

# PROMOTING COLLEGE STUDENTS' RESILIENCE AND GRIT WITH SELF-DETERMINATION PRACTICES

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# OH, TO BE 18 AGAIN...!



This generation of millennials has:

- \* higher GPA's,
- \* more AP credits,
- \* more service learning hours,
- \* more advanced technology skills,

and has applied to and been accepted into more colleges than any prior generation.

# BUT THEY ARE PAYING A HIGH PRICE...

- ▶ Large numbers of emotionally overwhelmed undergraduates

- ▶ 30% reported feeling “so depressed that it was difficult to function”
- ▶ 50% felt “overwhelming anxiety” in the past 12 months

- American College Health Association (2011)

- ▶ 25% of college students reported diagnosis/treatment of mental health condition within past year

- ▶ 11% treated for anxiety
- ▶ 10% treated for depression
- ▶ 80% felt overwhelmed by all they had to do
- ▶ 45% felt at times that things were hopeless

- American College Mental Health Association (2012)

- ▶ What price academics?

- ▶ 87% of 1,502 first-year U.S. college students reported much greater emphasis on academic preparation than emotional readiness
- ▶ 60% wished they had received more help preparing emotionally for college
- ▶ 50% felt stressed most or all of the time during Year 1
- ▶ 36% reported they were not in control of managing day-to-day stress

- The JED Foundation (2015)

# INSPIRATION FOR TODAY

## Becoming Self-Determined: Creating Thoughtful Learners in a Standards-Driven, Admissions-Frenzied Culture

Sharon Field, Ed.D. and David R. Parker, Ph.D. (Editors)



*Featuring chapters about:*

- Self-Determination (theory and practice)
- Appreciative Advising
- Universal Design for Instruction
- Academic Coaching
- Contemplative Practices
- Involving Families
- Resilience and Grit
- Additional Resources

# LEARNING OBJECTIVES...

- ▶ Define self-determination, resilience and grit
- ▶ Identify cultural factors that can limit undergraduates' resilience, grit and self-determination
- ▶ Describe 5 examples of current campus practices that strengthen students' emotional fortitude
- ▶ Q&A/Discussion

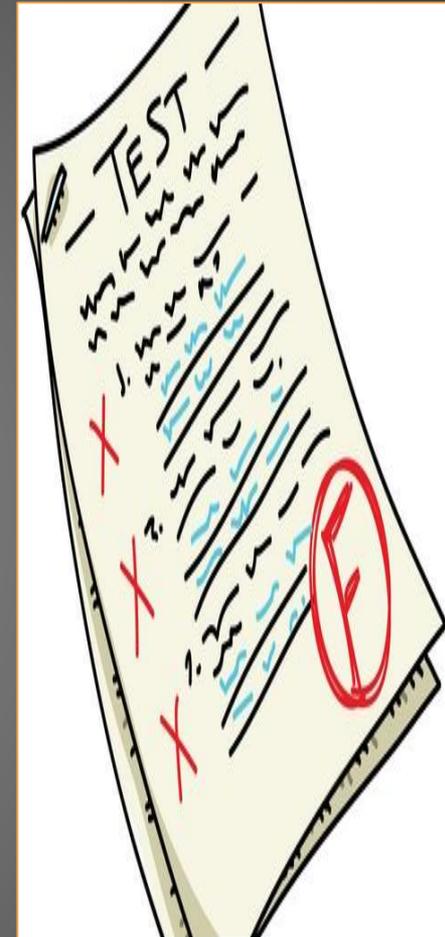
# UNDERSTANDING RESILIENCE

- ▶ Resilience is the ability to maintain positive adjustment under challenging life conditions. It is the ability to “bounce back.”

- Masten (1994)

- ▶ Factors that contribute to resilience:
  - ▶ creating meaningful relationships with others
  - ▶ the ability to seek assistance and utilize resources
  - ▶ awareness of one’s strengths and assets
  - ▶ belief in self; a sense of personal agency
  - ▶ the ability to problem solve
  - ▶ the ability to make realistic plans/carry them out

- Comaz-Dias et al. (2011)



# UNDERSTANDING GRIT

- ▶ Grit is a combination of “perseverance and passion for long-term goals”
  - Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews & Kelly (2007)
- ▶ Gritty individuals maintain “effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress”
  - Duckworth et al. (2007, p. 1088)
- ▶ Grit is associated with courage, conscientiousness, endurance, resilience, and striving for excellence
  - Perlis (2013)



# BENEFITS OF RESILIENCE AND GRIT

- ▶ Youth with high levels of resilience show positive outcomes in academic achievement, prosocial behavior, mental health, and peer acceptance.

