Wish: To go to college
- Best outcome: I would get a college degree and a good job doing something I like.
- SMART goal: I will raise my GPA from a 3.0 to a 3.2 by the end of the year.
- Action plan:
  - When I am done with dinner each night, then I will complete my homework at my desk in my bedroom.
- Contingency plan:
  - If I get distracted by my phone, then I will turn it off until my homework is done.

Goal Planning Activity

Goal Planning

- My Wish: To become a doctor
- Best outcome: I would be able to help people and make a lot of money.
- SMART goal: I will raise my math grade from a B to an A by the end of the marking period.
- Action plan:
  - When ________________, then ________________
Obstacles

- What might be some common obstacles that a student will encounter when working on this goal?
- What strategies could they use to overcome this obstacle?
- Contingency plan:
  - If __________________, then __________________

Goal Planning Tips for Kids

- Focus on one goal at a time
- Check your progress weekly
  - Is my plan working?
  - Do I need to make adjustments?
  - Do I need help? From whom?
- Adjust the goal, the strategy or the "if-then" statement if necessary
- Stay focused – avoid distractions
- When the goal has been reached and practiced consistently, set a new one
- Keep the goal worksheet in a visible location

Grit Summary

- Encourage students to dream big
- Help students make connections between academics and their long-term goals
- Teach students how to write goals
- Talk about deliberate practice with students
- Help students make plans to achieve their goals
  - Ensure that their plans incorporate deliberate practice
- Make time each week to check on goal progress
Issues to Consider

• What happens when you can't find your passion (or you have too many)?
  • Multipotentialites
  • Consider the tasks of adolescence

• Let’s “Chat”
  • Does our culture value breadth or depth of knowledge?

Let’s “Chat”

In what ways can we promote a balance of grit and creativity?
Planning Ahead

* What is one thing you learned today that you can incorporate immediately with your students?

* What is one thing you will work on implementing in the near future with your students?

Resources

* [https://characterlab.org/resources/grit](https://characterlab.org/resources/grit)


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