



# PATCH *works*

## THE POWER OF GRIT

Grit. It's a little word but a life-transforming possession. Grit makes it possible to keep going when things get tough. It helps us make progress, especially when we aren't experiencing many rewards. Grit helps us do the right thing, even when the cost is high.

Psychology used to teach that we are most likely to be successful when we feel strong and have high self-esteem built on praise. It was thought that pushing toward challenging goals could lead to low self-esteem and a desire to give up.

Years of research showed that chasing self-esteem may actually lower self-esteem. Science is catching up to something we've been practicing at Patch for years: developing a work ethic and grit is one of the most transformative gifts we can share with our teens -- and it actually helps create a positive form of self-esteem.

Many of our teens, like society in general, quit when things get tough. There is an unwritten rule that says, "If it is too hard, you are either doing it wrong, or it's something you shouldn't be doing." The truth is that doing the right thing is hard and requires work and perseverance.

We use many avenues to help our teens learn grit. The Fall 2024 issue of PatchWorks shares how we therapeutically use fun and recreation. Another tool is our low-ropes challenge course that not only helps teens face personal fears, but also helps them problem solve, develop as leaders, and keep working at difficult challenges.

We have three primary types of work that we use to develop grit: taking care of you, "family" jobs, and serving others.

First, our teens are responsible for taking care of themselves. Clients make their beds, clean their rooms, and do their laundry. Many teens have never used a washing machine and are stunned to learn how much effort it takes to wash and fold clothes.

Next, we have "family" jobs that benefit everyone who lives in the dorm, eats in the cafeteria, studies at school, and walks on our sidewalks. Clients and staff share these jobs, which include kitchen prep, cleaning up after meals, dorm chores, sweeping walks, shoveling snow, and mowing lawns. These tasks are shared, require teamwork, and often involve learning new skills. Teens rotate who is in charge during kitchen clean-up. They learn how to lead, take direction, communicate effectively, and work together as a team.



It is inspiring to watch our teens learn to work together. Teens use push mowers to mow the front lawn as well as near the school. Early in the year, they are all doing their own thing, mowing their own pattern, and focused on just getting the job done. The lawn is a mess, and they usually end up getting in each other's way. With time, they begin to work together, coordinate their efforts, and eventually complete the job in a fraction of the time it used to take. Plus, the lawn also looks great.

Ultimately, we have jobs that serve others. As 1 John 4:18 states, "Perfect love drives out fear." While we as humans don't practice perfect love, we have seen over and over that doing small acts of love for others often helps us more than it helps the person we are serving. The boys and girls frequently do service projects for people in the community. They can be stacking wood, raking needles, clearing brush, or other yard projects. Teens have also helped at the senior center and library, assisted with cleaning up after the 4th of July, as well as other community needs. The people we help have been generous to our kids, often sharing snacks, pizza, and drinks, and donating towards dorm parties and outings.

Work has immediate benefits. Without work, there wouldn't be meals or clean dishes, and things would be a mess. However, the greatest transformation from work is a life change. A former client shared, "At Patch, I learned to love nature and gained outdoor skills that shaped my work ethic and gave me the confidence and ability to experience a life I would have feared before."



While this article focuses on the work our clients do, it would be a shame if we didn't also highlight the privilege it is to work with these teens at Project Patch. As they undertake the hard work of facing their challenges, learning new skills, and growing, we have the opportunity to grow alongside them. It's not easy work, but it is work that makes an eternal difference. Would you consider working at Project Patch or sharing about the opportunity with others? Learn more at [www.projectpatch.org/jobs](http://www.projectpatch.org/jobs).



## ALUMNI Q&A WITH SHAKEENA



### YOUTH PROGRAM HAPPENINGS

Hiking & Wahooz Family Fun w/the Boys



Boise Aquarium & Cooking Class w/the Girls



**TO DONATE GO TO**  
**[projectpatch.org/donate25](http://projectpatch.org/donate25)**



We recently caught up with Project Patch alum Shakeena who is now navigating one of life's biggest adventures—parenting twins! We asked her to reflect on how the lessons she learned at Patch, especially about grit and work ethic, continue to shape her life today.

*Hi! My name is Shakeena! I was sent to Project Patch in the summer of 2017, it was the most transformative yet challenging time of my life. I was sent to Project Patch for a multitude of reasons, mainly behavioral issues and struggling with emotional regulation. While at Project Patch, I acquired all these skills and tools to help me with the obstacles of life and dealing with interpersonal relationships. I learned that it's ok to temporarily walk away from situations and calm down, and I've learned to maintain composure in situations I'm not able to walk away from in that moment where I need to be present.*

**What is one way Project Patch helped prepare you for real-life responsibilities—like being a parent?** I learned to heal from a lot of trauma in my past, that I was not at all coping with, hindering me from growing as a person. Project Patch has helped me heal from the loss of my grandma and be able to properly grieve, this has in turn given me hope again to live a fulfilling life.

