

Do you have what it takes to be a “Woman (or man) of True Grit?”

What exactly is “Grit,” anyway?

My book, *Women of True Grit*, chronicles the personal accounts of women who set firsts in their fields. So naturally, the questions people ask are, “What is the common trait they share? How did they overcome obstacles in their path? What lesson can I learn and apply for myself?”

In your career and life, you probably already know that taking a risk, like the women in my book, produces significant stress and strain on your body, mind and spirit, and may seem to be a negative choice indeed. Distractions are everywhere: death, divorce, sexism, racism, low income, poor health or danger, as well as shouldering responsibility for your parents, children and community. So how do you keep from being discouraged?

Truth is there are four outstanding traits that the women in my book shared. That’s the good news. But the bad news? Through my research, I have concluded that these women and you (if you decide to take a risk) *just can’t help it*. It’s in your DNA, and very hard to dispel.

Take the quiz below and see if it fits you. If it does, you are a person of **True Grit**, and there’s not much you can do about it except continue on your path.

Answer these questions:

1. Are you Committed? Think of Cam Newton, Auburn University’s star quarterback during their recent national championship. Are you highly involved in whatever you do and never give up under any kind of pressure? Do you weigh the importance of every negative event against the bigger picture, and then move on, instead of dwelling on the pain of the moment? Is it simply a part of your day? If yes, then nothing will derail you from your passion.
2. Are you always in Control? Helpless is not even in your vocabulary, as you are too accustomed to challenge and change. You cope extremely well and thrive on working yourself through impossible situations when others would just as soon walk away.
3. Do you have Faith? Challenge motivates you. You can and *will* perform. Simply put, you believe in yourself. If you hear, “you won’t do so well with this new idea,” what you really hear is “watch me blow it out of the water!” Your self awareness builds your confidence. You know what you can and cannot do and this enables you to clearly set your path. When television host Meredith Vieira’s first boss told her she would never make it in TV, she proved him wrong, right? She has appeared on *The View*, *The Today Show* and as host of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*? Her story also appears in my book.

4. Are you Resilient? Call it survival against the odds. In spite of dire circumstances, you always get good things going. This is the risk factor at full speed. Think of former First Lady Hillary Clinton and her then-President husband Bill's sexual escapades.
5. Do you have Perseverance? In the end, it is your ability to persevere against adverse conditions that determines your success. Perhaps this shows your strength of character. When others give up at a certain stage in their careers or endeavors, you hang on, and on and on. Anne Abernathy, another woman in my book, was the oldest Olympic Game participant, survived cancer three times, suffered a head injury, broken bones, 15 knee surgeries, and a broken back, yet continued her sport.

So is this you? If so, somewhere in your personality, rather than being overcome or defeated by adversity, you possess the ability to turn stressful events into life-changing possibilities and opportunities for your personal and professional development and that of others around you. You are hardy. You cope, but go further: you thrive during the stress of adverse life events. You turn life changing situations into positive experiences. Your final act is courage. One of my favorite lines comes from the contemporary movie, *We Bought a Zoo*: "All you need is 30 seconds of courage." Success is a product of experience, work, dedication, perseverance, taking initiative, speaking up and showing up. And those with courage will be the first to victory.

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