



GRIT

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

INTRODUCTION

Each Values for Living lesson is designed to help cadets explore a life virtue from multiple angles, examine it in ways that touch on all five learning styles, and experience the virtue through a hands-on activity that helps them internalize the virtue so it "sticks" and stays with them beyond the end of the squadron meeting.

"Grit" is the secret sauce that can determine whether we succeed or fail in any endeavor in life. This lesson will look at the ingredients of grit and help the cadets link those ingredients to a personal challenge.

PRECLASS CHECKLIST

Prior preparation is essential to success. Please prepare the following well ahead of time:

- All media installed and checked out
- Handouts and materials prepared and available as per teacher instruction sheet
- Phase Three cadet orientation/training completed
- Participation awards such as candy or granola bar treats available
- Room arrangements complete

ATTENTION GETTER

LARGE GROUP (USE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OR DEVELOP YOUR OWN. 5 MINUTES.)

Media Clip. Summitting Everest— the highest mountain in the world (used by permission from Elia Saikaly for character forum use only). This is a film clip of a group of climbers struggling as they approach the summit at over 29,000 feet. To put things in perspective, CAP requires aircrews to use oxygen when they fly above 14,000 feet. At Everest's altitude the cells in the body are dying faster than they can be replaced because of the low oxygen. Every step is slow as the muscles are screaming for oxygen. Edema, meaning fluid filling the lungs, makes breathing difficult.

As you watch the video, consider the personal character challenges each of these individuals would have to face in order to reach the summit.

Without video capability. Read the following about what it is like to attempt to climb the highest mountain in the world. Ask your cadets to think about the personal character challenges that they would have to face if they were to attempt the climb. Or share a personal story about something in your life that required every ounce of perseverance and courage to attain. (If you share a personal story, make sure the Phase Three cadets are in the loop so they can adjust their discussion approach.)

- **Why do people die climbing mountains, and what are the primary dangers?** Most climbers die from exposure to the elements — the subfreezing temperatures and the high altitude, especially after running out of supplemental oxygen and getting caught in sudden storms. But many climbers die from falls and avalanches, and others from health problems like heart attacks. Increasingly, climbers worry about the role of the crowds on Everest, where routes can be jammed with people desperate to reach the summit. This “traffic jam” took the lives of 20 climbers several years ago.
- **What does extreme altitude do to the body?** The area above 8,000 meters (about 26,000 feet), from Camp 4 to the summit, is called the “death zone,” because of its thin air and brutal weather. With gains in altitude, each breath draws less oxygen for the lungs and bloodstream, which is why most climbers, including guides, use supplemental oxygen.
- **How many bodies are on Everest?** Nearly 300 people are known to have died on Everest. Nepal’s government estimates that most of them, perhaps 200, remain there.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this lesson is to introduce you to the concept of GRIT. Studies have found that the number one predictor of success in all areas of your life is “How much GRIT do you have?” In this, and two subsequent lessons, we will work on becoming “MORE GRITTY.”

UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (3-5 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP. 10 MINUTES.)

“You have just watched a film clip (or been told) about summiting (getting to the top) of Mount Everest. It is difficult physically, mentally, and emotionally. Only about half those who try, make it. These individuals would have paid between \$30,000 to \$100,000 for the opportunity. Here are some areas I would like you to discuss.”

- What are these climbers experiencing as they near the summit? What choices do they face? What is going through their minds?
- “What character traits would an individual desiring to climb Mount Everest need in order to succeed?” (Write down a list of those that are mentioned on a piece of paper. What you are looking for is Vision (they had a strong desire to reach a goal); they had Courage; they had Persistence (never give up); they had Passion (I must succeed at this). There will be others – put them down.)

- Ask the group to identify the one thing that is most important. (The answer you are looking for is that **there is no one thing**. For example, if one cadet says Persistence, challenge them by saying if you don't have a vision (goal) then how do you focus your persistence?)
- Have your small group decide on the top three-character traits that you need. (What you are trying to get at are: **Vision** (developing a direction for your efforts); **Persistence** (hanging in there even when your body and your mind says, "Lets quit!"); **Courage** (ready to conquer challenges when they arise)

APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (15 MINUTES)

Share a personal story (three minutes or so) where you had the following occur in your life. You had a goal (Vision), you encountered problems and pushed through (Courage), and you kept going even though it seemed difficult at the time (Persistence). Make sure to relate this to the concept of GRIT in your life. The purpose of this is to cement in place the three components of GRIT – Vision/Courage/Persistence.

Questions for Discussion

- Looking at CAP's Core Values, which ones would be accomplished better if we as a squadron had more GRIT?
- Does anyone have someone they know who has shown a lot of GRIT? (Ask them to share it in terms of Vision/Persistence/Courage). What was that person able to accomplish?
- Recent studies of incoming freshman to the military academies show that individuals who had GRIT were more successful in completing the summer training than those who had academic honors or were class presidents. Why do you think that's the case?
- If you have been to encampment – how would having lots of GRIT make the week easier?

ACTIVITY: TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (3-5 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP. 20 MINUTES.)

Setup of the Exercise:

Give each cadet a three-by-five card. Ask them to write down the following three things on the card. You and the Phase Three cadets should fill out a card as well. Ask them to think carefully since they will be held accountable.

- Their Name
- One major thing they want to accomplish by the end of the year. (Goal or Vision) It **should be specific**. An example might be a promotion in CAP or an accomplishment at school such as raise their GPA ½ point.

- One thing they plan to do this next week to move toward their goal. (Courage and Persistence)

Wait for everyone to stop writing, then have each person share what they put on the card. You share yours first.

Have them exchange cards with another cadet. (You share your card as well. If the group is even-numbered, give your card to another Phase Three cadet.) During the next meeting the cadets should “check-up” on the person whose card they have to hear about their progress and what they have learned about grit.

It may not be easy to challenge another person, but accountability is a major factor in success. (Courage)

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5 MINUTES)

Use the activity as a segue into the close of the lesson:

“We all have visions and dreams. The first challenge is to define them — to write them down. If you don’t write them down, then it is unlikely you will make any plans to pursue them. But having a dream is not enough. You need a plan, a roadmap to get to your destination.

On May 25th, 1962 President Kennedy said the following in a speech at Rice Stadium in Houston: “We choose to go to the Moon! We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win, and the others, too.”

In 1969 Neil Armstrong set foot on the surface of the moon. The United States had GRIT and we made it happen.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

“True grit is making a decision and standing by it, doing what must be done. No moral man can have peace of mind if he leaves undone what he knows he should have done.” – John Wayne

“It’s gonna get harder before it gets easier. But it will get better, you just gotta make it through the hard stuff first.” – Anonymous

“Leaders aren’t born, they are made. And they are made like anything else, through hard work. And that’s the price we’ll have to pay to achieve that goal or any goal.” – Vince Lombardi

“The difference in winning and losing is most often not quitting.” – Walt Disney

“To be gritty is to keep putting one foot in front of the other. To be gritty is to hold fast to an interesting and purposeful goal. To be gritty is to invest, day after week after year, in challenging practice. To be gritty is to fall down seven times and rise eight.” – Angela Lee Duckworth

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