



TRUE GRIT Program Guide

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The program guide is intended as a rough outline for the topic and can be adapted as you see fit to meet the needs of your program, school, or situation. The guide also includes copy-permissible pages for use in activities as a supplement to instruction. **Please note that color handouts are copyright-protected and duplication in any form is strictly prohibited.** See our website www.dreamcatchercurriculum.com for additional info, resources, and new curriculum topics.

➡ **BEFORE YOU BEGIN:** This workshop requires minimal prep, however, it is strongly recommended that you read and review the program guide along with the handout before meeting with students.

TRUE GRIT OBJECTIVE & INCLUDED TOPICS

To provide middle school through high students with strategies for fostering the characteristics of grit and resilience which are needed in preparation for the rigors of college and throughout adult life; *Life Skills, Self-Awareness, Interpersonal Skills, Resilience, Goal Setting, Overcoming Obstacles, Accepting Failure, Emotional Intelligence, Mindfulness*

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP/SESSION

True Grit is designed as a transitional topic for middle through college level students, although the advice/tips provided on the handout would be appropriate for *any* level of student. Review the activities on this guide to determine if age-appropriate for delivery to upper level participants. It might be preferable to skip or substitute activities depending on what's best for your participants. Make copies of the included activities and materials as you see fit for the workshop. The handout is content-heavy and could easily stand alone if you have limited time.

STEP ONE TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

Before providing the handout, introduce the topic of GRIT by asking participants what they believe it means to be "gritty" or to have grit. Follow up by asking which characteristics one might require to bounce back from failure. Can they think of any examples of people who demonstrated grit or resilience? Some additional questions for discussion:

What made that person overcome their obstacles when others who faced similar obstacles gave up?

Are there benefits to failure?

Think about a time that you gave up or quit when pursuing a goal... why did you quit? Any regrets?

Is it better to try and fail than to simply give up?

Do you believe that intelligence has an impact on the ability to be gritty?

Distribute the TRUE GRIT handout to students. Read aloud the text inside the "sun" graphic that further introduces the topic. Allow for any follow-up discussion before providing a few minutes of quiet think time for students to read and reflect upon the quotes at the top of the handout. Read aloud the remaining text on the lower half of the cover page.

STEP TWO TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

Instruct participants to open the handout. Read aloud (or ask for a volunteer to read) the introduction at the top of the page. Read the box defining GRIT. Students should write down (in the space provided) the following definition for perseverance: **a steady effort to get something done despite difficulty or failure.**

Move to the next box providing additional details about GRIT. Read aloud the text, instructing students to underline wording that is **bolded** (to better emphasize those important statements/concepts). Instruct students to jot down at least 5 goals they want to work toward (using the "Scratch Your Brain" sheet provided on this guide or a scrap piece of paper). Mention that these goals need to be things about which they are truly passionate.

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STEP TWO (CONTINUED)

FUN FACT to share with students:

You are 42% more likely to achieve your goals simply by writing them down on a regular basis, according to Dr. Gail Matthews, psychology professor at Dominican University in California. The likelihood that you'll make your goals a reality increases even more if you share your written goals with a trusted friend (or family member) who believes in your ability to succeed (what Dr. Matthews calls a "partner in believing"). Frequently writing down goals leads to success because of how the brain works: the right hemisphere is imaginative and likes to dream about goals, whereas the left hemisphere is literal and logical. Physically writing a goal helps the two hemispheres create neural connections, which aids in achieving the goal by igniting an entirely new dimension of consciousness, planting a seed in your subconscious for making that dream a reality.

Cover the section *Why Resilience Matters*, reminding students to underline the bolded text as you proceed.

STEP THREE TIME: 10-15 MINUTES

Read aloud the box *Let Failure Be a Kick in the Pants*, providing a minute of think time to consider the questions at the end. Next, using the FAIL FORWARD CHALLENGE (included in this guide), put students in groups of 4 or 5 (depending on size of class/workshop). Distribute one activity sheet one per student.

DreamCatcher Tip: Photocopy activity sheets on different colors of paper (one color per number of groups you plan to have for the workshop). Have all students with **orange** sheets form a group, all those with **yellow** form a group, etc.

