



BUILDING **GRIT** AND STRENGTHENING **RESILIENCE** IN CHILDREN

FOCUS
DETERMINATION
PERSEVERE
ACHIEVE

**RESOURCE
GUIDE**



CCPS

Collier County Public Schools

GRIT

\ 'grit \ *noun*

1. courage and resolve; strength of character
2. how well a student perseveres through setbacks to achieve important long-term goals

CHARACTERISTICS OF GRITTY CHILDREN

They are courageous

They are able to manage their fear of failure. They are not afraid to make mistakes, but rather embrace them as part of the process. They have the strength to say “no,” which enables them to stand up to peer pressure and not be afraid to ask for help when needed.

They are conscientious

They desire to do a task well and are efficient and organized, not resting until the job is done and done right. They have strong moral principles and values: they want to do the right thing. They stick to their convictions and opinions and opposition only serves to strengthen their determination.

They persevere

They start and continue on the path toward the goals they set. They do not stop trying when things are hard. They find the meaning and value in their long-term efforts, despite difficulties or delays in achieving success.

They are resilient

They are optimistic and are able to laugh at themselves and reframe situations/experiences to see another side. They do not compare themselves to others, instead they create their own yardstick for success and see difficulties as stepping stones. They are more accepting of life's ups and downs and adjust their attitudes and goals accordingly.

They have passion

They are driven by goals, and are result-oriented. They do not let things get in their way to stop them. They have a “will to find a way” attitude and do not accept “no” for an answer. They take responsibility for their lives but are not afraid to ask for support. Passionate people recognize that they are in the driver's seat as they travel through life.

RESILIENCE

re·sil·ience \ rə 'zilyəns \ *noun*

1. the capacity to recover quickly from setbacks

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENT CHILDREN

They are competent

They feel capable and powerful. They tend to be more resourceful and believe in their ability to attempt difficult challenges.

They have confidence

They have a belief in their own abilities. They are able to make decisions independently. They view themselves as capable and are willing to try new things.

They are connected

They have close relationships with supportive adults and within their community that creates a sense of security and belonging.

They have character

They have morals and values with a solid sense of right and wrong and they demonstrate caring toward others.

They contribute

They understand themselves in relation to the world around them and know the importance of contributing to their schools and community, which generates a sense of purpose and motivation.

They cope

They are able to effectively manage stress and are better prepared to overcome life's challenges.

They are in control

They realize that they can control the outcomes of their decisions. They are able to apply decision making skills and are more motivated to contribute to and are more likely to bounce back from adversity.

GRIT

Help your child build GRIT.

Over the last few months teachers and students have been talking about how we can always ensure we give our best. Life can be challenging and sometimes we have to face moments which require us not to give up. We face challenges daily, from solving mathematical problems to having to write a creative story. To ensure we pick ourselves up and face these challenges head on we have to have Grit. Grit is defined as passion, perseverance, and stick-to-it-ness. Making a plan, taking action, and keeping a sense of confidence helps develop grit.

PARENTS! Here are 13 ways to help children build GRIT.

1

GOALS AND PURPOSE

Discuss with your child their goals and purpose in life. Then talk about the steps that would be required in order for your child to reach their goal. Encourage them to create a dream board to help visualize the purpose and goals.



2

FIND A PASSION

Help your child find a passion (or at least an engaging activity). Pursuing an interest of their own choosing can help them identify a passion and understand that practice, hard work, and perseverance are surest way to achievement.



3

“HARD THING RULE”

Follow the “Hard Thing Rule” by doing the following:

- Each member of the family has to do something hard
- You must finish what you start
- No one gets to pick the “hard thing” for anyone else, so your child gets to choose his own challenge

Talk about setbacks as they arise. Help your child build a plan B or C when necessary. Share your feelings about your challenge and celebrate when family members persevere through difficult tasks.



4

FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

Below are some examples of movies that reinforce grit.

Lion King (1994 - Rated G) A young lion gets tricked into believing that he causes his own father's death. He learns to go back and face the truth and claim what was rightfully his all along – the Kingdom.

