READY TO USE MENTORING

# Finding the sweet spot

I watched a TED Talk recently about how intelligence is not always the pre-indicator of success. Sometimes the cleverest kids aren’t the most successful and sometimes those with less natural ability overachieve and exceed all expectations. This speaker had observed this as a teacher, then later as a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania. If it wasn’t social intelligence that made the difference and it wasn’t good looks, it wasn’t physical health or IQ, so what was it? The answer is grit. She defined it as passion combined with hard work over the long-term.

I’ve tried to condense this wisdom into a tool that you can use to help your mentee identify areas with the most likelihood for success. Those things they have the grit and motivation for.

Draw a square and write ‘PASSION’ over one corner. Next to another corner write ‘HARD WORK’. In the third, write ‘COMMITMENT,’ and near the final corner write ‘FAILURE / PROGRESS’.

If you want to use this to identify a new goal then do the following:

1. Brainstorm your PASSIONS. These are your interests, the things you are excited about, dream of, talk about a lot and spend money on. What causes upset you or get you fired up?

2. Give your mentee plenty of time until they have run dry of ideas. Now give them another two minutes and ask them for at least five more – more specific passions. When they can’t think of any more, tell them to be really specific and encourage them to write at least two more. Chances are these last ones are the important ones.

3. Now go through the whole list and cross off any that you don’t regularly work hard at or just generally do something about. There is a truism that we make time for the things we want to do. So, claiming you are too busy is rarely an indicator of your time but rather your priorities – or that there is something else at play – for example, fear.

4. Give the remaining items on your list a score out of ten for how COMMITTED you are, or have been, to them over the LONG-TERM. Looking at the results with them, suggest that any less than seven or eight need crossing off. Explore why they have given the score they have.

For any remaining items, now ask if they have come through any setbacks, discouragements or hardship around that thing? Have they failed, made mistakes or gone wrong with it at any point? Understanding that failure is not a full stop but a comma is key to pursuing a worthwhile goal with real grit.

The perfect scenario is that the last remaining items on the list are ones you should start building goals around.

If at any point they have run out of passions, then use this as a discussion starter for whether they are (subconsciously) trying to come up with goals that will please other people rather than being honest with themselves, or if there are other reasons. Would it help them to return to the first stage and come up with more honest passions? Or perhaps the passions are right but the HARD WORK is lacking – why is that? Are there limiting beliefs, imposter syndrome or paralysis that comes from decision traps, lack of clarity about how to move forward, intimidation or fear? Has a lack of progress, or past failures discouraged them into submission?

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