If grouping by color, have students get into their color group. Since this is a group activity, each student must participate in order to "win." Groups will race to finish the matching activity, as assigned on the sheet. The first group to correctly match all *failures* to *winners* will be the victors. Award prizes to the winning group. See the FAIL FORWARD answers (with extra info to share) in the table below.

EPIC FAIL 1:	J.K. ROWLING	Today worth billions of dollars, the Harry Potter franchise of books and films has become the best-selling series of all time and the highest grossing film series in history, officially making J.K. Rowling richer than the Queen of England.
EPIC FAIL 2:	WALT DISNEY	Walt Disney became the most prolific and innovative creators in the world of animation. He created an empire of theme parks, feature films, and television shows, virtually redefining the meaning of childhood in America.
EPIC FAIL 3:	OPRAH WINFREY	Oprah has amassed a media empire with a net worth (in 2020) of \$2.6 billion, making her the richest self-made woman in the country and the richest African American of the 20th century. Her influence spreads across all forms of media: magazines, books, television, films, news, etc.
EPIC FAIL 4:	HARLAND SANDERS	Also known as Colonel Sanders, he founded the fried chicken empire of Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) known for its secret herbs and spices recipe. It is one of the most recognizable franchises in the world, with over 23,000 locations.
EPIC FAIL 5:	MICHAEL JORDAN	Jordan is widely considered one of the greatest basketball players of all time. He retired from the NBA, but remains a businessman and principal owner of the Charlotte Hornets. His net worth (in 2020) is estimated at \$2.1 billion. He remains one of the highest paid athletes ever.
EPIC FAIL 6:	LADY GAGA	The pop icon is a champion of LGBTQ rights and speaks out on behalf of victims of bullying and assault. Her real name is Stefani Germanotta and she's won Grammys, Golden Globes, awards from the Songwriter Hall of Fame, and many more. Her net worth (in 2020) is \$320 million.
EPIC FAIL 7:	JAY Z	In spring of 2017, Jay Z became the first rapper ever inducted into the Songwriter Hall of Fame. A winner of multiple Grammy awards, he is a music mogul and entrepreneur whose net worth (according to Forbes in 2020) is \$1 billion. He also happens to be married to Beyonce.

If time allows, you might mention other famous achievers who struggled with failure: Vincent Van Gogh (who only sold one painting in his lifetime, yet painted 900); Sir James Dyson (who made 5,126 failed attempts over 15 years to create a bagless vacuum cleaner); and Emily Dickinson (who wrote 1,800 poems but published less than a dozen while alive). ***What do these achievers have in common? If you were in their position, would you have given up?***

STEP THREE (CONTINUED)

Consider showing the clip of Denzel Washington's *Fall Forward* speech from University of Pennsylvania commencement, using a computer with internet access or mobile device (your phone would work fine to listen to his remarks without viewing the clip). The speech consolidates the subject of resilience with using failures as inspiration. At about two minutes long, it is well worth the time (although there are longer clips of this speech online if you want to use a longer version). If time is short, however, encourage students watch on their own after the workshop. (Denzel has another speech called "Don't Be Afraid to Fail Big" that might be worth watching, as well.) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEG55iB5tFA>

STEP FOUR TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

Return to handout to cover the section *How to Round Up Resilience*, making sure to review the items within the lasso graphics and allowing for discussion as time allows. For the lasso section *Make a Habit of Gratitude*, ask students to turn to the back side of the *Scratch Your Brain* sheet (or a piece of scrap paper) to make a list of all things for which they are grateful. Set a timer for two minutes (or play a two minute segment of "brain music" while students make their list). Afterward, challenge students to make this exercise in gratitude a habit. Before moving on to the EQ part of the handout, briefly cover *Grit Imposters* at the bottom of the page.

DreamCatcher Tip: During times of concentration in a workshop, consider playing "brain" music at a quiet level. Brain music should have no lyrics, with a slow rhythm of 40-60 beats per minute, such as Baroque classical music. This is a great way to incorporate a sense of mindfulness, plus this kind of music results in a "relaxed alertness" of the brain, resulting in increased concentration, deeper learning, and improved memory.

