

'The Grit Guide for Teens' Helps Kids Learn Resilience

If you're unfamiliar with the term, "grit" represents the courage we individuals have and the strength of our character. Adults may be more familiar with the concept, due to the movement spearheaded by Angela Duckworth, who wrote on the subject and on the passion, as well as Caroline Adams Miller's writings on "getting grit." Dr. Caren Baruch-Feldman, a local psychologist, saw the true importance of grit in our everyday lives from both a personal and professional standpoint. "On a personal level, I've been academically gritty," she said. "Into my wellness, not so much. But then I steered myself into grit for wellness and learned how to grow grit—and it was helpful."

Her personal and professional growth was something she didn't want to keep to herself, so she employed the pursuit of grit both in her psychological practice and with teens. With grit, it's important "to have long-term goals instead of what feels good in the moment." A parent of SAR teens herself, she worked with the high school to pilot a program with student involvement and the use of surveys. SAR students who worked with Dr. Baruch-

Feldman included Kira Cohen and Katie Parker, who had done their senior exploration with her last year and helped with the writing of her new book; Hannah Laifer who did her senior exploration with Dr. Baruch-Feldman this year and created YouTube videos to promote the book and its concepts; college students Emily Weisbrot and Rachel Aboodi of the Young Israel of Scarsdale, who read the book and gave recommendations on how to make it appeal to teens; and Alyssa Levy, a SAR graduate who is currently filming and editing grit stories from teens.

After giving workshops to faculty, Dr. Baruch-Feldman framed the idea of grit for teens to understand and embrace, teaching students about the mindset and behavior needed to work on grit, especially through teamwork. “When you partner and have a community, grit is grown,” she said.

The objective of grit, then, is to figure out a grit goal and to change your mindset and behavior. Dr. Baruch-Feldman also encourages developing a community and support system to get through obstacles along the way. For teens especially, grit can commonly be associated with sports, extracurricular activities and academia. However, there is also emotional grit—for the emotional problems that are suffered by many patients in her practice. Several of her clients have anxiety-related disorders, and many prefer to shy away from their anxieties by avoiding them

entirely. However, Dr. Baruch-Feldman argues that this mindset of grit makes it possible for individuals to fight through these rough times, times when teens especially are not socially comfortable. From social media sites like Instagram and Facebook, “all they see are rainbows and unicorns,” and thus a focus on social grit may be instrumental for their well-being.

The idea of Dr. Baruch-Feldman’s book, “The Grit Guide for Teens: A Workbook to Help You Build Perseverance, Self-Control, and a Growth Mindset,” is to focus on a domain in one’s life. The teenager is then guided through how to work through various domains. Dr. Baruch-Feldman advises, “The examples are very teen oriented but can be used for everyone.”

Dr. Baruch-Feldman’s book will be released by New Harbinger on July 1 and can be purchased through her website, www.drbaruchfeldman.com/book. Videos can be accessed at <http://bit.ly/2rGDhQb>.

By Tamar Weinberg