

(Download) How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character

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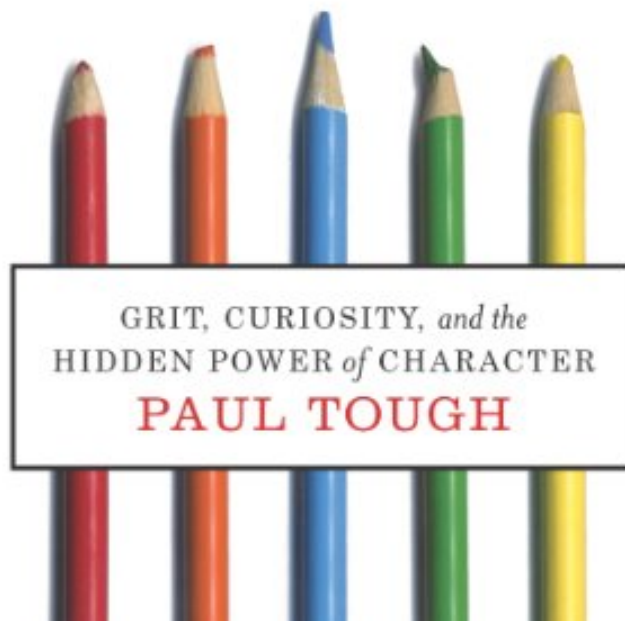
*Paul Tough*

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"Powerful, clear-eyed, beautifully written . . . *How Children Succeed* will change the way you think about children."—ALEX KOTLOWITZ

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

## How CHILDREN SUCCEED



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**Paul Tough : How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character:

376 of 391 people found the following review helpful. The power of early parenting, environment in cyclical povertyBy Graham ScharfFollowing the footsteps of Jonathan Kozol, Paul Tough employs his significant storytelling abilities to help readers see and feel the plight of children, families and communities trapped in cycles of failure and

poverty. How Children Succeed challenges some conventional wisdom on causes of failure (poverty, teacher quality) and contends that nurturing character in children and young adults is the key to success. As a former NYC Teaching Fellow who has lived and worked in multiple communities of cyclical poverty, I'm convinced that Tough has nailed some critical pieces of breaking those cycles. Here is the argument in

brief:=====There exists in our society a troubling and growing achievement gap between the have and the have-nots. The cause of that gap is neither merely poverty nor IQ, but a specific set of non-cognitive skills including executive function and conscientiousness, which Tough calls "character." Children who acquire these skills can break historic cyclical patterns of failure. Malleability of Character and Intelligence=====Whereas IQ is hardly malleable, executive function and character strengths - specifically grit, self-control, zest, social intelligence, gratitude, optimism, curiosity and conscientiousness - are far more malleable. These skills are better predictors of academic performance and educational achievement than IQ and therefore ought to be the direct target of interventions. Attachment and Lifelong Health=====Tough sees two key areas of influence for those who care for those trapped in cycles of poverty. The first is secure early attachment to parents. "The effect of good parenting is not just emotional or psychological, the neuroscientists say; it is biochemical" (28). Specifically, children who experience high levels of stress but NOT responsive and nurturing parents suffer from a range of lifelong health and mental health issues. However, "When mothers scored high on measures of responsiveness, the impact of those environmental factors on their children seemed to almost disappear" (32). Tough cites one study in which "early parental care predicted which students would graduate even more reliably than IQ or achievement test scores" (36). Importantly, interventions that focus on promoting stronger parent-child relationships in high risk groups (including one in which just 1 of 137 infants studied demonstrated secure attachment at the outset) have shown promising impact. Of the 137 children in the study, 61% of those in the treatment group formed secure attachment by age 2, compared with only 2% of the control group. Adolescent Character Formation=====Paul Tough highlights the work of school and support programs that intentionally focus on forming the character strength habits that enable children to learn well in schools, form healthy relationships, and avoid the destructive decisions and behavior patterns modeled in their communities. Here, too, Tough sees a ray of hope. Just as early intervention with parents and young children yields wide ranging benefits for families in poverty, so character interventions in adolescence can and do enable young adults surrounded by cycles of poverty to learn self-control, perseverance and focus that are critical for escaping the gravitational pull of their communities. Why You Should Read This

Book=====Paul Tough is tackling one of the most challenging - and contentious - issues of our time. His analysis will offend those who tend to blame poverty predominantly on the irresponsible choices of the poor by showing just how powerful the cyclical, environmental pressures are on children raised in these communities. His work is just as challenging to those who think that those trapped in cycles of poverty are mere victims of their environment who bear no responsibility for their decisions. Tough shows compellingly that parents and children in poverty can and do overcome the powerful environmental forces of their communities - and that this is a beautiful and essential component of breaking cyclical poverty. His call is for those with education and influence - the kinds of people who read books like his - to demonstrate motivation and volition (two components of character formation he extols) to recognize, celebrate, and nurture the character of children and families in poverty. Graham Scharf Author, The Apprenticeship of Being Human: Why Early Childhood Parenting Matters to Everyone[...]5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Rethinking what's Important By Steve Berczuk When listening to news coverage of education reform and talking to parents and teachers one hears a variety of views about what "The Best" approach to education is. Reading How Children Succeed led me to reconsider many of my preconceptions about what's best for kids, and along the way I learned a few things that I can use to help the people I work with succeed. The argument is that these "non-cognitive" or "character skills" -- things like grit, resilience, and resourcefulness, are often a better predictor of eventual success than mastery of academic skills. These non-cognitive skills are not all one needs, but they seem to be the least discussed ones. This is a great book for parents to read, in particular if you are inclined to get into discussions about education policy with your peers. I won't assert that this book will make you an expert, but it should lead to some interesting dialogs (internal and external) which will help you reconsider any idea you had that what worked for you in school was that right thing for your children. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good read for educators and parents By Customer How do children succeed? Is there one thing that boils down to? Is there one magic formula to ensure success for children? This is what Paul Tough explores in his book, How Children Succeed. In particular, he closely examines the aspects of character, including grit, curiosity, self-control, and more. The book is set up in a narrative format, with Tough introducing us to a variety of researchers, administrators, and students, and telling us their story. Reading Tough's book really helped me to do a self-analysis of what I considered to be "character". There is a lot of discussion throughout the text about character and what exactly that boils down to, and what indicators of character could be. Tough described several professionals and they had various lists of traits that together formed character. I found this interesting and was intrigued by that which I had never really considered. I have used the term of character before, but I had not done