- Masten (2001)

- ▶ Gritty individuals are able to continue working toward their goals when things get hard, boring, or disappointing.

- Duckworth et al. (2007)

- ▶ Gritty individuals are more likely to go further in their education and less likely to make career changes.

- Duckworth & Quinn (2009)

- ▶ Gritty students at an elite university reported higher GPA's than their classmates with less grit.

- Duckworth et al.

(2007)

# DEFINING SELF-DETERMINATION

- ▶ “The capacity to choose and to have those choices be the determinants of one’s actions” strengthens intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 38)
  - ▶ *autonomy, relatedness, competence*
- ▶ “One’s ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (Field & Hoffman, 1994, p. 164)
- ▶ *Self-determined college students have developed a sense of autonomy, competence, and connectivity that allows them to learn from their experiences and manage stress and failure with grit and resilience.*

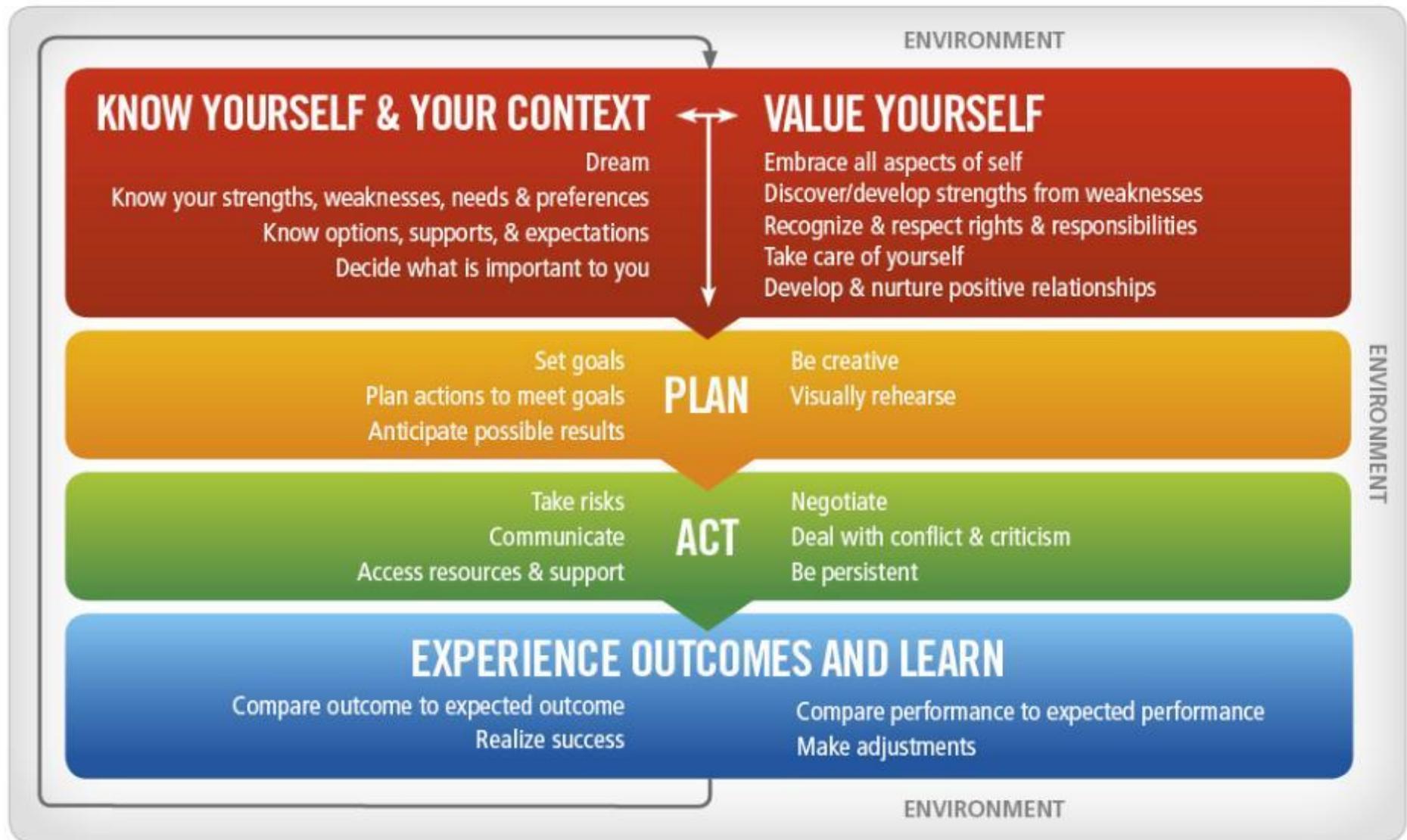
## *Factors that restrict the development of self-determination:*

