

The value of gritty learning

T&L Committee November 2023

Emanuel School

This talk focuses on:

- Grit
- Goals
- Deliberate practice

What do these people have in common?

Jacqueline du Pré



Michael Phelps



Jeff Bezos



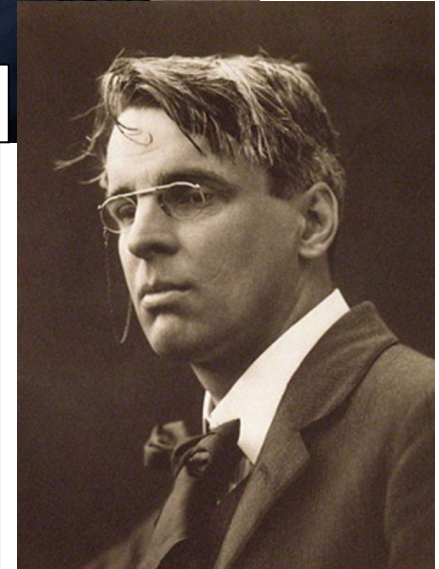
Martin Luther King



Ludwig van Beethoven



Maya Angelou



WB Yeats

We are seduced by the idea of 'genius'
Talent is a seductive and destructive distraction...



....from the importance and necessity of *effort*.



‘...the biggest reason a preoccupation with talent can be harmful is simple: **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 – don’t matter as much as they really do.’ Duckworth, p39

Nietzsche ‘we don’t ask how (perfection) came to be...we rejoice...*as though it came out of the ground by magic.*’

Why is ‘talent’ so seductive and destructive?

Because it gets people off the hook of having to try hard.

The cult of genius implies we *can’t* compete. **This is false.**

From ~~talent~~ ability to achievement

Effort counts twice:

Ability x effort = skill

but skill alone is not enough
...it is simply latent *potential*

skill x effort = achievement

The lessons of *grit*

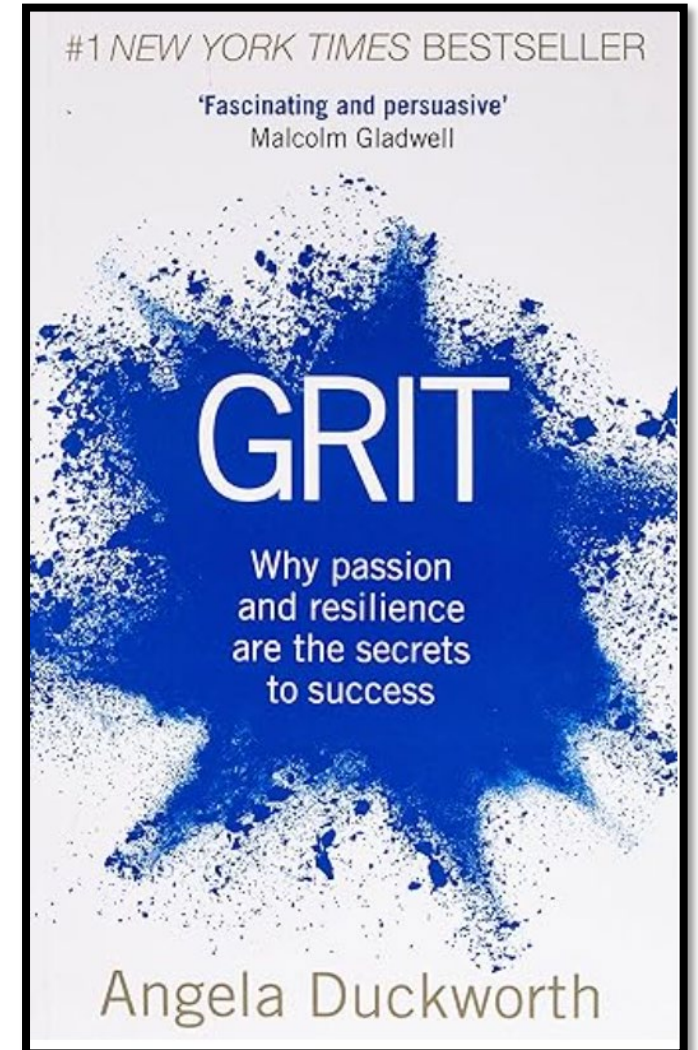
The characterlab: <https://characterlab.org/>

