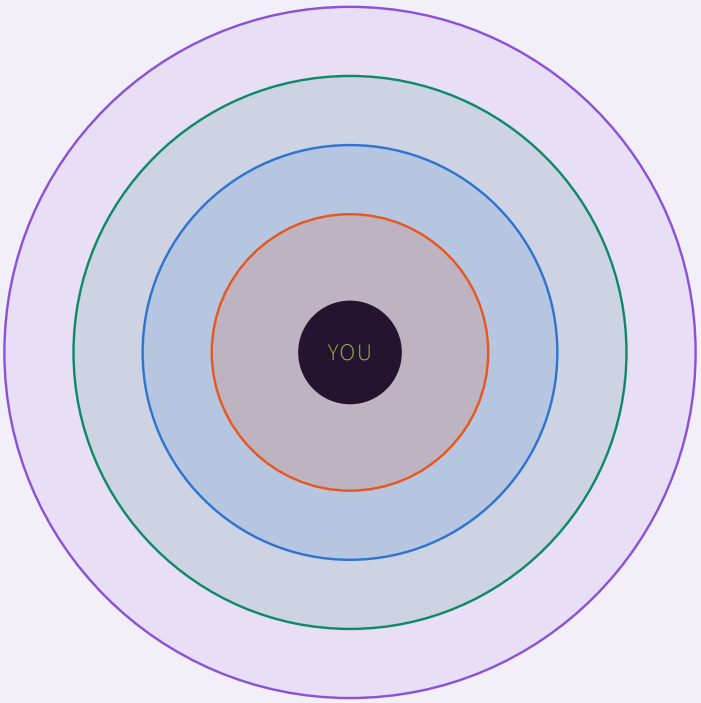


Situated

Find the People and Places That Bring Out Your Best

A reading of the book by Angela Duckworth (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Situated, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book, and no line in it is quoted from the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Situated is Angela Duckworth's follow-up to Grit, published ten years later. Passion and perseverance still matter, she argues, but they are not always enough. Where you stand decides how far your effort goes.

Her answer is a skill she calls situational agency. Instead of making the best of the situation you were handed, you choose it and shape it, until the behaviour you want is the easy one.

The book works through four elements of a situation, nearest first: the space around you, your peers, your mentors, and the culture of the places you belong to. Then it turns outward, to the situations parents, leaders and citizens build for other people.

> **The useful question moves from how hard am I trying to what is around me while I try.**

THE ARGUMENT 02

Grit, with a condition

Grit argued that passion and perseverance for long-term goals matter more than most of us think. Situated does not take that back. It adds a condition: effort goes much further in a situation that works with you, and it can do harm when you keep pushing in one that never will.

So the question changes. Most advice about change asks how hard you are trying. Duckworth asks what is around you while you try: the objects in reach, the people you spend the week with, the people a few steps ahead, and the habits of the group.

The book treats situational agency as a skill rather than a trait. You can learn it and practise it: notice how a situation is shaping you, then change one part of it on purpose.

TRY THIS

Think of the last goal you dropped. Before you name what was wrong with you, name one thing about where you were, who was there, or what was in reach.

THE MODEL 03

Three boxes

Duckworth borrows a model from the Stanford psychologist James Gross. A situation leads to thoughts, and thoughts lead to a response: what you feel, and what you do next.

Most attempts to change happen in the last box. We try to respond differently by force of will, in the moment, every time. That is the hardest place to win, because the situation keeps producing the same pull.

The first box is easier to move, and a change there keeps working on a bad day. Moving the cake off the counter beats resisting it at four o'clock. Leaving the book on the pillow beats remembering to read.

> **Start at box one: where you are, who is with you, and what is within reach.**

ELEMENT ONE · SPACE 04

Within arm's reach

The nearest element is the cheapest to change. The phone by the bed, the snacks on the counter, the guitar in its case at the back of a cupboard: what sits within arm's reach pulls on you all day, mostly without your noticing.

Place works the same way at a larger scale. The rooms you spend your days in make some things the default and others an effort. Before you blame your discipline, look at what the place is asking of you.

The aim is not a perfect environment. It is to make the right path the easy one, so the setup does the work, and keeps doing it when you are tired.

TRY THIS

The reach test. Sit where the work happens and list everything within arm's reach. Mark each item toward the goal or away from it. Move one away-item out of reach, and put one toward-item in its place.

ELEMENT TWO · PEERS 05

The people beside you

Peers set what feels normal. Spend the week with people who train, write or study, and doing it stops feeling like a special effort. Spend it with people who don't, and every session takes a small act of defiance.

You are also not the same person in every group. Personality shifts with where you are and who you are with, which means you can choose the company that brings out the version of yourself you like.

Part of the advice is to ask for help sooner. When her own writing stalled, Duckworth went to her editor rather than pushing on alone. Joining people who already do what you want to do is one of the strongest moves there is.

TRY THIS

List the five people you spend the most time with. Then find one group whose members already do what you want to do, and go once this week.

ELEMENT THREE · MENTORS 06

The people ahead of you

A good mentor helps you picture what you cannot do yet. Watching someone further along gives you a clear image of what better looks like, and their honest feedback shortens the distance.

The book uses Michael Phelps and his coach Bob Bowman to show how much a great performer owes to the people around him. Even the best-known stories of individual effort turn out to rest on people who shaped the situation.

Mentors are drawn, not assigned. Reviews of the book sum up what makes someone easy to help: arrive prepared, ask real questions, act on the advice, and say thank you, ideally in writing.

TRY THIS

Pick one person a few years ahead of you. Send one specific question, what you have already tried, and why you are asking them.

