



All Ears English Episode 224:

Do You Have Grit? Learn How to Develop It with Executive Coach Sarah Scala

Lindsay: This is an All Ears English Podcast, Episode 224: “Do You Have Grit? Learn How to Develop It with Executive Coach Sarah Scala.”

[Instrumental]

Gabby: Welcome to the All Ears English Podcast, where you’ll finally get real, native English conversation with your hosts, Lindsay McMahon, the ‘English Adventurer’ and Gabby Wallace, the ‘Language Angel’, from Boston, USA.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: In today’s episode, you’ll learn how to develop grit and resilience for your career, your English learning and your life with Fortune 500 Executive Coach, Sarah Scala.

[Instrumental]

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[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, guys. Welcome. Thank you so much for listening to our podcast today and today we have a very exciting guest. Our guest today is a dynamic coach, consultant, and educator. She's worked in global leadership development and executive coaching for more than 15 years with educators and with organizations from start-ups to Fortune 500 companies. Our guest today is Sarah Scala based in Cape Cod, (Massa-), Massachusetts and she's here to talk with us about resilience and grit. Sarah, welcome.

Sarah: Thank you so much. It's great to be here Lindsay.

Lindsay: Yeah, I'm so glad you, you, (uh), came on the show today. We are super excited to learn from you because you've been working with professionals for a long time and a lot of people in our audience, in the All Ears English podcast audience are out there in the field working hard in the corporate world.

Sarah: Excellent.

Lindsay: So great. So let's just dive into it. Let us know Sarah, what is resilience, first of all, and how does that compare with this concept of grit?

Sarah: Excellent questions Lindsay. So when I look at resilience, resilience is one's ability to pick themselves up after a setback. Maybe it's something going on at work, maybe it's a project or a proposal that isn't accepted or approved, maybe it's something going on in your family life and resilience is your ability to recover and bounce back from that. Resilience is a skill that can be developed. So it's not that we have resilience or we don't have resilience...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Sarah: ...we just can have stronger resilience or less developed.



Lindsay: I see. So we can work on it, we can become more resilient.

Sarah: Of course.

Lindsay: Awesome. Well, that's good news. And how about grit, (like), what is grit? How does that compare to resilience?

Sarah: So grit – I think in order for people to have a strong level of grit – they have a good level of resilience, but I definitely wanna (want to) differentiate between the two.

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Sarah: Grit is in a person's ability to really stay focused and interested and inspired in the long, long term.

Lindsay: (Uhn).

Sarah: So maybe it's, (you know), a life goal, maybe it's learning something that's extremely difficult and takes a lot of time. Grit has been found to distinguish, (uh), world-class performers. So that's the one characteristic – (you know), a lot of people thought, (a) you have to be really smart or have a super (e-), IQ (intelligence quotient) to be successful in business or in the world, but actually researchers, especially out of Stanford, are finding that what distinguishes world-class performers is their level of grit.

Lindsay: Oh, that's interesting Sarah. So it's not about IQ. And that is such a common expectation or a preconception that the smartest people in the world are the most successful. But I like what you're saying here that it's actually not so much about intelligence, it's about our ability to stay focused over the long term. And one question: so you said that resilience can be developed. Well, is grit something that can also be learned and developed or is grit just something that we, maybe we inherit from our parents or it's (kind of) more of an in-born thing, what do you think?

Sarah: Well, it's interesting that you bring that up Lindsay because they're very early in doing research about how to build grit.



Lindsay: (Uhn).

Sarah: And I have a few suggestions I'll give at the end on ways people can improve their levels of grit. But they're still trying to understand how they can build this characteristic in world-class performers. (Uh), Stanford has done a lot of research with the United States military and graduates of West Point to help define who would be the most successful in the long run with their...

Lindsay: (Uhn).

Sarah: ...military careers, but they're also doing research with kids in the classroom, young kids, to look at how they learn and which students over the long run are most successful as well. So, I think...

Lindsay: Oh.

Sarah: ...grit can be learned. We're just now in early stages of figuring out how.

Lindsay: Oh, this is such an interesting concept and I think it's so important to our listeners. We're gonna (going to) talk about this a little bit later in the interview, but it's so important to our listeners on a couple of levels – on the business level because we know, as I said, a lot of our listeners are in the corporate world, in the business world striving to (kind of) climb that corporate ladder or just to be successful and fulfilled at work and at the same time, our listeners are also language learners and I think this is really key for language learning. I think, I think especially in American culture, we look at the concept of grit and we think, "Wow, that is admirable."

Sarah: Definitely. Definitely.

Lindsay: Yeah.

Sarah: And it's just so interesting, (you know), the-these days to know that it's not just a person's level of IQ. Don't get me wrong, a person's intelligence is very critical to their success...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).



Sarah: ...but overall, long-term success. Looking at grit is (sort of) like preparing to run a marathon versus sprinting. It's very long-term focused.