**Looking back, what job or chore at Patch taught you the most—and why?** Looking back, the job at Patch that taught me the most was the cafeteria, the sink station! Listen, being in a dorm full of women dealing with their own emotional struggles made for a challenging environment. Dish time was particularly tough, as I found myself in close quarters with people I wasn't exactly fond of, resulting in high tension. I had to learn to get the job done despite my emotions!

**Can you share a moment at Patch when you had to push through something hard? How did that shape your work ethic?** During a trip, snowboarding, I pushed myself to a new limit! I was frustrated with my lack of experience and overall, just being a Debby Downer to those around me having fun. I was honestly letting the fear of failure hold me back. After a quick talk with Terri, I got up and continued trying. That trip taught me a lot about myself, as well as to be ok to leave my comfort zone sometimes.

**What encouragement would you give a current Patch teen who's struggling to stick with something hard?** If I could give one piece of advice to someone currently at Patch, it'd be, "It gets better!" It's so easy to focus on the negative and get caught up in what's going wrong and how unhappy you are. I challenge you to focus on the positive parts of each day (anything that makes you smile or brings you peace) and at night, before you sleep, tell yourself what was the best part of your day

**Now that you're older, how do you define "success"—and did Patch play a part in shaping that definition?** Now that I'm older, I'm only 24! My definition of success is making it through the day! Looking at my daughters' faces as they rest peacefully, knowing I contributed to that. It's the small wins, as small as the sun shining, or me treating myself to a dessert! It's finding the good in my life after being hopeless for so long & only seeing the bad.



Project Patch has been partnering with parents since 1984 to help teens with behavior problems. Parents trust our licensed and accredited Youth Program in the mountains of Idaho as a therapeutic place for their teens to gain the insight, skills, and motivation to live a positive life.

# FIVE CORE LIFE SKILLS



At the heart of healing trauma is connection, and at the heart of connection are life skills that help our teens learn to feel safe, capable, and loved. In our program, we center our work on five core life skills: Safe, Respectful, Responsible, Helpful, and Trustworthy. These skills aren't just rules to follow; they're relationship-based pathways to healing.

Using a trauma-informed lens and the principles of Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®), we teach, model, and celebrate these life skills daily. Our staff walk alongside teens, helping them regulate their emotions, repair relationships, and reintegrate into a safe and supportive community.

## 1. Safe – Free from Harm or Risk

Safety isn't just physical -- it's emotional and relational. We help teens understand what it means to feel safe with others and safe within themselves. Through co-regulation and consistent, nurturing presence, staff create spaces where youth can downshift from survival mode into connection.

**TBRI in Action:** We foster felt safety by mirroring tone and body posture, offering choices, and avoiding power struggles. These small signals send big messages: "You are safe with me."

**Youth Example:** One of our residents recently shared that he now checks in with staff when he feels overwhelmed instead of running off. "It feels safer when I can talk it out," he said. That's a life-changing shift from fight-or-flight to trust.

## 2. Respectful – Regard for the Feelings, Wishes, and Rights of Others

Respect begins with seeing the humanity in one another. For teens who've experienced disrespect, chaos, or abuse, this life skill must be experienced before it can be expected. That's why we lead with empathy and model respect in every interaction.

**TBRI in Action:** We approach behavior with curiosity, not punishment or judgment. Instead of "What's wrong with you?" we ask, "What happened to you?" That shift helps teens regulate and feel seen.

**Youth Example:** One client had difficulty sharing space with peers, but after daily coaching, she now asks before using shared items and thanks others for their kindness. "It feels better when people do the same back," she said.

*"As an adult looking back at my experience at Patch I can honestly say that this program saved my life. Not only by providing a positive environment but by teaching me the necessary skills to live a healthy life."*  
Former Client

## 3. Responsible – Doing What Needs to Be Done, Even When It's Hard

Responsibility is about building trust and a sense of agency. We help teens recognize their capacity to manage themselves, follow through, and make things right when they make mistakes. It's about nurturing internal motivation, not external compliance.

**TBRI in Action:** Rather than punish mistakes, we coach through them with grace. We model re-dos, repair attempts, and natural consequences, allowing youth to safely practice being accountable.

**Youth Example:** One client struggled with impulsivity but recently took responsibility for a conflict by initiating a repair process with a peer. "I don't want to carry it around anymore," he said, a true sign of growing maturity.

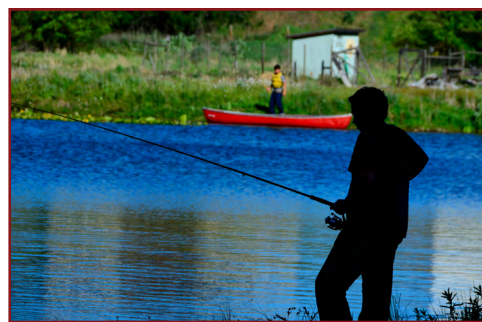
## 4. Helpful – Contributing to the Community and Building Belonging

Being helpful builds community, identity, and confidence. In our program, every youth has opportunities to contribute, whether through chores, group support, or mentoring peers. Helping others helps them heal.

**TBRI in Action:** We empower kids with voice and choice, and then invite them into meaningful roles. We acknowledge every act of service, from passing the salt to comforting a struggling peer.

