

Formula for Success: *The Role of Guts, Grit and Gusto*

By Erica Miller, PhD



Like everyone, I've experienced my share of personal and business losses. Instead of being crushed and devastated by them, I figured out how to overcome them. By adopting the philosophy of living life with "Guts, Grit and Gusto," I've been able to achieve a rewarding life and successful business career. As entrepreneurs and CEOs, you can, too. By using this formula for success as the foundation for experiencing life your way, you can achieve your goals and dreams. Here are the basics:

Guts

“Guts” is manifesting courage, having a vision and acting on it. It means standing up for what you believe in, even if others don’t support you. It took guts to overcome the horrors, degradation, starvation and filth I experienced while imprisoned for four years in the camps during the Holocaust. It took guts to pursue my Ph.D. in clinical psychology, ignoring people who said I couldn’t have a family and a professional career at the same time.

Grit

“Grit” is having determination and developing the ability to overcome obstacles and challenges. Giving in to negativity is forbidden. Giving up is not an option. It took hard work and willpower to rebuild my chain of counseling centers after managed care shut me out in 1994. Grit means demonstrating perseverance by learning to go through and go around what impedes your progress without thinking yourself a failure, especially if you don’t succeed right away. Grit also involves postponing gratification—often for a long time.

Gusto

“Gusto” is pizzazz, positive attitude, energy and the ability to enjoy and take pleasure in your accomplishments. It means celebrating wins and living life to the fullest every day.

Women in business

As women, we need to be proud of our progress. The Bureau of Labor Statistics December 2018 [report](#) says, “...the proportion of women ages 25 to 64 in the labor force who held a college degree nearly quadrupled from 1970 to 2017, whereas the proportion of men with a college degree about doubled over that time. Women also have become more likely to work full time and year-round. In addition, women’s (\$770 median weekly) earnings as a proportion of men’s (\$941 median weekly) earnings have grown over time. Women working full time earned 62 percent of what men earned in 1979 and 82 percent in 2017.”

At the other income extreme, but exemplifying guts, grit and gusto, Oprah Winfrey, whose net worth in 2018 was \$2.8 billion (Forbes), succeeded despite being terribly impoverished and abused as a child. On a similar note, J.K. Rowling was a single mother on welfare when she wrote the “Harry Potter” series. Now a billionaire, Ms. Rowling supports many causes through her own global charity, Lumos, sending millions of dollars in aid to orphans and children worldwide. She also can contribute to the charity Gingerbread—advocates for single parents—all because she had the guts and grit to hold onto her dreams, however wild they were.

As with Ms. Rowling, women are still the primary providers of parenting responsibilities. The 2015 issue of the Pew Research Center reported, “half (54%) of parents in households where both the mother and the father work full time say that, in their family, the mother does more when it comes to managing the children’s schedules and activities.” Even so, the 2019 Pew Research Center report indicates, “many working parents—including about eight-in-ten full-time working mothers—say their current employment situation is what’s best for them at this point in their life.”

As the population ages, women are also dealing with primary caregiver responsibilities for their immediate and extended families. Women, by nature, have to have grit! It takes extraordinary courage, resourcefulness and planning to be at work when our babies are sick or when our aging parents are ill. Sometimes, it takes tremendous guts to tell our employers we need time off when there’s no other choice.



Dr. Erica Miller, speaker and author, teaches the philosophy of “guts, grit and gusto.”

When your employer is you

Entrepreneurs think they will have more control over their lives when they launch their own businesses, but that's not always the case—especially when they don't have the infrastructure to get products made, services rendered or the bills paid. In this situation, stress increases, which goes right back to the need to practice the formula of guts, grit and gusto consistently. Authenticity, integrity, commitment and passion are the backbones of business success. If something doesn't work, dust yourself off and try something new. Be patient with yourself and look for ways to celebrate you and your life every day.

How to practice guts, grit and gusto

- Being gutsy means striving to overcome fear. One of our biggest fears in business is the fear of failing. But there is no failure, just learning. Stay hungry and be open for growth opportunities of all kinds by continually challenging yourself with the unfamiliar. It's good practice for when you need it the most.
- Having grit is a decision to stay the course at all costs. Identify your passion and go for it. Sometimes writing it down is useful. Don't let anyone tell you something can't be done. In my life, I had lots of people say I wouldn't succeed. But I kept trying, and because I didn't give up, I achieved the goals I set and continue to identify new ones.
- Living with gusto is a question of maintaining a positive attitude, choosing joy and [expressing gratitude](#). Try new things. Live in the moment. Stay healthy. Exercise. Smile, laugh, dance and sing. Some people list three things they're thankful for every day—on paper. Stopping to experience and chronicle your good days will carry you through the hard ones. I know this for a fact.

Find your strength

Much of succeeding as an entrepreneur will evolve from your willingness to look inside yourself to identify your passion, discover your life's purpose and stay the course in the face of opposition from outsiders. But be prepared: you may also get pushback from those who love you because they do not or cannot share in your vision. Be strong. Your life's work is to be creative when you're told "no," and to embrace life's joys and challenges... with guts, grit and gusto!

About the Author

Dr. Erica Miller is a multi-faceted, dynamic speaker and international best-selling author with a long history of "telling it like it is." A Holocaust survivor, entrepreneur, mental health professional, and world traveler, she captivates audiences with her colorful stories and authentic conversations of guts, grit, and gusto. Her three books are: Chronologically Gifted: Aging with Gusto, Don't Tell Me I Can't Do It: Living Audaciously in the Here and Now, and The Dr. Erica Miller Story: From Trauma to Triumph. For more information, please visit <http://dricamiller.com/>