Lindsay: (Um), interesting. And a few weeks back, we had an interview with Laura Garnett regarding the Zone of Genius and I'm just imagining a beautiful convergence of two concepts. If we bring together working inside your zone of genius *and* having grit in your work, you could really be shooting for the stars. (I mean), you could really be achieving at super high levels.

Sarah: Definitely. Definitely.

Lindsay: Awesome. Awesome. So can you tell us a story, Sarah, about how you've seen this with your clients because you work with Fortune 500 companies, you're out there in the corporations every day. (I mean), how have you seen grit versus resilience in your clients?

Sarah: Yep. So I see resilience as a strong characteristics with some of my clients that are going through a lot of change and which company these days is not going through change. I mean everybody is, but those folks who are working in companies that tend to be more resilient...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Sarah: ...tend to be comfortable with that process of change, tend to be okay with setbacks, of reorganizations, layoffs, offshoring, in-shoring, all of these workforce, (um), changes that tend to take place.

Lindsay: (Uh-hmm).

Sarah: And so folks that have a, a stronger or more developed level of resistance, seem to bounce back from that a lot quicker, may not take it as personally and be, be...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Sarah: ...actually better able to shift in change as the organization demands of them.

Lindsay: Yeah.



Lindsay: Hey, guys. We're gonna (going to) take just a minute here to thank our sponsors.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Hey, guys, today we've been talking with Fortune 500 Executive Coach, Sarah Scala and we've used a couple of high-level vocabulary words like 'grit' and 'resilience'. If you wanna (want to) use these words in the business space to talk with your colleagues or your boss in English, you need to practice them with a native English teacher right now. If you go to AllEarsEnglish.com/iTalki and book your first lesson, iTalki will give you ten US dollars for free to go towards your next lesson. So go get it now at AllEarsEnglish.com/i-T-a-l-k-i.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: Is there a specific story that you have about someone – I don't know how many... Obviously, we don't need you to say names, but can you, can you paint a picture of someone who went through an intense change and they came out in a positive way.

Sarah: Yeah, sure. (Uh), a company that, that I was affiliated with in the past had significant layoffs. This was back in 2007, 2008. They were a manufacturer in the United...

Lindsay: So one-one, one question. What's a layoff? [crosstalk] Just to make sure our audience knows. Yeah.

Sarah: Thank you for asking that. A layoff is when folks are, (um), let go of their job. So when there aren't enough, (you know), jobs for the people and their employment, sometimes short-term or sometimes permanently is ended. So...

Lindsay: Thank you.



Sarah: Yeah, no problem. So, so this client was going through a layoff – (um), a massive company, 40,000 people globally is their size, and they needed to reduce their workforce, so, so cutting back on people because the economy wasn't supporting having a workforce that big. And, (uh), I was in touch with a few folks on the business side, who, although they knew, (you know), layoffs were coming, they were lucky in that their positions weren't terminated or ended, but positions of their friends and colleagues were.

Lindsay: (Uhn).

Sarah: And they were just really able to bounce back from that. I don't know, Lindsay, if you, or I'm sure your audience have worked for companies that have gone through layoffs...

Lindsay: Oh, yeah.

Sarah: ...or reductions in workforce and, (you know), we, we (sort of) have two choices when it, when it comes to that. We can choose to get really sad and upset and (sort of)...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Sarah: ...buckle down and, (you know), put our heads down and get to work or we can try to keep our level of energy up and (uh), and (uh), and...

Lindsay: Yeah.

Sarah: ...our level of resilience. And that, that shows because those are the people that typically companies are more likely to keep a lot of the times because their attitude is, is one of positive acceptance of the change. And so...

Lindsay: (Uh-huh).

Sarah: ...this, this person with this particular company, (you know), they made it through, th-their job was not terminated and they really excelled during this, this time of change in terms of taking on additional projects and really shining. So this is...



Lindsay: Wow.

Sarah: ...really, really interesting to, to observe.

Lindsay: Awesome. So it's a chance to set yourself apart. (You know), I always think that these (sort of) dark nights are opportunities for us to grow and to set ourselves apart and to really experience that exponential growth. And, and I also think about this common factor with our audience of being moved abroad, being moved overseas. For example, (you know), a good, (um) – about a fifth of our listeners are in Japan and we know that a lot of them get transferred abroad coming, (you know), to the US or going to London to do business. And have you worked personally with any, (uh), expats, anyone who's been moved (abro-), to the US from abroad and have you seen grit and resilience in them?

Sarah: I sure have. I've worked with, (um), with expats, (uh) many, many times and I think their, their ability to be nimble in the times of changes.

Lindsay: (Um).

Sarah: Nimble...

Lindsay: ...nimble.

Sarah: ...and accepting, I think really go in line, especially with resilience. Again, grit, we're looking at long-term perseverance. And although...