**Youth Example:** One client offered to walk a new resident through the morning routine. "I remember how confusing it was when I got here," she said. That's leadership through empathy, and it started with connection.

Continued on page 4 . . .



## HELP US STAY CONNECTED



We want to be sure we have your most up-to-date contact information and preferred method of communication. Please take a moment to update your details so we can continue sharing important updates.

Visit [www.projectpatch.org/update](http://www.projectpatch.org/update) or call (360)690-8495 to update your information.



## MARANATHA IS COMING BACK! SEPTEMBER 3 - 19

We're excited to welcome Maranatha volunteers back to our Garden Valley campus this fall!

*Want to be part of the project?*

Watch for details on our social media or at [www.projectpatch.org/maranatha](http://www.projectpatch.org/maranatha).



## ★ WISH LIST ★

For those who prefer to give toward a specific project, the following list contains items that are needed, yet are not part of the operating budget.

- Rafting Trip - \$500/dorm
- Mountain Biking Trip - \$500/dorm
- 10 Life Jackets - \$50 each
- 3 Camp Chairs (2-pack)\*\* - \$60 each
- 12 Ropes Course Helmets - \$50 each
- 3 Bike Helmets\*\* - \$75 each
- 4 Skateboards\*\* - \$30 each
- 12 Biking Gloves\*\* - \$7 each
- 20 Bike Water Bottles\*\* - \$11 each
- 3 Kites (4-pack)\*\* - \$30 each
- 2 Kick Scooters\*\* - \$35 each
- 2 Metal Detectors\*\* - \$150 each
- Laser Tag Set\*\* - \$200

\*\* Also available from Amazon at [www.projectpatch.org/AmazonWishList](http://www.projectpatch.org/AmazonWishList)

Please note on your gift if you would like it designated for a *specific* Wish List item or the *highest need* Wish List item. If the item has already been purchased, we will contact you for further instructions.

To donate via credit card:  
call (360)690-8495

OR

donate online at  
[www.projectpatch.org/wishlist](http://www.projectpatch.org/wishlist)

OR

mail a check to the address below

## CONTACT US

PO Box 820209  
Vancouver, WA 98682

[info@projectpatch.org](mailto:info@projectpatch.org)  
[www.projectpatch.org](http://www.projectpatch.org)  
(360)690-8495

## PLEASE

Let us know if your address, email, or phone number has changed!

## PIECING IT TOGETHER by Chuck Hagele

A friend of mine won a chili cookoff. It took him all day to make the chili, and he obsessed over each ingredient. He used an old family recipe that included all the ingredients except one. If you followed the recipe, it would be a good chili, but not spectacular. The secret ingredient? A big scoop of strawberry jam. It added just a hint of sweetness to balance all the spice.

Our work at Project Patch is like a good batch of chili. We choose high-quality ingredients, add them at the right time, give them time to blend, and use heat carefully to create something truly amazing.

Our ingredients are counseling, faith development, school, play, and work. We bind these with safety, respect, responsibility, helpfulness, and trust. We have high expectations for our teens and provide the scaffolding and support they need to face difficult things and learn new skills.

What's our secret ingredient? It's not something we hide. It's right in our mission: Restoring Hope to Teens. Hope is at the heart of our work. We know our teens are born with a purpose and giftedness, even if they don't yet realize it. We know change is possible and that God can redeem every life. Hope motivates us to show up each day because we know that once a teen has hope, they are unstoppable.

This issue of PatchWorks focuses on work. That is one transforming tool that we use, but it isn't the only tool. You can learn more about our work by reading our newsletters or visiting our website; however, the best way to experience it firsthand is to come to Idaho and see for yourself. Call us at (360)690-8495 to schedule a tour. You will walk away inspired by our teens, encouraged by our staff, and with a newfound hope that you can share with others.



## FIVE CORE LIFE SKILLS ... continued from page 3

### 5. Trustworthy – Being Honest and Dependable

Many of our youth have had their trust shattered. We show them what it looks like to be trustworthy by following through, being consistent, and offering second chances. Trust is earned through relationship, not demanded through control.



Client Poster Contest Winner

**TBRI in Action:** We narrate our trust-building steps: "I said I'd be here at 4, and I showed up." When youth keep their word, we name it: "Thanks for being someone I can count on."

**Youth Example:** One client recently earned more privileges by consistently telling the truth and being open about her needs. She said, "I didn't know people would still like me if I was honest." Now she does.

When youth practice being safe, respectful, responsible, helpful, and trustworthy, they're not just behaving better, they're becoming who they were meant to be.

**Acknowledgment:** Project Patch gratefully acknowledges Methodist Children's Home (MCH) in Waco, Texas, for its pioneering work in integrating life skills development into trauma-informed care. The five life skills — Safe, Respectful, Responsible, Helpful, and Trustworthy — that anchor our program at Project Patch were inspired by the long-standing and impactful work of MCH.

For the full article, references, and resources, visit [projectpatch.org/lifeskills](http://projectpatch.org/lifeskills).