- Adhere to a “quick fix” mindset
- Overly control students’ choices
- Discourage thoughtful risk taking
- Value outcomes but not efforts
- Minimize efforts to learn from past experiences

*Field & Parker (2016)*



# An Action Model for Self-Determination



# SELF-DETERMINED LEARNERS



- ▶ “To create intrinsic motivation, students have to define personal success in their own context and then set specific goals based on that definition. The greatest mistake we can make is assuming that students can’t identify what’s important to them.
  - Joseph and Matthew Moheban (220 Youth Leadership)
- ✓ **Take calculated risks**
- ✓ **Learn from disappointing outcomes**
- ✓ **Persist at challenging goals over time**
- ✓ **View college as a time to explore your own voice and determine what matters to YOU.**

# RESTRICTIVE CULTURAL FACTORS

## ▶ Economic Realities in Post-recession America

### ▶ “Do Overs” in K-12 Settings

“The ‘make-up’ work expectation is damaging. Students are taught, artificially, that time can be undone by not being allowed to experience the natural consequences of their actions. They learn the false lesson that life provides them with perpetual do-overs. The administration is just interested in doing whatever it takes to get the students through and achieve the targets they are accountable for.”

- Peter Gray (Boston University)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn/201511/causes-students-emotional-fragility-five-perspectives>

### ▶ Parents of the “Bubble-Wrap” Generation

“What I saw was many college students who didn’t seem to have ever experienced much failure, actual failure. My sense is that, with the best of intentions, parents who are *uberinvolved* are undercutting their kids’ chances of developing self efficacy.”

- Julia Lythcott-Haims (Dean of Freshman and Undergraduate Advising, Stanford University)

<http://chronicle.com/article/Todays-Fail-Safe-Students/231019>

# RESTRICTIVE CULTURAL FACTORS

## ➤ How the Facebook Generation Rolls

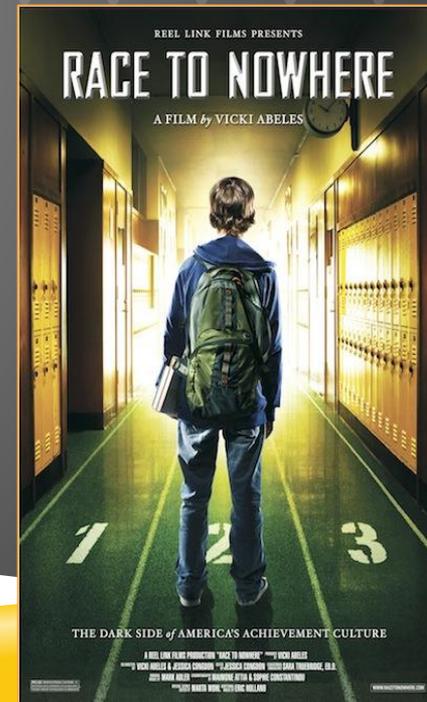
“It is hard to develop an authentic sense of self when there is constant pressure to adopt a socially facile, highly competitive, performance-oriented, unblemished ‘self’ that is promoted by omnipresent adults. This may encourage some children to perform at high levels, but, more important, it also encourages dependency, depression, and a truncated sense of self in most children.”

- Madeline Levine, *The Price of Privilege* (2006, p. 95)

## ➤ College Recruitment Run Amok?

“College is a singular opportunity to rummage through and luxuriate in ideas, to give your brain a vigorous workout and your soul a thorough investigation, to realize how very large the world is and to contemplate your desired place in it. And that’s being lost in the admissions mania, which sends the message that college is a sanctum to be breached – a border to be crossed – rather than a land to be inhabited and tilled for all it’s worth.”

- Frank Bruni (The New York Times)  
*Where You Go Is Not Who You Will Be: An Antidote to the College Admissions Mania* (2015, p. 10)



# FOSTERING RESILIENCE AND GRIT

- ▶ Recognize the huge cultural leap incoming students take as they leave high school and home
- ▶ Help students form supportive relationships
- ▶ Normalize failure as growth opportunities
- ▶ Foster a sense of community
- ▶ Give learners meaningful choices
- ▶ Teach students how to replace negative self-talk with positive problem solving
- ▶ Publicize models of resilience and grit
- ▶ Provide direct instruction in persistence and the benefits of emotional fortitude
- ▶ Help parents developing coaching skills
- ▶ Infuse growth mindset into challenging experiences
  - Duckworth & Quinn (2009); Field & Parker (2016); Gerstein (2013); Silva & White (2013)