‘A persuasive response to the cult of IQ fundamentalism’
(Malcolm Gladwell)

- **Grit matters more than talent.**
- **Grit is growable, not fixed.**
- **Learning about grit + deliberate practice increases pupils’ grades.**

She has comprehensive research underpinning these assertions.

- Management consultant at McKinsey
- Full-time teacher
- Studied neurobiology (Harvard) and neuroscience (Oxford)
- MacArthur Fellow, Professor of Psychology at U of Pennsylvania
- Advises the White House, World Bank, NBA and NFL teams.



What is grit?

GRIT = passion & perseverance

= commitment, not just intensity

= consistent commitment over time

= a combination of **enthusiasm** and **endurance**.

What is grit?



How gritty are you?

<https://angeladuckworth.com/grit-scale/>



1. Circle the number for each statement
2. Add up your scores.
3. Divide by 10
4. **This is your 'grit score'**

	Not at all like me	Not much like me	Some-what like me	Mostly like me	Very much like me
1. New ideas and project sometimes distract me from previous ones.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Setbacks don't discourage me for long. I don't give up easily.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I am a hard worker.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I finish whatever I begin.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My interests change from year to year.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I am diligent. I never give up.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.	1	2	3	4	5

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Percentile	Grit score
10%	2.5
20%	3
30%	3.3
40%	3.5
50%	3.8
60%	3.9
70%	4.1
80%	4.3
90%	4.5
95%	4.7
99%	4.9

i.e. If you scored 4.1, you are grittier than about 70% of adults in the large sample of American adults used.

How gritty are you?

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Grit =
passion
&
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Key finding:

Grit CAN change

Grit can be grown

**Your grit score
can change if you
work at making
yourself grittier.**

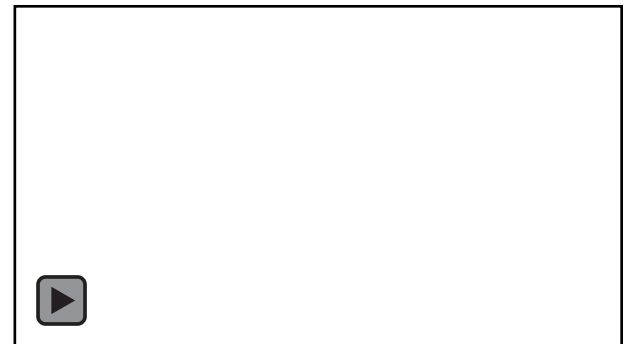


Discussion

Question: How gritty are our learners at Emanuel?

Question: How best could we use this 'Grit scale' with our pupils?

5 mins discussion in small groups.





What if we have low Grit scores?

Grit grows.

How...?

For example: **The Social Multiplier effect:**

Average IQ has risen 15 points in 50 years – have we all got smarter?

No.

Abstract reasoning is better, *because we do it more.*

‘by getting better, each kid inadvertently enriched the learning environment for the kids he/she was (learning with)’

Grit changes as a function of the culture we grow up or learn in.

Grit is relative to the average...but **the overall average can change too.**

4 key elements of gritty people:

1. Interest
2. Practice
3. Purpose
4. Hope

These can all be developed.

Grit grows...with interest

Why do people give up on things?

