

Hello 757swim Family,

I hope everyone enjoyed Jay Chambers' presentation yesterday. As a coaching staff, we knew and requested the topic that he presented on, but we did not know how he would do it or what would be in the presentation. Personally, I really enjoyed his stories on the races that he shared, and I absolutely loved that he showed part of one of my favorite TED Talks. That talk, *Grit: the power of passion and perseverance*, by Angela Lee Duckworth is the topic of today's discussion.

Framed and hanging on my wall is a quotation passed down from my grandfather to my father, and then my father to me. It reads:

“Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

Of course, my father nor his father wrote this. Calvin Coolidge earned that honor. Never-the-less, this was something that has been important enough in my family to pass down through three generations. It's one of the reasons why Angela Duckworth's TED Talk spoke to me so much, and I agree with both of them (along with many other researchers and philosophers) that grit is the strongest predictor of success.

Grit is persistence and determination, especially when things are not going one's way. Knowing it's importance, one of the most difficult but important challenges we face as coaches is guiding swimmers to develop grit. Last week, I wrote about how failure is one of the best teachers, and perhaps the most important thing failure can teach is the discovery of grit.

For example, many 10 and under superstar swimmers achieve their success relatively easily compared to older superstars. These younger swimmers who rise to the top generally are gifted with great coordination and feel for the water (talent). Talent alone can be enough for some young swimmers to rise to the top. However, when they turn 11, these younger stars often struggle when they are asked to start training hard. Many will naturally do what they've always done to be successful without working their hardest. This allows their peers a chance to catch up which will lead to some failures in the young superstar's mind. However, their failure could be an important part of them discovering grit.

On the other side of the coin, swimmers who did not have tremendous success at a young age can develop grit more naturally. For an example that relates directly to our team, swimmers who aren't ready for Silver 2 when they turn 11 are placed in Silver 1. Some are fine with this group placement. Some are really not and see it as a failure. For those who were disappointed, Riley and I had the task of turning that disappointment into fuel for improvement. Most of these swimmers who felt slighted by their group placement are now some of the grittiest kids on the team. Though most are still currently trailing their Silver 2 peers in talent, with grit being the most important indicator of success, you can bet that they will be among the team's best swimmers before it's all said and done.

Building grit is tough. As mentioned above it is one of the most difficult challenges we face as coaches. Fortunately, there is more and more info out there every year on the subject. Angela mentions that a good place to start is by developing a growth mindset. As parents, try your best to help your kids develop this outlook. As swimmers, use your passion for the sport as a starting point, and use your failures as fuel. I'll end by leaving a link for this amazing 6-minute TED Talk.

<https://youtu.be/H14bBuluwB8>

Thanks for reading, and I hope everyone has a great week!

-Mike