

My Strengths

Self-Coaching Guide

Strengths

Strengths are the characteristic ways we tend to behave, think or feel. Each of our strengths reflects who we really are and enables us to: (a) be our best self, (b) use our innate abilities, (c) be true to our values, and (d) be energised. Our strengths are not the same as our competencies, talents or skills. Just because we may be good at doing something doesn't necessarily mean it's our strength.

Playing to our strengths daily helps us improve our life and flourish due to the following benefits:

- **Increased performance** – more engaged and likely to achieve our goals and grow the most.
- **Increased vitality** – more energised and likely to have enhanced health, wellbeing and happiness.
- **Increased confidence and self-esteem** – more belief in our abilities and improved relationships.
- **Increased resilience** – better able to protect against, manage, and overcome our problems.

We all possess character strengths in different degrees, giving us a unique profile.

(The classification of 24 character strengths from the VIA Institute on Character is given overleaf.)

How can I play to my strengths?

First, you need to discover your personal character strengths profile. You can do this by taking the VIA Survey. (Details of this free online survey are given overleaf.) The highest character strengths in your profile are your signature strengths. Knowing and applying these strengths is crucial to you being your best self and flourishing. When applying your signature strengths, it will feel like they are: (a) essential to you as a person, (b) natural and effortless, and (c) energising. You will have a sense of engagement.

Once you know your signature strengths you can think about whether you are using them to your best advantage. Do you ignore or play them down? Are they serving you as well as they could? Also, you can use your signature strengths to help you overcome challenges or resolve issues. To do this, write down your problem succinctly; list your signature strengths; think how you could use each strength to help tackle the problem; write these thoughts down as actions and commit to implementing them.

The lowest character strengths in your profile are those you don't use much because you don't display the characteristics linked with these strengths, and you don't need them to do what you currently do. These are weaknesses only if they prevent you from achieving what you *want* to achieve. A weakness can be developed into a strength over time through training, practice, and the support of those people around you who may have this strength, or by working with a coach/mentor.

You need to be aware that the underuse or overuse a particular signature strength can turn it into a weakness. For example, 'Perseverance' can be underused (lazy, helpless, giving up), overused (stubborn, struggles to let go), or optimally used (task completer, persistent). You should use common sense when deciding how and when to play to your strengths to get the balance right. Your signature strengths need to be applied in the right combination, to the right degree, and in the right situation. (A chart showing the optimal use of the 24 character strengths from the VIA Institute is given overleaf.)

"Strength reveals itself through character." Henry Rollins

More Information

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VIA Institute on Character Classification of Character Strengths

The 24 character strengths, based on those developed by the VIA Institute and grouped into six virtues, are listed below:

Wisdom & Knowledge

- Creativity – Original, adaptive, ingenuity
- Curiosity – Interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience
- Judgment – Critical thinking, thinking things through, open-minded
- Love of Learning – Mastering new skills and topics, systematically adding to knowledge
- Perspective – Wisdom, providing wise counsel, taking the big picture view

Courage

- Bravery – Valour, not shrinking from fear, speaking up for what's right
- Perseverance – Persistence, industry, finishing what one starts
- Integrity – Authenticity, honesty
- Enthusiasm – Vitality, zest, vigour, energy, feeling alive and activated

Love (or Humanity)

- Intimacy – Both loving and being loved, valuing close relations with others
- Kindness – Generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruism, 'niceness'
- Social Intelligence – Aware of the motives/feelings of oneself and others

Justice

- Teamwork – Citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty
- Fairness – Just, not letting feelings bias decisions about others
- Leadership – Organizing group activities, encouraging a group to get things done

Temperance

- Forgiveness – Mercy, accepting others' shortcomings, giving people a second chance
- Humility – Modesty, letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves
- Caution – Careful, prudence, not taking undue risks
- Self-control – Self-regulation, disciplined, managing impulses and emotions

Transcendence

- Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence – Awe, wonder, elevation
- Gratitude – Thankful for the good, expressing thanks, feeling blessed
- Optimism – Hope, future-mindedness, future orientation
- Humour – Playfulness, bringing smiles to others, light-hearted
- Spirituality – Religiousness, faith, purpose, meaning

VIA Institute free online survey to obtain your personal character strengths profile can be found at – [VIA Survey](#).

VIA Institute chart showing the optimal use of the 24 character strengths can be found at – [Via GoldenMean](#).

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