

**GOING FOR GRIT IN
A GIVE-UP WORLD**

**FIVE OAKS
FAMILY**

Going for grit in a give-up world

Grit is commitment and perseverance over time. It's getting up in the morning and going after a goal again, even after failing the day before.

My third grader is learning about this at school. Last night he asked at dinner, **"Do you know the power of 'yet'?"** He went on to explain to his older sisters, "It's like this: Not saying, 'I don't know how to do that math problem,' but, 'I don't know how to do that math problem YET.'"

Or not, 'I'll never score a goal in soccer,' but, 'I haven't scored a goal YET.'"

Big difference. The power of yet. The power of grit.

One huge key to grit is endurance. As psychological researcher Angela Duckworth notes, "Enthusiasm is common. Endurance is rare" (58). Endurance is steadily working at a skill, sport, art, or ability for a long time. The key is finding something you really care about, which for adolescents, of course, can change like the wind.

Grit sounds attractive, but feels elusive to many of us when it comes to how we parent our teenagers. Here are four keys for helping your kids develop grit:

1 Find what's interesting.

There are parts of any skill, activity, or job that young people won't enjoy, but overall, being interested in and curious about something goes a long way toward being willing to stick with it over time. The Search Institute calls these interests "sparks," and they're different for every young person. Because school is a requirement more than a love for many kids, helping them find an extracurricular activity that interests them is often an important key.

Try this: Have each person find one "hard thing" they're interested in and focus on it for a season (parents included!) and commit to stick with it.

2 Develop the capacity to practice.

In just about every area of life, we become who we are by practicing. Those who become truly great at a particular skill practice a lot, devoting time each day or each week to get better, and resisting complacency by practicing deliberately—getting better at something specific.

Try this: Encourage practice as much or more than performance.

3 Deepen their purpose.

Interest without a real sense of purpose doesn't last long; we need to believe that what we're doing matters—to us and to others. This becomes more important to teenagers as they are trying to reconcile where and how they spend their time with what they truly care about and how they want to contribute to the world around them. In particular for those who feel trapped in classrooms 35 hours out of each week, pursuing life-giving activities beyond school can energize their purpose.

Try this: Serve or Volunteer together at church or in the community. Even better let your student choose the cause.

4 Cultivate hope.

In grit terminology, hope is learning to keep going even when we want to quit, when things seem impossibly difficult, and when we fail. It's a sense of resolve. Hope threads through all these stages, and our teenagers need it in huge doses. Disappointments become opportunities to learn. Failure moves from "I can't" to "I didn't...yet."

The power of sticking with it over time

It's okay if your 16-year-old isn't showing an obvious lifelong pathway yet. Grit can be practiced and developed in areas we aren't as naturally drawn to initially. **The key is to help teenagers find some area of challenge in their lives that they're going to devote themselves to for a season.** Pick something hard. Set goals to get better and improve specific weaknesses. Learn to get feedback from others who are better at that skill. Get up day after day and do it again.

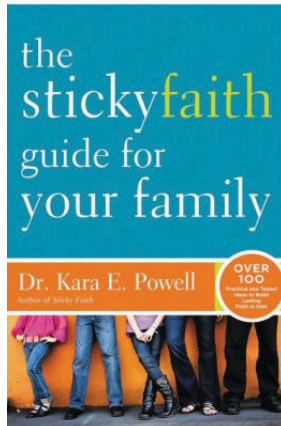
For high school students, research has shown that participating in an extracurricular activity for at least two consistent years is correlated with higher rates of college graduation, having a job as a young adult, and volunteering in adulthood. It seems that grit developed in a particular pursuit transfers to other life pursuits as well.

One last thing. Parents who want gritty kids can work on becoming gritty adults ourselves. As we discovered in our parenting research for Sticky Faith, loads of research now affirms that what matters more than what we think we are teaching our kids is what our kids perceive us teaching them. **Their perception is largely shaped by our actions.** The great news

is that grit can be developed at any age. After all, despite our preference for natural talent, grit ultimately wins the day.

So what's your next hard thing—the thing that might remind you of the power of “yet”? Find it, and share it with your kids! You might be surprised at how it inspires them.

Visit the Five Oaks Family Resource Center for more parenting ideas and resources like this...



*This article was adapted from “4 ways to go for grit over grades this year”
by Brad Griffin found on the Fuller Youth Institute website
fulleryouthinstitute.org/blog/grit-over-grades*