

I Just Have One Question...Got Grit?

By Chris Combass | Posted in December 2019



As we continue to train staff in Youth Mental Health Awareness and prepare to teach our students mental health content, I can't help but think of the correlation between resiliency, a good support system, and growth mindset. As mentioned in a previous article, adolescents are faced with increased pressures to perform well in school, and many are often faced with traumatic events, peer pressure, and social media distress. Through it all, we must continue to find ways to build upon student resiliency.

Like many others, I found myself glued to the television this past weekend to watch a little football. In one of the postgame shows, I heard an announcer talk about the importance of grit when referencing a particular team. So, how would you define grit? Angela Duckworth, a well-known psychology professor and author, wrote a book on "Grit." She describes grit as the combination of passion and perseverance, and she suggests that gritty individuals approach achievement as a marathon. I totally agree with this interpretation, and it is my belief that just as players need grit and determination among teammates to achieve victories, students need supportive peers and adults to build the resiliency necessary to overcome obstacles within their lives. One of my favorite quotes is by Booker T. Washington. He once said that "Success is to be measured not so much by the position that one has reached in life as by the obstacles which he or she has overcome." Those are definitely valuable words of wisdom to live by.

One of the most important contributing factors in the building of successful teams as well as the development of resilient individuals is growth mindset. Carol Dweck is a leading researcher in this approach. She made a valid point when she said "For no matter what your ability, it is effort that ignites that ability and turns it into accomplishment." The fear of failure can often be devastating for young people as well as adults; however, we must all remember that failure is a part of life. The most important thing that we can do is learn from our mistakes, work hard, and embrace our challenges. Vince Lombardi once stated that "The only place success comes before hard work is in the dictionary." He also noted that "The difference between a successful person and others is not a lack of strength, not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of will." There are a lot of take-aways from those quotes, and if you would like to learn more about growth mindset or grit, check out the TED talk links provided on this page.

In conclusion, if we want to be gritty or achieve growth mindset status, an essential contributing factor is regularly having that strong support system. One of the best things about living in a small community such as ours is the fact that you frequently find strong support systems not only in homes and school but also within our community. One of the greatest examples of our school and community working together was at our last School Safety Advisory meeting. To have a group of students, staff, law enforcement officers, emergency medical technicians, emergency management personnel, drug and alcohol prevention coalition members, and other community representatives in the same room having valuable conversations and learning from one another was truly amazing. I encourage you to check out the pictures which have been posted from this event. For more information regarding this article, Youth Mental Health or Hamilton County School Safety Advisory Council initiatives, e-mail chris.combass@hamiltonfl.com or visit www.hamiltonfl.com/safety. Enjoy the holidays!