The Secret of Nimh (1982 - Rated G) This movie is the heartwarming story of Mrs. Briggsby, a mild-mannered mother mouse, who will move heaven and earth to save her family from the Farmer Fitzgibbon's plow. She faces many obstacles including a ferocious cat and a mysterious rat, and through her sheer grit, conquers them all.

The Blind Side (2009 - Rated PG-13) Since this is a biography, it opens the doors for real-life discussions, especially if you have older kids. A homeless and traumatized boy becomes an All American football player and first round NFL draft pick with the help of a caring woman and her family.

The Pursuit of Happyness (2006 - Rated PG-13) Based on a true story. This movie would appeal to older kids. It is the story of a single dad who becomes homeless and his struggle to make life normal again for his son. It gives an opportunity to discuss what it would really feel like to not have the comforts of everyday life and find oneself suddenly homeless.



SEE NEXT PAGE FOR MORE GRIT STRATEGIES



5**TEACH GRIT THROUGH LITERATURE**

Read classic stories about perseverance like *“The Little Engine That Could”* or Dr. Seuss’ *“Oh, The Places You’ll Go!”* Help your child find connections to their own life. Talk about the challenges, response to failures, and how to live with grit.

**6****TEACH GRITTIENESS**

One example of teaching grittiness could be if you signed up for a half-marathon. First, you could create a training schedule to show your kids how you broke the big hurdle into smaller, more accomplishable goals. Then, have your kids come to the race so they can see that, even with all of your hard work, finishing was not easy. Showing your children that even you struggle at new things, shows them first-hand that, while difficult, achieving goals can be rewarding.

**7****ALLOW FRUSTRATION**

Parents hate to see their kids struggle. But learning from challenges (as well as failure) is the key to making the connection for kids that true achievement does not come easily.

**8****OFFER PRAISE**

Teaching grit includes praising the effort behind those good performances. Do not forget to praise effort because, though every performance may not be perfect, consistent effort will lead to more good performances than bad. Instead of praising your child for his grades or for being “smart” praise him for being tenacious and determined.

**9****LET YOUR CHILD TRY TASKS ON THEIR OWN**

Constantly intervening in your child’s activities prevents them from learning for themselves. This can undermine their confidence and create a fear of failure. They may even end up relying on you or waiting for you to help with future struggles. Instead, demonstrate how to do a new task, such as cooking, and allow your child to try. This allows them to try new things, but without feeling that they are all alone. Plus, if they need your help, you are right there to jump in.

**10****SET YOUR CHILD UP FOR SUCCESS**

Choosing when to jump in and help when you see your child’s failure in advance is always a difficult decision. One of the best ways that you can teach your child grit is, whenever possible, ask them to do tasks that they are capable of and age-appropriate, but that will not come easily.

**11****TEACH SELF-ENCOURAGEMENT**

When you see your child struggling, offer encouragement that you are there to help, but you know that they can do it on their own. For example, if your child falls down when learning to ride a bike, praise his efforts at getting back up and trying again and again, rather than only praising when he learns to ride fast on his own.

**12****MODEL GRIT**

If you love what you do, let others know. Wear your passion on your sleeve. When you fail, openly share your frustration but go out of your way to point out what you learned from the experience. Emphasize playing the long game—life is a marathon, not a sprint.

**13****CELEBRATE GRIT**

When you see grit, draw attention to it: *“Your work this past quarter has demonstrated enormous dedication. I know it wasn’t always easy.”* Praise passion: *“You are so into this! That is just awesome!”*



RESILIENCE

Nurturing RESILIENCE in children.

Resilience is a key building block of growth mindset and an important social emotional learning competency we want our students to have. For children to be able to bounce back from stress, challenges, tragedy, trauma, and adversity, it is important that they are intentionally placed in situations and given opportunities where they can discover their own ability to solve problems. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, more adaptable, and more able to extend their reach into the world. The great news is that resilience is something that can be nurtured in all children.



TEACH RESILIENCE THROUGH LITERATURE

The Hugging Tree: A Story About Resilience This story is about a tree that, in spite of harsh circumstances, grows until it can hold and shelter others. The resilience of the Hugging Tree calls to mind the potential in all of us: to thrive, despite times of struggle and difficulty; to nurture the little spark of hope and resolve; and to dream and to grow, just where we are. This book includes a “Note to Parents” by Elizabeth McCallum, Ph.D.

Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff for Teens: Simple Ways to Keep Your Cool in Stressful Times This candid guide to adolescence examines the contradictions and challenges unique to teenage life and offers students (and their parents) tools for learning not to stress about homework, peer pressure, dating, and other potentially difficult areas. The book authored by Richard Carlson addresses such issues as: do not sweat the breakups, get out of the emergency lane, be OK with your bad hair day, and drop the drama.

My Strong Mind: A Story About Developing Mental Strength This story by Niels van Hove is about a sporty and happy girl who uses her strong mind to tackle her daily challenges with a positive attitude. She faces several situations your children will face too, and applies a positive attitude to deal with challenges.

I Am Not Afraid To Fail Failure does not have to be scary for kids. Parents, guardians, and mentors play a crucial role in teaching children that failure is just one step towards success. With the help of author Daniel Kenney, you and your child can work together to learn that failure is a normal and natural part of life. This book teaches how to build the confidence to take chances and go for it without fear of failure.

RESILIENCE NEEDS RELATIONSHIPS Spend one-on-one time with your children. The reliable presence of at least one unconditionally loving and supportive adult relationship provides the opportunity for developing vital coping skills. Children feel empowered to seek guidance and make attempts to work through difficult situations. A responsive adult can reverse the psychological changes that are activated by stress.

MODEL RESILIENCY Model how to handle stressful situations. Imitation is a powerful way to learn. Show your child how to deal with disappointment and difficult situations by using coping and calming strategies such as deep breathing and labeling emotions. Talking about our emotions can normalize these experiences and teach children how to respond.

ENCOURAGE RISK TAKING Allow children to take age-appropriate risks, even if you think it may be “too hard” for them. Having the courage to do something difficult is more important than the outcome. Allow children to think about decisions in order to teach them that they can cope when things go wrong.

RESIST RESCUING Resist the urge to run to your child’s rescue immediately. Giving children exposure to challenges they can manage during childhood will help ensure they are better able to deal with stressors in adulthood. Think of it like “immunizations” – a little bit of the pathogen now, whether a virus or stress, helps to build up resistance and protect against the more severe version later on.

IT’S OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP Being brave does not mean always having to deal with things on your own. Let your child know that being brave and strong means knowing when to ask for help. If they can do it themselves, guide them towards it but resist carrying them.

SEE NEXT PAGE FOR MORE RESILIENCE STRATEGIES



REFRAME The ability to reframe challenges in a way that feels less threatening is a valuable skill in times of difficulty or disappointment and can help children focus on what they have, rather than what they lost. To build this skill, acknowledge your child's disappointment, then gently guide them away from looking at what the problem has cost them and toward the opportunities it may have brought them. Fostering optimism can literally help rewire the brain to be more optimistic through the experiences they are exposed to. Acknowledge their view of the world and show them the positive side. For example, "It is disappointing when your game gets rained out, what else can we do to make this a great rainy day?"

BUILD BETTER BRAIN FUNCTION Strengthening your child's prefrontal lobe will help them manage their own behaviors and feelings, and increase their ability to develop coping skills. This can be reinforced by doing the following:

- Establish routines and model healthy social behaviors
- Provide opportunities for their own social connections
- Engage in creative play
- Provide an opportunity for independent thinking and decision-making



FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (2014 - rated PG) Gum stuck in his hair signals the start of a disastrous day for 11-year old Alexander. One calamity follows another, but when he tells his family about his misadventures, he finds little sympathy. Alexander begins to wonder if bad things happen only to him, but he soon learns that others in his family are living through their own calamitous days. Alexander's family manages to support each other and ends up even stronger than they were before.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick (2011 - rated PG) Back in middle school after summer vacation, Greg and his older brother Rodrick don't get along and must deal with their parents' attempts to have them bond. But, that is not the only problem they have to deal with as Greg navigates numerous conflicts and embarrassing situations.

Finding Nemo (2003 - rated G) Marlin, a clown fish, is overly cautious with his son, Nemo, who has a foreshortened fin. When Nemo swims too close to the surface to prove himself, he is caught by a diver and horrified Marlin must set out to find him. A blue reef fish named Dory, who has a really short memory, joins Marlin and complicates the encounters with sharks, jellyfish, and a host of ocean dangers.

