

Identifying and Working With Strengths

Research suggests that utilizing our unique talents and strengths will make us not only happier but healthier as well. When we are beginning the process of behavior change it is important that we recognize these strengths to make the change process more effective and enjoyable.

Research

People who use their strengths are:^{1,2}

- Less stressed
- More likely to reach their goals
- More confident
- Happier
- Perform better at work
- Have more energy

Strengths

Personal strengths are those talents and abilities that we possess that are energizing, and allow us to do and be our best. That being said, just being good at something does not necessarily make that skill or ability one of your strengths. Sometimes those things we are good at (for example, being detail oriented) can actually drain our energy.

Remember these three points when thinking about your strengths, they should be already existing ways of thinking, behaving, and feeling that are:

1. Authentic: They are genuine and real
2. Fulfilling: They help us to feel that we are “at our best”. When are using a strength, we are usually pretty content with ourselves and where we are in life.
3. Meaningful: A strength is something about us that we truly value, something important.

¹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/functioning-flourishing/201411/ten-reasons-focus-your-strengths>

² http://www.cappeu.com/Portals/3/Files/Why_Strengths_The_Evidence.pdf

Questions to get you thinking about your strengths:

1. What did you absolutely love to do as a child? What were those experiences and moments where you were most joyful and engaged?

2. Think about your life now. When do you feel completely absorbed and happy with what you are doing? What are those experiences that leave you feeling energized?

3. Describe a time when you felt tremendous pride in an action of yours. Describe it in detail, and how you contributed to that event or action happening.

4. What event(s) are you looking forward to in the future?

5. If someone very close to you were to give your top 3 strengths, what do you think they would say?

List Your Top Strengths Below

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

Strengths List

Ambitious	Fairness	Loving
Appreciation of beauty	Faith	Modesty
Artistic	Forgiveness	Open Mindedness
Bravery	Generosity	Optimism
Compassion	Gratitude	Passion
Connector	Honesty	Perspective
Creativity	Hope	Playfulness
Critical Thinking	Humility	Practical
Curiosity	Humor	Prudence
Devoted	Integrity	Sense of purpose
Empathetic	Judgment	Spiritual
Emotional Intelligence	Kindness	Spontaneous
Enthusiasm	Leadership	
Equality	Love of Learning	

Strengths Resource List

1. University of Pennsylvania's "Authentic Happiness" site has a free strengths assessment. On the home page look under the "Engagement Questionnaires" and click on the VIA Signature Strengths link. You will have to create a free account and log in to take the assessment.
<http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx>
2. Center of Applied Positive Psychology (CAPP) has a strengths assessment tool called Realize
2. This is survey costs money but some people like it because it assesses not only current strengths but also learned (those that are not energizing) and unrealized strengths. It also offers strengths tips to those that sign up for an account.

3. *The Strengths Book* by Alex Linley, Janet Willars, and Robert Biswas-Diener.

4. *Strengths Finder* by Tom Rath