Lindsay: Okay.

Sarah: ...I think folks will have a good level of grit, especially if they're comfortable with changes. It's really the, (you know), the focusing on almost very specific outcomes and being excited about achieving those, realizing that there's gonna (going to) be ups and downs. That's really where having a good level of grit comes into play. Where resilience is more, (you know), situation by situation, overcoming grit is very long-term focused.



Lindsay: I see. So I see the difference now. So those are – they’re two pretty different concepts, but they’re both important to understand. So now let’s get specific here Sarah. Can you give us two or three ways that our audience members, our listeners of All Ears English could use these concepts to, could develop grit or resilience if they’re being moved abroad? Let’s say they’re being moved, relocated with their family to the US or even if they’re, (you know), they’re being laid off from their job, for example, in their home country or any particular challenge that they’re going through. Can you give us a couple of actionable steps that they can take?

Sarah: Yeah, definitely. Thanks for asking. (Um), with grit, the first thing that they suggest when trying to develop or improve your levels of grit is to be meaningfully interested. Again, you can work really hard at something, but if you don’t care about it very much, it’s hard to have that grit, those grit benefits. So, again, it’s set around being interested and having it be meaningful to you. That magical grit happens when both of those are present: interest and meaning. So that’s really important for developing grit.

Also, looking at a growth mindset. I’m not sure if any of your readers have read any of Carol Dweck’s work out of Stanford, but (uh), a growth mindset looks at the, the opportunity that your mind and your brain isn’t like one solid mass that stays the same forever, but that our brains and our minds and our learning is changing and so for that reason, it’s hard to fail because we’re always changing and adapting and evolving. So again, cultivating that growth mindset and practice a lot. Invest in deliberate practice of whatever it is that you’re trying to become exceptional at. I know they used to say that people would become experts at something if they practiced 10,000 hours. [crosstalk]

Lindsay: Right. That’s a famous quote.

Sarah: ...10,000 hours,(right), but can you invest in some deliberate practices. So those are...



Lindsay: (Um).

Sarah: ...some tips for grit and I believe we're gonna (going to) have some links to some good articles...

Lindsay: Yes.

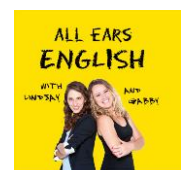
Sarah: ...that also covers some of these pieces. So if I'm speaking too quickly and you're finding it difficult to take notes on this, you know a lot of these key points are going to be included in links that will be available.

Lindsay: Yeah, thank you Sarah. So you guys can come back to AllEarsEnglish.com/224 and you'll be able to find links to all of these articles and all of these (kind of) suggestions, these awesome suggestions that Sarah has given us today. That's fantastic. So I just wanna (want to) go ahead and recap what you've told us about how to develop grit in our work. So, first of all, we have to be meaningfully interested. I think that's so key, (right). We have to know that we're making an impact in the world and that that impact matters to us. Right? And I think that also applies to language learners, (right). We need to be interested in the language we're learning and the way we're learning it.

Sarah: Yeah.

Lindsay: And number two, going with a growth mindset, developing a growth mindset. And I want you guys to come back to AllEarsEnglish.com/224 to learn more about that. I also want to learn more about this concept of growth mindset. And number three, to practice your craft, hone your craft. We had Jay Bethke on the show a few weeks ago and he talked about how important it is – (you know), he's a writer, but he hones his craft every single day. You just need to get out and get the work done. Work on it and focus on it. Awesome. Sarah, this has been so cool and super helpful. I'm really excited to hear the, the comments, (uh), from our listeners about this episode. And thank you so much for joining us today.

Sarah: Thank you.



Lindsay: Yeah. Do you have any personal website, or any blog that you wanna (want to) send our listeners to? Is there any place that they could get more resources or should they come back to our website? What's the best way?

Sarah: Well, we can – I think we can put a link to my website on your...

Lindsay: Yes.

Sarah: ...on your, (uh), on your (uh) blog, which is SarahScala.com. S-a-r-a-h S-c-a-l-a where you can learn more about my work and my approach. Grit and resilience are both guiding principles of my company. So...

Lindsay: Awesome.

Sarah: ...that's how we got started talking about this stuff.

Lindsay: I love it. I love it. These are concepts that you really work in every day. (I mean), these concepts, these are not just concepts that you just read about. You care about them and they're part of your company and that's why you're successful as an executive coach, I think.

Sarah: Definitely. Definitely.

Lindsay: Okay. Awesome. Thanks for chatting with us today Sarah. And I hope you have a great day.

Sarah: You too. Thanks again.

Lindsay: Thank you.

Sarah: Bye-bye.

[Instrumental]

Lindsay: If you wanna (want to) put your ears into English more often, be sure to subscribe to our podcast in iTunes on your computer or on your smartphone. Thanks so much for listening and see you next time.