11 responses

A word cloud of 11 responses to the question 'Why do people give up on things?'. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with 'boredom' written vertically on the right side. The words and their colors are: 'they haven't felt success' (red), 'time consuming' (purple), 'difficult' (green), 'at rugby' (red), 'bored' (blue), 'lack of time' (blue), 'too busy' (pink), 'no sense of progress' (yellow), 'too hard' (pink), 'limited time' (yellow), and 'boredom' (brown, written vertically).

they haven't felt success
time consuming
difficult at rugby
lack of time bored
limited time too busy
no sense of progress
too hard
boredom

Grit grows...with interest

Why do we give up on something?

Reasons most often given:

- Not worth it
- Not important to me
- Boredom
- I can't do it so I should give up

Grit grows

Reasons:

- Not worth it
- Not important to me
- Bored

Find what IS important to you

Find what IS interesting to you

- I can't do it so I should give up

Try again, harder. Try another way.

Why do people NOT give up?

Because they've found a high-level goal

Goals: Passion as a *compass*

Another dangerous myth = passion as fireworks.
Fireworks quickly fizzle.

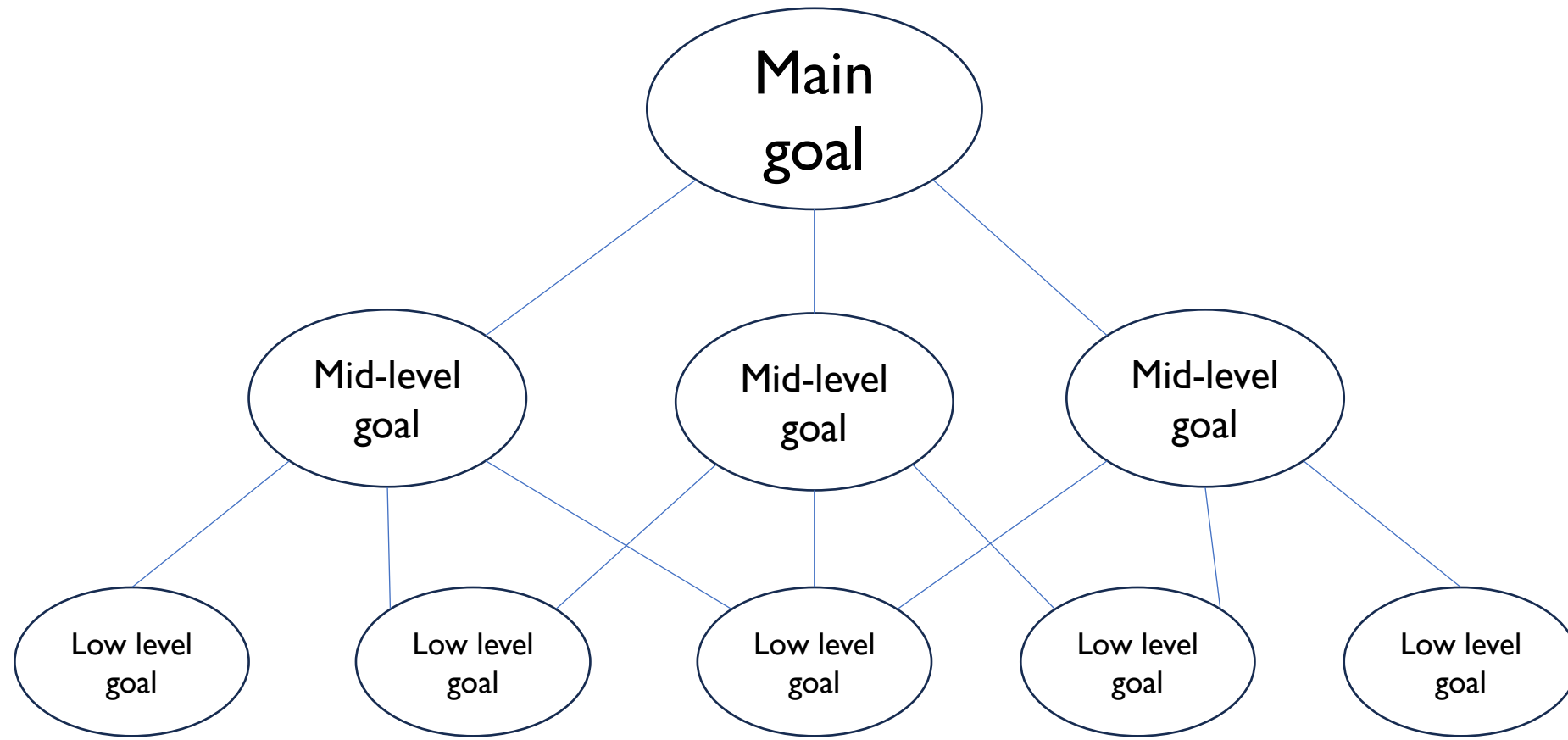
Passion is better thought of as a **compass**.