**See Handout #1:**  
Practical Strategies: Approaches  
for Promoting Students'  
Resilience and Grit

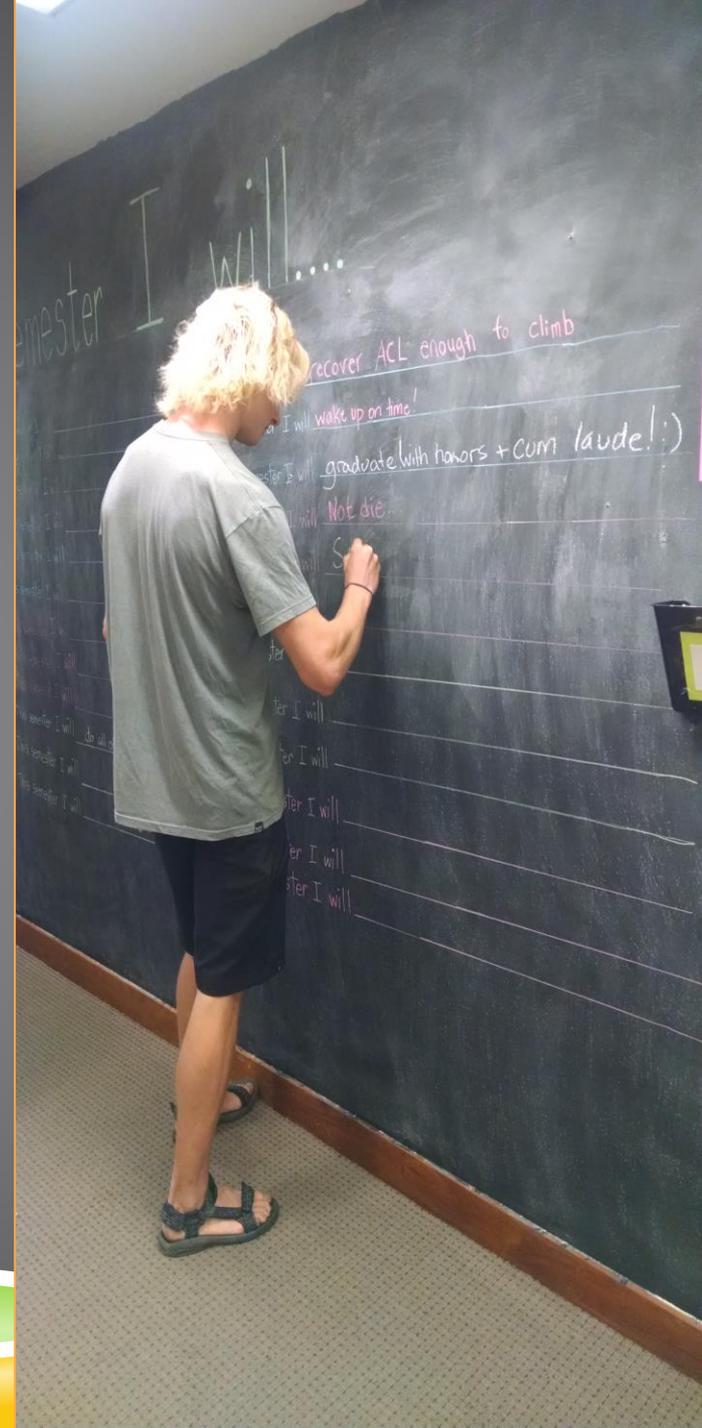
# CAMPUS PRACTICES: RESILIENCE

- ▶ Harvard's "The Success-Failure Project"  
<http://resilienceconsortium.bsc.harvard.edu>
- ▶ Stanford's Resilience Project  
<https://undergrad.stanford.edu/resilience>
- ▶ University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Engineering School)  
<https://publish.illinois.edu/engineering-education-research/projects/>
- ▶ Evergreen State College's *Bouncing Back: Writing Personal Resilience*  
<http://evergreen.edu/catalog/2014-15/programs/bouncingbackwritingpersonalresilience-11734>

**See Handout #2:**  
Resilience and Grit  
Resources

# CAMPUS PRACTICES: GRIT

- ▶ Germanna Community College's GRIT Series <http://www.germannacollege.edu/goal-realization-workshops/>
- ▶ NASPA's CU Thrive Website <http://cuthrive-naspa.personaladvantage.com>
- ▶ Green Mountain College's "This Semester I Will..." Community Interaction Board
  - Christina Fabrey  
Director, Center for Advising and Achievement  
Green Mountain College



# Q&A/DISCUSSION

- ▶ Other reasons for reduced resilience and grit?
- ▶ Your own campus practices designed to strengthen students' emotional fortitude?
- ▶ Challenges you face in addressing this issue?



*Thank you very much for your involvement today!*