

“You’re no genius”: Her father’s shutdowns made Angela Duckworth a world expert on grit

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[Angela Duckworth](#) is the world’s leading expert on “grit,” the much-hyped ingredient in personal success. As Duckworth defines it, grit is *passion* and sustained *persistence* applied toward long-term achievement, with no particular concern for rewards or recognition along the way. It combines resilience, ambition, and self-control in the pursuit of goals that take months, years, or even decades.

The University of Pennsylvania psychologist’s studies of grit began when she was teaching math to seventh graders. She realized IQ wasn’t the only factor separating successful students from those who struggled, and that grit—holding steadfast to a goal through time—was highly predictive of success. She then spent years analyzing the short- and long term effects of grit on people’s performance in school, at work, and in personal relationships, and published her research in [Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance](#), a New York Times bestseller documenting how grit predicts long-term success in nearly every realm of life (a theory also explained in her viral [TED Talk](#)).

Today Duckworth is a sought-after speaker on human behavior and the founder and CEO of [Character Lab](#), a nonprofit whose mission is to advance the science and practice of character development (including, but not limited to grit). Quartz caught up with her after her keynote address at the [Qualtrics X4 Experience Management Summit](#), a conference about brand experience, held in March in Salt Lake City, Utah. The following transcript has been lightly edited for length and clarity.