Think Jack Sparrow...guided unfailingly
towards his heart's desire by his magic compass.



GOAL HIERARCHY

An over-arching vision or top-level goal is crucial.



An end in itself.
More abstract and general.
Your compass

Concrete & specific
Stepping stones.

May need to be swapped or dropped.

Habits & Goals....

Example:

Low-level: getting up at 6:30am

Why?

Low-level: to get to work/school on time

Why?

Mid-level: to be a punctual employee/pupil and avoid missing information or content

Why?

Mid-level: to show respect and be trusted at work/ to make good progress

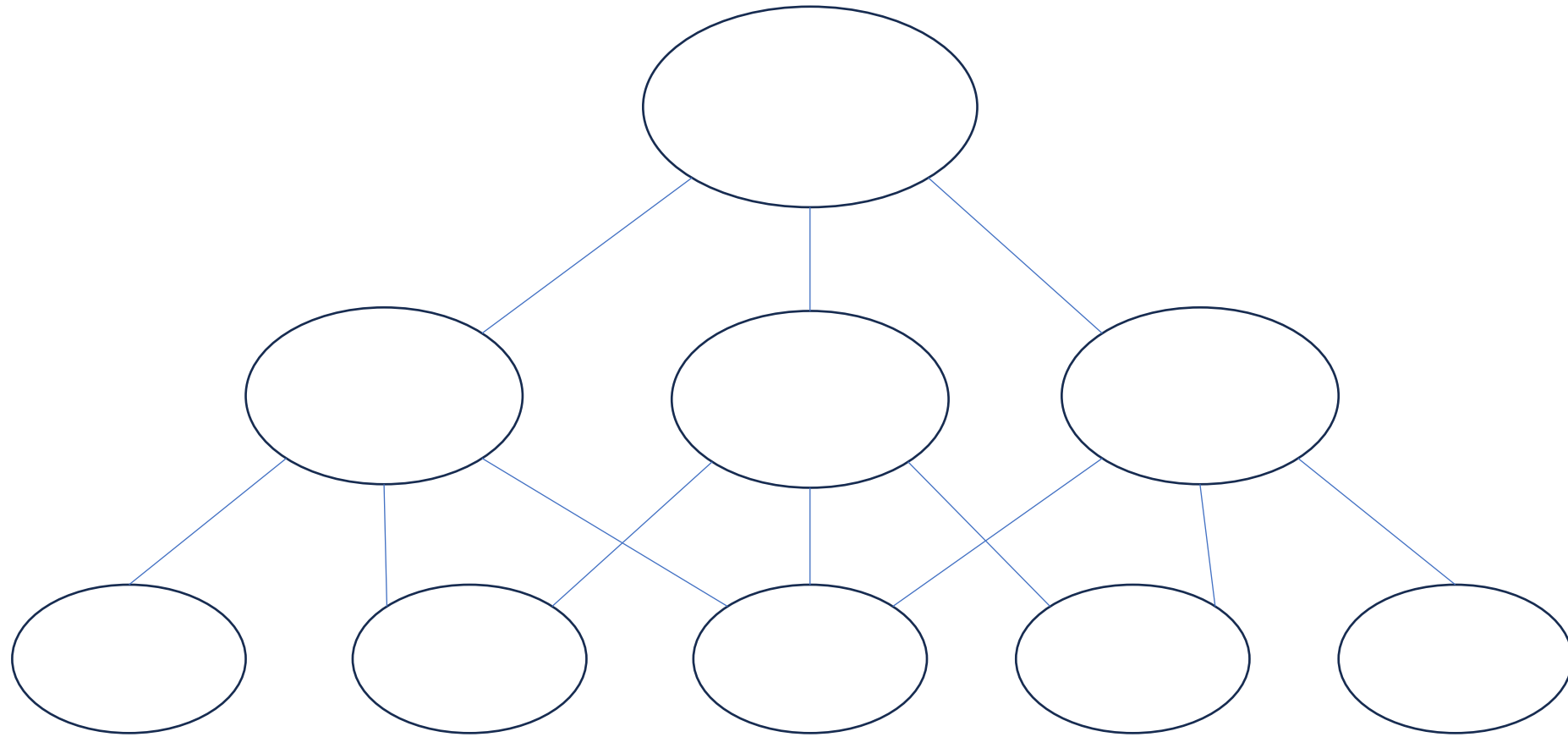
Why?

