

PERSISTENCE

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I recently read about a Labrador Retriever named Ruby. Ruby will bring you a tennis ball, drop it in front of you, and stare at you. If you try to ignore her she will pick up the ball, drop it again, and stare at you. And she will continue to do this as long as it takes. Sooner or later, you will give in and go outside. You throw the ball, she charges after it, brings it back, and drops it at your feet. This game will go on as long as you allow it and Ruby seems to find it endlessly exciting and entertaining.

Ruby is showing the quality of persistence. She doesn't give up. Her goal is to entice someone into throwing her the tennis ball and, more often than not, she succeeds. Human beings vary on the quality of persistence. Some have lots of it and some have just a little. Some people give up easily and others don't. What do we know about those people who don't give up? We know that they are optimistic. They have a vivid image of the future that draws them forward. When they are defeated, they don't give up. The vivid image makes the defeat less painful. Just as Ruby seems unfazed by people telling her that now is not a good time to throw the ball, optimists more easily bounce back from disappointments.

What difference would it make in your life if you had more persistence? Rate yourself on a zero-to-ten scale on how persistent you are. Zero means you give up quickly when you encounter any problem, while ten means you hold on to your goals and keep working hard toward them in the face of all kinds of discouragement. If you rate yourself at five or less on the persistence scale, it would be helpful to develop more of that in your personality. When you do, the result will be good. Native talent does not predict success in life. Persistence and optimism do predict both happiness and success. We can develop the qualities of persistence and optimism. And it is worth it. It helps.