STEP FIVE TIME: 10 MINUTES

Move to the EQ section of the handout. Read aloud the introduction about the concept of Emotional Intelligence. Before covering the characteristics of EQ, encourage students to "throw a lasso" around (or circle) those in which they need to improve or work to develop. Be sure to cover the concepts of EMPATHY and HUMILITY when they appear in the text. Ask students to write down the definitions, using the *Scratch Your Brain* sheet or the margin of the handout.

EMPATHY: to be able to understand and share the feelings or emotions of another person

HUMILITY: a modest view of one's importance; not thinking you are better than other people

STEP SIX TIME: 5-10 MINUTES

Before covering the back page of the handout, ask students to stand up and take 3 deep breaths (breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth) to help clear their thoughts in preparation to learn about mindfulness. Read aloud the *Get Your Head in the Clouds* section of the back page. If time allows, provide 2 minutes of daydream time for students to simply zone out. You could play brain music or simply let everyone sit in silence. Move on to review the remaining sections of the handout, encouraging comments and feedback as you see fit.

LAST STEP TIME REMAINING

Provide assessment (see copy-permissible sheet included with this guide) to a sampling of students and collect before students are dismissed.

LEARNING OUTCOME

By the end of this session, students will have learned strategies for how to be gritty and resilient in times of adversity. Through embracing failures as learning experiences, setting goals for achievement, developing emotional intelligence, and practicing mindfulness, students will have tools to utilize from now throughout college and into adult life.

FAIL FORWARD CHALLENGE - This activity is very flexible: students can race in teams (see **Step 3** for color grouping idea), discuss in small groups (writing answers on their own activity sheets), or even compete in a marathon-style race. For that, you would need to enlarge to copies and pre-cut the EPIC FAIL boxes before the workshop. Attach FAILS to a large poster board for team members to take turns relaying to attach their answers. Teams need scissors and tape/glue for this version of the activity (or use Post-It Notes to write answers, just be sure to provide different color Post-It notes to each team). Feel free to adapt or establish any rules as you see fit.

“FAIL FORWARD” CHALLENGE

INSTRUCTIONS: Match the following EPIC FAILS to the famous person who managed to FAIL FORWARD until they were a success. Race with other teams to see who can match all FAILS correctly in the shortest amount of time.



TRUE STORY: Everybody fails. Some people fail more than others, which can be due to a variety of factors (not all of which may be within your control). The fact is, disappointment and failure are part of the human experience. Try not to let it get you down and realize that during times of adversity, it's up to YOU to make the best of the worst experience. If you're going to fail, FAIL FORWARD. The individuals in this activity used their failures as motivation to be resilient and keep going.

EPIC FAIL 1:

After her mother died and her marriage ended in divorce, this single mother was jobless and near penniless. She struggled with hours of severe depression and ultimately had to sign up for welfare assistance. In an attempt to be a writer, she typed several chapters on an old typewriter and approached publishers with her story, only to be rejected by 12 major publishing companies. One publisher told her to find another job. To sum up her feelings about struggle, she said: *“It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all – in which case, you fail by default.”*

EPIC FAIL 2:

Fired by his editor at the *Kansas City Star* newspaper because he “lacked imagination and had no good ideas,” he had to leave his job in disgrace. His first attempt at owning a business ended in bankruptcy, resulting in financial ruin. After moving to California to start over and become a cartoonist, he lost the rights to his beloved creation and first commercial character, *Lucky Rabbit*. About failure, he said: *“I think it's important to have a good hard failure when you're young... because it makes you kind of aware of what can happen to you. Because of it I've never had any fear in my whole life when we've been near collapse and all of that. I've never been afraid.”*

EPIC FAIL 3:

Talk about a rough start in life: born to a low-income, teenaged mother in terrible living conditions, this person was abused by her uncle, cousin, and a family friend starting at the age of nine. At the age of 14 she became pregnant but her son died soon after birth. She was shuffled to another state to live with her father and went on to college, but struggled to establish a career in broadcasting. She was fired from her first job for being “too emotionally invested in her stories” and fired later on for being “unfit for television.” Her upbeat comment about struggle: *“There is no such thing as failure. Failure is just life trying to move us in another direction.”*

