

# Strengths

## What are strengths?

Often we are excellent at knowing and naming our weaknesses (e.g., procrastination or public speaking) but know little about our strengths (e.g., curiosity, kindness, or bravery). Personal strengths are defined<sup>1</sup> as a “natural capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a way that allows optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of valued outcomes”.

## Benefits of strengths use

Strengths use is related to a number of beneficial outcomes for individuals and organisations, including:<sup>1-6</sup>

- Greater wellbeing.
- Higher levels of energy or vitality.
- Less depression and stress.
- More likely to achieve their goals.
- Greater authenticity (i.e., the sense that I am being myself, rather than living a life that isn't mine).
- More positive emotions, which leads to a broadened mindset and building of resources.
- Greater resilience and the ability to deal with the after-effects of negative events.

### Box 1: VIA 6 virtues and 24 strengths

1. WISDOM & KNOWLEDGE: Creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love-of-learning, perspective, innovation.
2. COURAGE: Bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality, zest.
3. LOVE & HUMANITY: Love, kindness, social intelligence.
4. JUSTICE: Citizenship, fairness, leadership.
5. TEMPERANCE: Forgiveness & mercy, humility, prudence, self control.
6. SPIRITUALITY & TRANSCENDENCE: Appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humour, spirituality.

“Strengths are the things we are good at AND that energise us. This is the first mistake people make, because traditionally we have thought our strengths are simply the things we are good at.”

The Strengths Book

## Books

The Strengths Book, by Alex Linley, Willars & Biswas-Diener.

Average to A+, Alex Linley.

## Websites

[www.cappeu.com](http://www.cappeu.com)

[viacharacter.org](http://viacharacter.org)

[www.strengthsfinder.com](http://www.strengthsfinder.com)

## Mobile Apps

365 Strengths

Go Strengths

## Online Videos

YouTube, Why are strengths relevant? Robert Biswas-Diener.

## Identifying your own strengths

Identifying your own personal strengths requires self-reflection and exploration. Here are some of the signs and questions that can help you spot your strengths<sup>1</sup>.

- **Energy:** What activities give you a buzz?
- **Authenticity:** When are you most relaxed, like you are 'being your self'?
- **Ease:** What activities come naturally to you?
- **Motivation:** What activities do you simply love to do?

## Strength questionnaires

There are also questionnaires that can help you explore your strengths online. Assessment takes 20-30 minutes and provides you with a report of your key strengths. The three major online strengths assessments are:

- **VIA Signature Strengths**, by the VIA Institute, USA (see Box 1). This is the only free strengths survey currently, however it does not provide the same level of feedback as the other two.
- **Realise2**, by CAPP, UK. This includes 60 strength themes, e.g., drive (self-motivated and push self to achieve more) and legacy (you care deeply about future generations and seek to leave a legacy through what you do). Recommended by MindSetGo.
- **StrengthsFinder 2.0**, by Gallup, USA. This includes 34 strengths themes, e.g., activator (puts ideas into action) and strategic (plans toward the big picture).

My strengths are...

1. Linley & Harrington (2006). Strengths coaching.
2. Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson (2005). Positive psychology progress.
3. Clifton & Buckingham (2001) Now, Discover Your Strengths.
4. Linley, Willars & Biswas-Diener (2010). The Strengths Book.
5. Peterson & Seligman (2004). Character Strengths and Virtues.
6. Rath (2007). StrengthsFinder 2.0.

“A natural capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a way that allows optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of valued outcomes.”

## Questions

- ? Do you know what your strengths are?
- ? Do you know what the strengths of your friends, family members or work team are?
- ? Do you get the chance to use your strengths on a daily basis?
- ? What could you do to use your strengths more often or in new ways?

## Action

1. Identify your own strengths using the strengths self-reflection questions or one of the online questionnaires.
2. Write out your top 5 strengths and give each one a score depending on how often you use that strength, i.e., 0 (not at all) to 10 (frequently).
3. Then ask yourself, what can I do to activate or use my strengths more often and/or in new ways?