

The Two Traits More Important Than IQ

Red Pill Theory | 8 July, 2018 | by Avery

It is common knowledge that intelligence is the most important determinant of personal success. It's well known, but it's also untrue. Research has shown that although intelligence is valuable, there are several traits that even more powerfully predict personal success.

Whereas intelligence is at least partly – an inherited trait, these traits of high achievers are completely learnable.

1. A Growth Mindset



Henry Ford famously said, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't—you're right." Those provocative words have now been validated by a large body of psychological research.

Psychologist Carol Dweck writes, "People with a growth mindset think of talents and abilities as things they can develop as potentials to come to fruition through effort. In a fixed mindset (people) believe their basic abilities, their intelligence, their talents, are just fixed traits." Research on the growth mindset has shown that success or failure is largely a self-fulfilling prophecy. Students with a growth mindset do significantly better in school than those who have a static mindset, this is because a static mindset is a psychological trap.

Let's say you're taking English 101 in college and you get your first paper back and you got a D, and you're both frustrated and disappointed by that. Well, if you have a static mindset, you're going to think something like, "I'm just not good at English."

Or, "My teacher sucks."

Or, "Maybe I'm not smart enough to do well in college."

Those thoughts are harmful enough by themselves, but what's worse is the effect they have on your behavior. Once you've told yourself you're just not good at English, what are you going to do the next time you get assigned an essay, are you going to put in hours of effort just to get another bad grade? Of course not, you're going to play Fortnite for four hours and then write a half-assed essay at the last minute, why try hard when doing so will only end in disappointment?

People with a static mindset see failure as a reflection of who they are. If they get a bad grade, it means they're not smart, if they get rejected for a date, it means they're not attractive – this becomes a pernicious cycle in which a single failure cascades into continual failure. Once you've identified yourself as unintelligent or untalented, there's no reason for you to do the things that could lead to success in the first place.

A growth mindset creates a self-fulfilling prophecy, too, but in the opposite direction. If someone with a growth mindset were to get a D on their first paper, they would think, "I didn't put enough effort into that essay, I'm going to do better next time." Or, "I'm going to ask the teacher what I should focus on to improve my writing." Then, that student would work hard and most likely, they would get a better grade on their next paper. This would reinforce that hard work pays off and will lead the person to believe in their ability to improve their performance even further.

Fortunately, a growth mindset can be learned. The key is to simply to know what a growth mindset is and to understand the impact your mindset has on your performance. Research by Angela Duckworth has

shown that students with a growth mindset were more likely to graduate high school, and the effect was even larger than the effect of even intelligence.

Whenever you encounter failure in your life, you have a choice, you can either see that failure as a reflection of who you are (I.E. unintelligent or lazy), or you can see that failure as an opportunity to learn, (I.E. What can I do differently to get a better outcome in the future) and according to research, whichever way you choose to think about failure, you're probably right.

2. A Strong Willpower



The only thing that I see that is distinctly different about me is I'm not afraid to die on a treadmill. I will not be outworked, period. You might have more talent than me, you might be smarter than me, you might be sexier than me, you might be all of those things that you got it on me in nine categories. But if we get on the treadmill together, there's two things: You're getting off first, or I'm going to die. It's really that simple! – Will Smith

Walter Mischel's famous Stanford Marshmallow experiment measured the self-control of young children. Mischel kept track of the study's participants over the next 40 years. Fascinatingly, the children who had strong self-control at age 4 had substantially higher SAT scores, were more educated, and were even less likely to be overweight.

Shockingly, the impact of self-control on these children's educational success was larger than the impact of their IQ Scores.

Self-control (AKA willpower) is a measurement of a person's ability to embrace short-term pain for a long-term gain. If you give up sugary foods, you're using willpower. If you lift weights, you're using willpower. If you were to, like me, chose to be celibate until the age of 19, you'd be using your willpower (okay, maybe that's not the best example, I didn't necessarily choose to be celibate.)

Research has shown that willpower works a lot like a muscle. When you strain your muscles by exercising them, they grow back stronger. Similarly, when you strain your willpower by exercising it (say by writing, meditating, or working on your side-hustle) your willpower will grow back stronger, too.

To build your willpower, pursue long-term goals but do it gradually. If you want to get in better shape, start working out a couple times a week or start practicing intermittent fasting. If you want to learn more, make a habit of reading, even if just for 5 minutes a day.

Just like muscle, willpower takes time to build, but the benefits are extraordinary for your long-term success.

Conclusion – The Two Traits More Important Than IQ

We are taught the talent is the key to success. If you're born smart enough or creative enough, you'll go far, but if you're not among those lucky few, greatness just isn't your destiny. Recent psychological research has shown the idea that intrinsic talent is the end-all be-all of success may be a cultural myth. Instead, it's your beliefs about yourself that are most important.

This isn't to say intelligence or talent isn't a factor, but a growing body of evidence shows it may not be as important as we've been lead to believe. Your ability to learn from failure, instead of being

discouraged by it, and your ability to take on challenges even when doing so feels uncomfortable, may very well be far more likely to determine your success in all areas of life.

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