EPIC FAIL 4:

In a life filled with financial struggle, he jumped from one low-paying job to the next, working as a farm hand, street car conductor, and steamboat operator. He was fired from dozens of jobs before opening a small restaurant only to have it fail miserably when a new highway was built that cut off customer access. Not giving up on his idea of running a restaurant with a special recipe as the draw, he traveled around the country pitching the idea to investors, being told repeatedly that his idea wasn't worth the investment. It took nearly a decade of hearing “no” before he finally found someone willing to give him a chance. By the time he achieved success, he was 65 years old.

EPIC FAIL 5:

He tried out for the high school varsity basketball team but didn't make the cut, a rejection that stung so badly he went home and cried. As an adult he struggled with a severe gambling addiction that resulted in millions of dollars in debts and suspension from his job. His father was murdered by two teenagers during a robbery attempt. His marriage crumbled into divorce. Yet still, his thoughts about failure are surprisingly optimistic: *“I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. On 26 occasions I have been entrusted to take the game winning shot, and I missed. I have failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”*

EPIC FAIL 6:

Mercilessly bullied as a child and young adult, she struggled to overcome harassment in school. She was physically assaulted at age 19 which resulted in a PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) diagnosis. After years of struggle to break into the music business, she finally signed with a record company, but was dropped after only three weeks. Music industry reps told her that she wasn't pretty enough to be a headline singer and that the songs she had written would never be hits. Later in her adult life she struggled with depression, anxiety, and an eating disorder. She has had to overcome several health issues and even required hip surgery.

EPIC FAIL 7:

He grew up in the drug-infested Marcy Housing Projects of Brooklyn, New York and worked to perfect his musical style from a young age, using his impoverished background as inspiration for his music. When he was only 11, his father left the family. This began a rough adolescence of dealing drugs and dabbling in gun violence, experiences that influenced his lyrics. After rejections by multiple music labels, he and his friends sold homemade music CDs from the trunk of a car in New York City. Later in his career his was charged with allegedly stabbing someone at a record release party for which he plead to a criminal misdemeanor and served three years probation.

FOR THE WIN:

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Sources: <http://www.businessinsider.com/successful-people-who-failed-at-first-2015-7/>; <http://college.usatoday.com/2012/12/01/5-famous-people-who-failed-their-way-to-success/>; <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/productivity/15-highly-successful-people-who-failed-their-way-success.html>

Brain research has discovered that the simple act of putting pencil to paper (whether to write down goals, to-do lists, random ideas, or even doodling) can have a positive impact on your ability to handle stress, process your thoughts, and improve memory. Researchers in psychology have further discovered the benefits of writing down your goals as a means of subconscious motivation. **Writing down what you plan to accomplish means you have better odds at actually completing your goals.**

Find some scratch paper (here you go!) or use a notebook to **develop the habit of writing daily.** The next time a stressful event comes up (like a test competition, etc.) write out your feelings before the activity. This mindfulness practice alleviates anxiety and helps focus your brain on the task at hand, clearing your brain of extra clutter.

SCRATCH YOUR BRAIN IN THIS SPACE:

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SCRATCH YOUR BRAIN IN THIS SPACE:

5 GOALS TO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH:

START YOUR GRATITUDE LIST ON THE BACK...

GOOD TO KNOW:
It takes approximately 21 days to form a habit (whether good or bad).

Find an "accountability buddy" who will ask you at the end of each week if you've practiced your good habit every day. Reward yourself if you can honestly make it to 21 days (or more) of daily practice. Then challenge yourself to new good habits!

Source: www.psychologytoday.com; *Gift & Bear It Activity Guide* (Zentec, 2015)
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TRUE GRIT ASSESSMENT

According to Dr. Angela Duckworth, what are the **TWO** qualities needed for one to have **GRIT**?

In your own words, what does it mean to be **RESILIENT**? How can that be beneficial to you in college?

Provide at least **ONE** characteristic of **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE** that you could work to improve:

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