Top-level: to be successful at work/school



What is my heart's desire?

What passion can be my compass?



Questions to help discover a passion

1. What do I like to think about?
2. Where does my mind wander?
3. What do I really care about?
4. What matters most to me?
5. How do I enjoy spending my time?

By contrast...

6. What do I find unbearable?

Goals.... Warren Buffet's process

1. Write down a list of 25 career goals
2. Do some soul-searching and circle the **five** highest priorities.
3. Look at the other twenty. Avoid these at all costs – they are what is distracting you and eat your time and energy.

Time and energy are limited. You have to be selective.

Decide what *not* to do, to be successful.

What you may well realize, is that many of the goals are mid-level goals required for the achievement of the main goal.



What could you achieve with grit and the right goal?

Shawshank scene I

<https://youtu.be/ABpeLNCuE3w?si=EKoLqyrLzVgrGmaG>



Interest matters:

Question: What percentage of people feel 'engaged at work'? [menti.com]

Worldwide, only 13% of people are 'engaged' at work. 87% are not.

Very few people love what they do for a living.

There is a pandemic level of indifference to work.

So it is worth making the effort to find our passion.

Then we have to foster it and make it productive.



Your passion cheerleaders...include **teachers**

Interests thrive when you have a crew of encouraging supporters.

This includes parents, peers, coaches and **teachers**.

Positive feedback makes us feel happy, competent, and secure.

Early years of developing a passion – encouragement is crucial, as learners figure out if they want to commit or quit.

‘The best mentors...were especially warm and supportive....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...much like a game’ p128

A degree of autonomy is important – overbearing parents and teachers erode intrinsic motivation.

Don't rush beginners.

Avoid boring the experts.

Experts and beginners have different motivational needs.

Beginners (KS3) need encouragement and freedom, small wins.

A small amount of corrective feedback and practice. Short-cutting the relaxed, playful stage has dire consequences. Getting too serious too soon can kill interest and motivation.

