

For more information about Dr. Caren Baruch-Feldman and her book, *The Grit Guide for Childs*, visit [www.drbaruchfeldman.com](http://www.drbaruchfeldman.com).

## Helping Children Grow Their Grit

### Make It about “Yes!”

We often try to be gritty by telling ourselves “no”—no more feeling anxious, no more procrastinating. However, focusing on the no makes things harder. Help your child find the *positive* in growing her grit—the “yes”—and she will be more likely to persevere. Encourage your child to see her grit as a “want to” rather than a “have to.” If she can’t find a reason to grow her grit for herself, show her how growing her grit can be meaningful to others.

### Be Optimistic and Fail Forward

Research shows that having an optimistic mindset is linked to grit. Optimists are more likely to think of bad things that happen as temporary and specific events set against a backdrop of mostly good. When we tell ourselves we failed because of something temporary and specific, we are more likely to keep trying. Show your child that mistakes are part of the process and setbacks are opportunities for learning. Teach your child the acronym F.A.I.L.—a “fail” is just a “First Attempt In Learning.”

### Set Effective Goals

Help your child set goals that are specific, measurable, and that stretch them. Encourage your child to write his goals down and place them somewhere he will see them every day—on the bathroom mirror or as a daily reminder on his phone. Let your child know there may be days when he doesn’t meet his goal, but instead of putting himself down, remind him to learn from it. Be sure he acknowledges and savor all his wins, no matter how small.

### Practice Makes Perfect

Give your child opportunities to practice their gritty behavior, for it is only through practice that behavior changes. Teach your child about **deliberate practice**, a type of focused and intentional practice combined with feedback and lots of repetition. (Think of a basketball player taking 3-point shots over and over again or a violinist playing the same section of music again and again.)

### **Turn Gritty Behavior into a Habit**

Gritty people don't exert self-control all day long; rather, they engage in **habits** that promote grit. When an activity becomes a habit, it is automatic and no longer needs to draw upon the limited resource of willpower. Remind your child that changing habits is hard, but if she is diligent and consistent, these new routines will become as automatic as her old bad habits.

### **Find a Cheerleader and Accountability Partner**

Research shows that having a **charismatic adult**, someone from whom we can gather strength, is key to coping with stress and building perseverance. When we connect with others we have improved focus, emotional regulation, even immune functioning. Help your child find an accountability partner, someone who gives him support and keeps him on track while pursuing his goal.

### **Develop a Community of Grit**

Gritty people don't just have *one* person they can count on. They are surrounded by a *community* of grit, people who motivate and ignite each other's passions and purpose. Teach your child to surround herself with gritty people, and she is more likely to be gritty herself.

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