

Growing Grit:

How to succeed in your online coursework

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*A proposed development session for at-risk, online students.
Julianna Donaher EDU6050*

The Session

Type: Synchronous
Platform: Zoom
Capacity: 25 students

Itinerary:

-Introductions/Icebreakers

-What is Grit?

-Reflective exercise: Preparation

-How does preparation build grit?

-Reflective Exercise: Self Perception

-How does Self Perception build grit?

-Reflective Exercise: Expectations

-How does managing expectation build grit?

-Reflective Exercise: Motivation

-How does motivation build grit?

-Closing Exercise: SMART goal setting

-Progress sharing/discussion/questions

Itinerary Breakdown: Introduction/Icebreakers

- Purpose: Provides a brief window as students are entering the session to introduce themselves.
- Prompt: “As you’re coming, feel free to turn on your mic and introduce yourself, tell us where you’re from, what you’re studying and what you hope to get out of this session.”
- To conclude: Presenter introduces themselves and begins the session.

Itinerary Breakdown: What is Grit?

- Purpose: Introduce the overarching topic and share research into why we talk about grit when we talk about success
- [Link to Potential Language.](#)
- To conclude: Introduce the steps in reflection we're going to be discussing today: preparation, self perception, expectation and motivation.

Itinerary Breakdown: Reflective exercise, Preparation

Write down some notes on either of the following prompts:

Think about a time you felt very prepared.

How did you get that way? What effect did it have on the outcome of the event?

How can you recreate that approach for your course?

OR

Think about a time you felt unprepared.

Why did that happen? What effect did it have on your success?

How can you avoid that effect in your coursework?

Itinerary Breakdown: How does preparation build grit?

- Purpose: Share research into the efficacy of making an “emergency plan” in your coursework. Encourage students to answer the following questions:
 - How am I building a study schedule that allows for unexpected obstacles?
 - Who can I talk to if unavoidable obstacles, like sickness occur?
 - Who is my accountability buddy if I find myself less motivated to log in?
 - What immediate tasks can I do if I find myself feeling anxious about my coursework?

Itinerary Breakdown: Reflective Exercise, Self Perception

Prompt: Think back to how you have described your “student self” to others.

Raise your digital hand when you hear phrases that you have said about yourself.

- *I was never a good student.*
- *My teachers hated me.*
- *I'm bad at math.*
- *I'm bad at taking tests.*
- *I can't write essays for the life of me.*
- *I'm just trying to survive school and get this degree.*

Conclusion: Presenter will introduce the idea that these self perceptions were never accurate and are constructed based on an unreliable web of outside influences.

Itinerary Breakdown: How does Self Perception build grit?

Purpose: The presenter will introduce research into the power of self perception. Students will be introduced to the idea that a negative mindset can undermine even the most powerful of study plans.

After guiding students to recognize how they perceive themselves, they will then be provided with tools to reframe their perception.

Basic psychological exercises into reframing and identify false thought patterns may be included if time allows.

Itinerary Breakdown: Reflective Exercise, Expectations

Answer the following questions clearly and succinctly on a sheet of paper. Remember, no one will ever see your responses!

- Do you feel this course will be easier than other, in-person course?
- Do you feel you can cut corners in an online course easier than you can in person?
- Do you feel you can finish this class at your own pace, custom to your non-academic schedule?
- Do you feel a professor won't notice you in this online course?

Finally, reflect on what you know of your course—*are all of your answers 100% true?* Or do you need to manage your expectations to achieve success?

Itinerary Breakdown: How does managing expectation build grit?

- Purpose: Share the reality of how an incorrect idea of a course can throw off your progress.
- This portion of the presentation will share real case studies in which students developed incorrect notions into the nature of their coursework and therefore dropped out.
- Outline the three phases of culture shock in online learning: The honeymoon phase, the culture shock, and the adjustment to online learning.

Itinerary Breakdown: Reflective Exercise, Motivation

List your top three motivations for taking this course on a sheet of paper.

List your top three motivations for getting this degree on a sheet of paper.

Next, take some time to write about your ideal imagined life in five years. What does your home look like? What is your job? What do you do every day? How do you feel?

Now go back and identify 3 ways this course is getting you closer to that imagined life.

Review your reflections and identify patterns and take aways. What aspects are the most powerful and personal to you?

On a sticky note, write down your version of the following:

“I am here because I want...”

Post your newly discovered motivation wherever you study.

Itinerary Breakdown: How does motivation build grit?

- Purpose: Share research into the power of true, significant intrinsic motivation.
- Follow up: share tools for rebuilding motivation and developing nontraditional motivators (“I am learning calculus so I can prove why it is useless to learn Calculus. But either way I am learning Calculus.”)

Itinerary Breakdown: Closing Exercise, SMART goal setting

Purpose: Using sites like [this one](#), identify and define SMART goals.

If time allows, share this [TED talk on SMART goals](#).

Provide time for students to create their own, course specific SMART goals.

Encourage students to take time after the call to create SMART goals for other aspects of their life.

Itinerary Breakdown: Progress sharing/discussion/questions

Purpose: Provide time for students to discuss with one another what their takeaways have been.

Prompts: Let's hear from three people on the following prompt. Take a second to read the prompt. Then, raise your digital hand if you'd like to share.

-What is one discovery you have made about yourself from this session?

Second Prompt, same opportunity for sharing:

-What is one step you will now take to improve your chance of success in online learning?

And finally, do you have any questions for myself or your peers?

Link to the infographic:

In a followup email, I will provide students with this infographic, as well as a feedback survey.

My infographic:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAEhCLFJlb8/riKJJV6jb8S1aw1HIVAD0A/view?utm_content=DAEhCLFJlb8&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton

Why this topic?

We all know the boom in online, asynchronous learning is of enormous influence on the culture of US education and very likely here to stay. But are our students prepared? Do they have the skills to self regulate their work, or are they headed for a failure that permanently cements a devastating conclusion—“I’m just bad at online school” or worse: “I’m just bad at school.” If students are lacking the gritty traits necessary to complete courses and achieve outcomes they are proud of, whose responsibility is it to teach them how to do so? For many brick and mortar institutions the current answer seems to be “not ours...”

At work, I am constantly battling the realities of students who arrive at our online course work ill prepared for its reality. In an attempt to bridge those gaps in expectations and optimize those outcomes, I am designing curriculum to teach them how to work smarter—not harder.

Who for?

The target audience of my session will include students who are falling behind in their online coursework and are at risk of exiting the program. The information and tone will walk the line between accessible to younger people (18-21) and not reductive to older, less traditional learners.

Why me?

As an online learner, and a professional with several years experience advising online students, I have both empathy and quantitative data to support my suggestions.

Overall purpose:

To recap, this session aims to arm students with the knowledge and motivation to pass their online course and receive fulfillment from its content.

Setting

In my ideal scenario, this will be a synchronous zoom session.

Tools

I have used Canva to create my infographic. I found this tool to be the most versatile and conducive to my needs. The templates provided were especially helpful and allowed me to get the creative juices flowing without too much extraneous load.

References

Ambrose, S.A. & Lovett, M.C. (2014). Prior knowledge is more than content: skills and beliefs also impact learning. In V.A. Benassi, C.E. Overson, & C.M. Hakala (Eds.), *Applying science of learning in education: Infusing psychological science into the curriculum* (pp. 7-19).

Duckworth, A. L., Peterson, C., Matthews, M. D., & Kelly, D. R. (2007). Grit: perseverance and passion for long-term goals. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 92(6), 1087–1101. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1087>

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