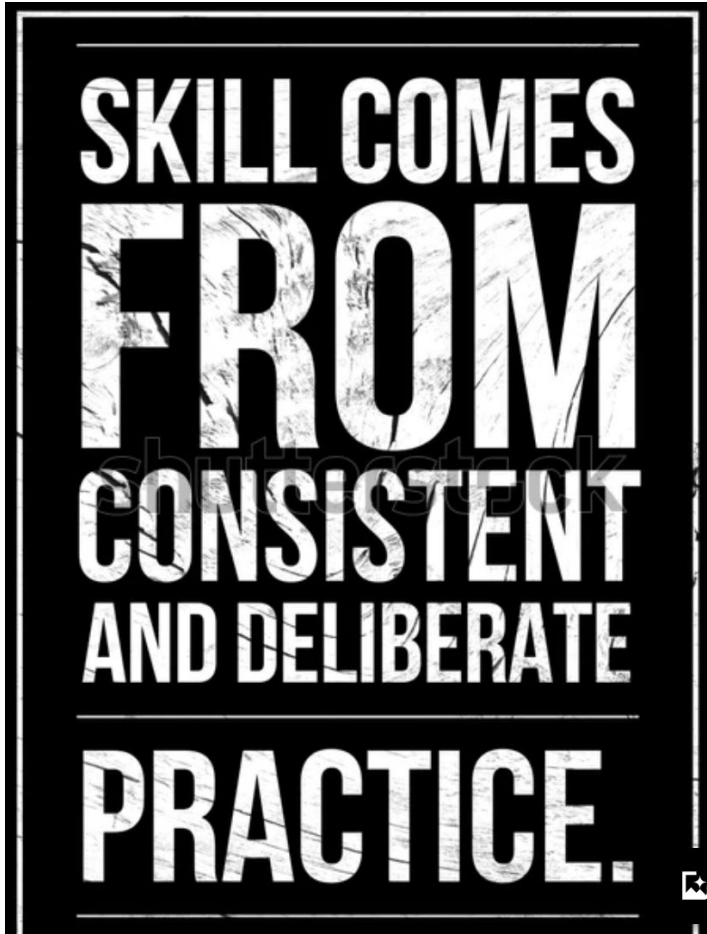
Developing experts (KS4-5) need nuance and depth.

We are all neophiles by nature. We have a basic drive for novelty. For the beginner, novelty is anything new.

But for the expert, *novelty is nuance*.

This enables the process of deepening our interests rather than getting bored and giving up.

Deliberate Practice



Deliberate practice

It is **not just more hours** on task.

It is better time on task.

Practice for continuous improvement.

Anders Ericsson (expert on world experts)

The rule of ten-ten: 10,000 hours of practice x ten years to achieve elite expertise.

So experts **do** practice more - But most importantly...**experts practice differently.**

Japanese concept of *kaizen* = a persistent desire to do better.

This is a positive attitude, not self-critical.

It embraces **mistakes and failure as necessary** on the path to improvement.



Deliberate practice – 4 steps

1. Set a **stretch goal** focused on one narrow aspect to **improve a specific weakness**, involving a challenge you can't yet do.
2. **Practice alone with total concentration and effort (ie no phone).**
3. Seek immediate and informative **feedback** on what you did wrong so you can fix it. This feedback must be ***actively processed***.
4. **Repeat** the process with reflection and refinement until you have mastered it and made **conscious incompetence into unconscious competence**.

Then start again with a new stretch goal. Make it a habit. Build a routine.



Deliberate practice

What makes **the difference between good and excellent** is going beyond easy to hard work.

This can be exhausting – experts, athletes, musicians can only do 3-5 hours of this type of focused practice per day. **It is not about quantity, it about focus.**

The good news is that the process can be extremely positive because it is productive, because we feel satisfaction as we improve, feel competence and confidence growing.

Putting deliberate practice into practice in school

<https://characterlab.org/>

Duckworth created lessons explaining key differences between deliberate practice and less effective methods.

- They told pupils explicitly that trying to do something you can't yet do, failing, and learning what you need to do differently is how experts practice.
- They showed pupils that feelings of frustration are not necessarily a sign that you're doing it wrong.


She discovered that **students can change the way they think about practice and achievement.**

Learning about deliberate practice increased their grades.

A culture of grit at Emanuel?

Discussion – Question to consider:

How can we foster and develop a culture of grit in our school?

A high-angle shot of a man in a blue swimming pool. He is shirtless, wearing dark swim trunks, and has his arms outstretched horizontally. He is looking up at the camera with a slight smile. The water is a deep blue, and there are some ripples and reflections on the surface.

**What could you
achieve with grit
and the right
goal?**

https://youtu.be/8jRRZPGa3fU?si=wrEffyxlG9r_tjE9