ELEMENT FOUR · CULTURE 07

The culture you belong to

The furthest element is the culture of the groups and places you belong to: a team, a school, a household, a town. Culture is a situation too, and it shapes what everyone in it treats as normal.

A group has a why, its mission, and a way, how it works from day to day. When the two line up, people can do their best without fighting the place. When they don't, effort goes into working around the place instead of with it.

You cannot always change a culture, but you can choose where you spend your hours. And if you lead, you answer for both the why and the way.

TRY THIS

Name one rule, meeting or habit that contradicts what your team or household says it values. Change it, or raise it, this week.

PART THREE · AGENCY IN ACTION 08

Situations for other people

The last part of the book turns outward. Once you see how much a situation shapes a person, the people who build situations for others carry a particular weight: parents, teachers, leaders and citizens.

For a parent, that can mean arranging the home so the good choice is the easy one, rather than relying on reminders. For a leader, it means designing how the work happens, not only urging people to try harder. For a citizen, it means caring about the places where other people's effort will either go far or go nowhere.

This is the thinnest part of our reading, and the part most worth reading in the book itself.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

The lines readers on HourLife vote up most, in our words, each with a note on what it asks of you.

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Grit is necessary, but it is not always enough. How you set yourself up for a challenge matters too.

The book is a companion to Grit, not a retraction. Effort still counts. It simply goes further in a situation that works with you, and it can do harm when you keep pushing in one that never will.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Change the situation before you try to change yourself.

Duckworth borrows a three-box model from the psychologist James Gross: the situation, what you think about it, and how you respond. Most of us fight at the last box with willpower. The first box is easier to move, and the change lasts longer.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Situational agency is a skill: taking charge of your circumstances on purpose.

It means choosing the people and places that bring out your best, instead of making the best of whatever you were handed. The book treats it as something you can learn and practise, like any other skill.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

What sits within arm's reach shapes what you do.

The phone by the bed, the cake on the counter, the book left on the pillow. Nearby objects pull on you all day. Look at what is in reach where you do the work before you blame your discipline.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A stubborn problem often gets solved by making the right path the easy one.

Resisting temptation every day wears you out. Moving the temptation out of the way, or putting the good option in front of you, does the work for you and keeps doing it on a bad day.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You are not the same person in every situation, so pick the ones that bring out the self you want.

Your personality shifts with where you are and who you are with. That can work in your favour. The question becomes which rooms, teams and routines bring out the version of you that you like.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You do better with the right people around you.

Peers set what feels normal. When her own writing stalled, Duckworth went to her editor for help rather than pushing harder alone. Joining people who already do what you want to do is one of the strongest moves you can make.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A good mentor helps you picture what you cannot do yet.

Watching someone further along gives you a clear picture of what better looks like. The book uses Michael Phelps and his coach Bob Bowman to show how much a great performer owes to the people around him.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Culture is a situation too. Choose where you live and work, and if you lead, you shape it.

A group's mission and its everyday way of working either line up or they do not. Leaders are responsible for both. The last part of the book turns to parents, leaders and citizens, and to building situations where other people can do well.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. The setup actions install the situation. The habits keep it working after the first good week.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Run the reach test on your desk
- [ ] Give your phone a home outside the bedroom
- [ ] Put your goal where you see it first and last
- [ ] Join one group that already does what you want to do
- [ ] Send one prepared question to a possible mentor

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Check box one before you blame yourself
- ◯ Ask for help before you push harder
- ◯ Thank a mentor in writing

30 days · Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE VERDICT

Should you read it?

Our reading: the book's most useful move is a small one. It shifts the blame from the person to the situation, and then hands the person a lever.

READ IT IF

You read Grit and kept trying harder without getting further.

You keep restarting the same habit and blaming yourself.

You lead a team, a class or a household and want people to do well without pushing them.

You are choosing a job, a school or a place to live.

MAYBE NOT IF

You have little say over your situation right now. The book assumes some room to choose, though its smallest changes, within arm's reach, need very little.

You want a plan more than an argument. The action book at the end of this reading is the plan.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Run the reach test on your desk

Sit where you do your most important work and list everything within arm's reach.

Move one thing that pulls you off course out of reach, and put one thing that pulls you toward the work in its place.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Give your phone a home outside the bedroom

Tonight, put the charger in the kitchen or hall and use a cheap alarm clock instead.

Do it once, and every night after that runs on the new setup.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Put your goal where you see it first and last

Write this month's goal on a card and leave it beside your bed or on your monitor.

Michael Phelps kept his goals by his bed so they were the last thing he saw at night and the first in the morning.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Join one group that already does what you want to do

List the five people you spend the most time with.

Then find a club, class or online group whose members already run, write, build or study the way you want to, and go to one session this week.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Send one prepared question to a possible mentor

Pick someone a few years ahead of you.

Send a short note with one specific question, what you have already tried, and why you are asking them. Keep it easy to answer in five minutes.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Check box one before you blame yourself

When you skip a habit, write down one thing about the situation that made it hard: where you were, who was there, what was in reach.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Ask for help before you push harder

When a task has stalled for a whole session, message one person who could help instead of grinding on alone.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Thank a mentor in writing

Once a month, send a short note to someone who helped you.

Nov 2 - Dec 1, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

December 2026

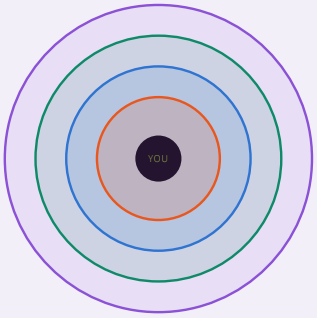
MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Effort goes further in a place that is on your side.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER ANGELA DUCKWORTH