



# Overcoming Obstacles with a Growth Mindset

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## FACILITATOR GUIDE

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## Introduction

For more than a year, the resilience of our students, teachers, coaches, and communities has been tested by the COVID-19 pandemic and its countless challenges. Though COVID-19 presented many unique trials, it is hardly the only obstacle that our students will encounter in their lives. From personal adversity, like injuries and mistakes, to societal challenges, like lack of equity and inclusion, students need strategies to be resilient. It is critical for us as educators and coaches to teach our students how to be resilient in all aspects of their life.

This set of resilience resources focus on four critical skills that when utilized help us demonstrate resilience: stress management and mental health, overcoming obstacles with a growth mindset, taking ownership of your decisions, and creating inclusive and supportive environments. Each lesson focuses on one of these critical skills and includes a research-based, replicable tool or strategy that students can apply to the classroom, athletic pursuits, extra-curricular activities, at home, and in every other aspect of their life.

## Facilitation Notes:

- Each lesson is designed to last approximately 60 minutes. However, each lesson could easily be broken into shorter segments for use in a homeroom or advisory period, or extended for longer sessions. Facilitator notes found throughout the lesson (in blue boxes) often describe ways to modify the lesson for time.
- Each lesson could be adapted for in-person or online delivery.
- A session script for each lesson is provided, but you are welcome and encouraged to modify the lesson with your own examples, stories, videos, and expertise as you see fit.
- Lessons can be delivered in any order.
- Excellence with Integrity Tools provide replicable, research-based distillation of the knowledge we want students to learn. These tools describe what students need to know and be able to do. Tool descriptions are included in the student handout underneath each tool.
- Other-study videos are a vital component of each presentation. These videos are used to deepen understanding of the topic, and provide a relevant, real-life examples of the skill in action. Please review the videos in advance to ensure you are comfortable introducing the content and debriefing the video as needed. You may choose to substitute your own videos if desired.
- Student handouts are included so that participants can easily follow along with the lesson and complete each activity. Handouts are fillable PDF documents, which can be typed in, saved, and attached to e-mails. You can also print the handouts if you prefer hard copies.

## Additional Resources

If you find these lessons effective, you may be interested in The ESSENTIALS resources available in the [CHARACTER COUNTS! store](#). These resources are targeted at middle school and high school students and focus on skills like leadership, goal achievement, communication, integrity, growth mindset, and attitude and effort, among others.

Visit <https://store.charactercounts.org/product-tag/the-essentials/> for samples and more information. You may also be interested in our Pursuing Victory With Honor workshops for coaches who want to create a positive, productive team culture and use their sport or activity to intentionally teach important character skills. Visit <https://charactercounts.org/workshops/> for more information.

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## Overview

In his book, “How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character,” author Paul Tough poses the question, “What if the key to success is failure?” Every individual and every team face challenges, obstacles, and adversity. The ability to learn from mistakes and failure, overcome obstacles, and move beyond those challenges is often what separates those who are successful from those who don’t achieve their full potential.

Participants will learn how to identify what is and is not within their control and implement **Grow-and-Let-Go Strategies** to help them learn from their experiences and use that knowledge to grow and improve.

## Session Flow Directions

1. Inform students that today you are talking about what it takes to be successful. Ask students to create a list of the most successful individuals they can think of in a variety of fields (sports, music, science, business, art, politics, etc.)

Once students create their list, ask them to share their list with a partner or in a small group. Instruct students to share why they believe the individuals they identified are successful.

2. In his book, “How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character,” author Paul Tough poses the question, “What if the key to success is failure?” Ask students to discuss this question. Do they believe that failure is key to success? Why or why not? How could failure be responsible for success?

**Facilitator Note:** If you need to shorten the lesson into smaller chunks, steps one and two makes for an excellent 10-15-minute activity.

3. Share the video Famous Failures.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLYECljmnQs>

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to review their list of successful people. Did any of the individuals from their list suffer failures or setbacks before reaching the pinnacle of success?

**Facilitator Note:** If you would like to expand on the activity in step three, ask students to research some of the individuals on their list to see what setbacks, failures, or mistakes in their life or career were experienced by each individual and how they overcame those failures.

4. Mistakes and failures are inevitable. It is impossible to try new things, to grow, to develop, or to improve without occasionally falling short or making errors. The only way to escape failure is to never try, though that’s also a guaranteed way to never succeed. Success doesn’t occur because we avoid challenges. Success happens for those who are able to overcome challenges and obstacles, to grow and learn from their mistakes, and continue pursuing their goals.
5. The first step in overcoming adversity is identifying what is and is not within your control. Too often, we spend far too much time worrying about things we can’t change. For example, after a loss in sports, you will often hear people blame the weather, a bad call, or any number of other factors that aren’t within their