

Pride has gotten a bad rap. Here's how it can help kids develop grit and resilience.

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Parents know that grit and inner motivation are building blocks to success, yet they sometimes struggle with how to instill these qualities in their children. Recent research finds they have a surprising — and often overlooked — key ingredient: pride.

“Hubristic pride” — the arrogance of feeling superior to others — was once considered to be the most serious of the seven deadly sins. But in recent years, researchers have focused on a healthier, more productive type of pride. “Authentic pride” — the deep personal satisfaction of hitting a valued goal — can encourage the kind of self-discipline and hard work it takes to stay motivated, overcome challenges and achieve.

A [study](#) last year by German researchers followed more than 3,000 German math students from grades five through nine. Students who reported feeling positive emotions such as “pride” and “enjoyment” related to their work had significantly better achievement over time than students who had the same level of ability but fewer positive emotions. (Negative emotions, such as shame, anxiety and hopelessness, were found to undermine achievement.)

Positive emotions such as pride are rewarding and generally reinforce the activity that generated them, said lead researcher Reinhard Pekrun from the University of Munich in an email. For example, anticipating pride — knowing how great it will feel to ace that math test — can “strongly motivate a student to invest the effort” that it takes to achieve that result, he adds.