



Optimizing Strengths

Creative Wellbeing Workshops, LLC

Your Strengths Are Your Sails

Positive psychologist Robert Biswas-Diener suggests that weaknesses are like the water sloshing around the baseboard of a sailboat—we might notice it but, hey, we're sailing, it's to be expected! On the other hand, if *too much* water gathers or there's a leak, we have to bail some of it out or plug the leak so we don't sink. If there's breach in the hull, we might have to take more extreme measures and dock the ship for repairs. Nevertheless, even if the boat is perfectly intact, when we actually want to *move*, our strengths are our sails. We need them to go forward!

Strategies for Optimizing Strengths

- Identify strengths
- Build a vocabulary of strengths
- Develop your strengths
- Use strengths that energize you more
- Use qualities that deplete you less
- Couple strengths with weaknesses
- Partner with others
- Become strengths spotters



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Rebecca 2011

If you focus on strengths, weakness becomes irrelevant.

Ways to Identify Your Strengths and Resources

- Values in Action Survey of Character Strengths
<https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter>
- Center for Applied Positive Psychology Realise 2
<http://www.capeu.com/R2StrengthsProfiler>
- Gallup Strengths Finder <https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/>
- Myers Briggs <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>
- The Enneagram <https://www.eclecticenergies.com/enneagram/test.php>
- The Upside of Your Dark Side, Robert Biswas-Diener & Todd Kashdan
- Think of what engages you most
- Ask people what they think your strengths are

Strengths for Individuals and Teams (using the list of strengths provided on the other side)

- Circle strengths you identify with most (you may just circle sections of a strength)
- Circle strengths others would say that you have
- Circle strengths of others with whom you are in relationship (friends, partners, family, employers, employees)
- Circle strengths that your group manifests (couples, family, cultural/ethnic group, organization, school, team, etc.)
- Circle the strengths of other groups with which you interface (same as above)

The VIA Classification of Character Strengths

1. **Wisdom and Knowledge** - Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge
 - **Creativity** [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
 - **Curiosity** [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.
 - **Judgment** [critical thinking]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly.
 - **Love of Learning**: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows.
 - **Perspective** [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people.
2. **Courage** - Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal
 - **Bravery** [valor]: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it.
 - **Perseverance** [persistence, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks.
 - **Honesty** [authenticity, integrity]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions
 - **Zest** [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.
3. **Humanity** - Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others
 - **Love**: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.
 - **Kindness** [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.
 - **Social Intelligence** [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick.
4. **Justice** - Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life
 - **Teamwork** [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.
 - **Fairness**: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.
 - **Leadership**: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the time.
5. **Temperance** - Strengths that protect against excess
 - **Forgiveness**: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful.
 - **Humility**: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is.
 - **Prudence**: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted.
 - **Self-Regulation** [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions.
6. **Transcendence** - Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning
 - **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence** [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.
 - **Gratitude**: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.
 - **Hope** [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.
 - **Humor** [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes.
 - **Spirituality** [faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort.

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