enough self-reflection to determine what, exactly, I was referring to when I said that. After reading, I have more ideas but I think I need more time for self-reflection to be able to determine my own personal idea of character, and how that definition and those traits are impacting my teaching and my students. Character was the big theme of the text, but there was more to the book than just that. I really liked how each chapter in this book had its own feel but still built upon the previous chapters. Chapter one is entitled "How to Fail (and How Not To)". This part of the book explores a school, Fenger, and the students and administrator of the school. Using this, Tough gives us an introduction to trauma scale (ACE), stress systems, and executive functioning skills, among other things. He also introduces us to students who have shown that they can overcome circumstances. Brain research is a heavy theme in this opening chapter. Chapter two is entitled "How to Build Character". Here is where Tough spends a lot of time introducing us to professionals and their ideas and research on character. He introduces us to David Levin, who came up with the idea of a character report card, and goes through the process of this becoming reality. It is in this chapter, too, that Tough examines affluence. Typically, affluent students are thought to have less troubles than students who are in poverty situations, but Tough shows that although they do not have the same troubles, there are other obstacles they face and that has a different impact on character development. For example, these students might experience a greater pressure to be successful, which can create a feeling of distress. Next the narrative switches to an examination of chess and character in chapter three, "How to Think". This chapter I found to be the easiest to read. The focus is on chess and how a teacher in Brooklyn uses chess with her intermediate students and takes it beyond the game itself. She ingrains in her students a way of thinking via her chess education. Chapter four, "How to Succeed", examines college and the path from high school to college. It turns out the greatest indicator of college graduation is a high school GPA, and not because it reflects a student's mastery of content; rather, a GPA is more a reflection of character skills. In this chapter as well, we are introduced to the organization OneGoal, which is based in Chicago and the goal is to help students find, apply, and be accepted to appropriately matched colleges. Tough goes over this program and also takes us through one student's journey in this chapter. The book ends with chapter five, "A Better Path". The chapter begins with a bomb-drop moment of Tough revealing to the reader that he himself was a college drop out. Here he goes into a self-analysis with you, the reader. Then he turns the narrative to his son that he introduced you to in the book's introduction, and the way that his parenting choices can impact his child's character. Here, Tough makes a lot of personal connections back to the research he shared with us in chapter one. Finally, Tough spends time here looking at poverty and education. As a teacher, I felt this book was a good read for me. I teach kindergarten at a Title One school, and while reading Tough's book, I was able to make connections to situations and students I have had. In particular, the overall theme of character I think is important and influential to teachers. After my reading, I believe I have a better understanding of character and what I can do in my time with students to help them build this. Not only do I think I have a better grasp on the concept of character for my students, but I also think I can examine my own character more closely, such as Tough did in the final chapter. While reading, I had an idea of things I was good at and other traits came up that I knew I was not so good at. These character traits I am not exactly strong in are areas I can be cognizant of and be proactive about. Self-control is an example of a character trait that I am strong in but I am lacking in grit, which I would attribute to a lack of challenge in childhood. I would definitely recommend this book to teachers, and I would also recommend the book to parents as it has a lot of information that parents can use as well. *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* by Paul Tough is \$15.95, 231 pages long, and published by Mariner Books: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

"Drop the flashcards—grit, character, and curiosity matter even more than cognitive skills. A persuasive wake-up call."—People  
Why do some children succeed while others fail? The story we usually tell about childhood and success is the one about intelligence: success comes to those who score highest on tests, from preschool admissions to SATs. But in *How Children Succeed*, Paul Tough argues that the qualities that matter more have to do with character: skills like perseverance, curiosity, optimism, and self-control. *How Children Succeed* introduces us to a new generation of researchers and educators, who, for the first time, are using the tools of science to peel back the mysteries of character. Through their stories—and the stories of the children they are trying to help—Tough reveals how this new knowledge can transform young people's lives. He uncovers the surprising ways in which parents do—and do not—prepare their children for adulthood. And he provides us with new insights into how to improve the lives of children growing up in poverty. This provocative and profoundly hopeful book will not only inspire and engage readers, it will also change our understanding of childhood itself. Illuminates the extremes of American childhood: for rich kids, a safety net drawn so tight it's a harness; for poor kids, almost nothing to break their fall."—*New York Times*  
"I learned so much reading this book and I came away full of hope about how we can make life better for all kinds of kids."—Slate