Finding Forrester (2001 - rated PG-13) In the film, a young African American teenager and a reclusive Pulitzer Prize-winning author find themselves by reaching out to each other and forming a bond of friendship across age, suspicion, and race. This inspiring movie is about how some people "Walk away from their dreams afraid they may fail or worse yet, afraid they may succeed."

Freedom Writers (2007 - rated PG-13) A young teacher inspires her class of "unteachable, at-risk" students to set out on life-changing, eye-opening experiences and learn how to overcome ignorance, misunderstanding, and the negative forces in their own lives to develop tolerance, apply themselves and pursue education beyond high school.

The Karate Kid (1984 - rated PG-13) A kid is being bullied and wants to learn about martial arts in order to defend himself. The Master, Mr. Miyagi, teaches him that martial arts are about much more than "fighting." Life happens and tough things happen sometimes. The lesson behind this movie is that when tough things happen, it's how a person chooses to deal with those things that determine their destiny.

EXERCISE Exercise, especially outdoor activities that occur regularly, actually helps strengthen the brain and make it more resilient to stress by increasing the neurochemicals that can calm the brain during times of stress. If team sports do not appeal to your child, encourage bicycling, walking, throwing a frisbee, hula-hoop spinning, kicking a ball or playing tag.

ACKNOWLEDGE EFFORT When children have a sense of mastery they are less likely to be reactive to future stress and more likely to handle future challenges. Remind children that they can do difficult things by pointing out their efforts in trying something, their strengths, the brave things they do, and encouraging them to make their own decisions.

BUILD PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS Give children the language to learn to solve problems on their own rather than solving their problems for them. Some suggestions: How can we fix this? What has worked before? How can we break this big problem into little pieces? What are some pros and cons of each solution?

DEVELOP GRATITUDE Gratitude is tied to happiness and resilience and can be developed with practice. It can rebuild neural pathways to fight negativity, remain realistic, identify what is controllable, maintain hope and confidence, and improve relationships. Some strategies you can use to build gratitude are:

- Have your child write thank you letters to people who have a meaningful and positive impact on their lives
- Talk with your child daily about the small things or people you appreciated that day
- Keep a gratitude journal and write things you received that day (a smile from a friend, a sunny day, a high five from a teacher)

QUIZ How Gritty Are You?

Here are a number of statements that may or may not apply to you. There are no right or wrong answers, so just answer honestly, considering how you compare to most people. At the end, you'll get a score that reflects how passionate and persevering you see yourself to be.

1. I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

2. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

3. My interests change from year to year.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

4. Setbacks do not discourage me.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

5. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

6. I am a hard worker.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

7. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

8. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

9. I finish whatever I begin.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

10. I have achieved a goal that took years of work.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

11. I become interested in new pursuits every few months.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

12. I am diligent.

- Very much like me
- Mostly like me
- Somewhat like me
- Not much like me
- Not like me at all

GRIT SCALE TEST SCORING GUIDE

Step 1: 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

Step 2: 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

Step 3: Add up all the points and divide by 12.

Grit Score: _____ The higher your grit scale score is, the more gritty you are. (1=not gritty; 5=very gritty)

WHEN PARENTS . . .

KIDS LEARN TO . . .

Show affection and attention

Feel loved and connected

Listen and understand

Feel accepted and understood

Stay calm

Handle stressful situations

Show patience

Develop patience “wait”

Stop and re-think

Be creative problem solvers

Show positive outlook

Be hopeful and optimistic

View mistakes as okay

Try new things

Keep trying

Achieve goals

See strengths

Feel confident

Take responsibility

Be responsible

Are involved

Get involved

Label and express feelings

Identify and express feelings

9-5-2-1-0, Let's Go!

9-5-2-1-0, Let's Go! is an easy nutrition and health message to teach children. Below is an outline for each recommendation. Set goals with your children and participate with them - lead by example.



9 Hours of Sleep Per Night



5 Servings of Fruits and Vegetables Per Day



2 Hours or Less of Screen Time Per Day



1 Hour of Physical Activity Per Day



0 Sugary Beverages and No Tobacco/Drugs