



The Tuesday Program

Discovering and using your *Strengths*

Your task is to:

1. Read though each of the 24 character strengths below and identify the five that you believe are your key strengths. Allow yourself a good five minutes to really contemplate these and to think of specific examples of you actually using each strength. Good questions to ask that give you insight into your strengths include:


- A. What are you complimented on by others?
- B. What aspects of your life are you proud of?
- C. What skills have you acquired easily?
- D. When do you feel most yourself?
- E. What have you done to overcome a serious difficulty?
- F. What gives your life a sense of meaning?

The 24 character strengths include:

- Appreciation of beauty & excellence
- Bravery & Valour
- **Capacity to love & be loved**
- Caution, prudence, & discretion
- Citizenship, teamwork, & loyalty
- Creativity, ingenuity, & originality
- **Curiosity & interest in the world**
- Fairness, equity, & justice
- Forgiveness & mercy
- **Gratitude**
- Honesty, authenticity, & genuineness
- **Hope, optimism, & future-mindedness**
- Humour & playfulness
- Industry, diligence, & perseverance
- Judgment, critical thinking, & open-mindedness
- Kindness & generosity
- Leadership
- Love of Learning
- Modesty & humility
- Perspective (wisdom)
- Self-control & self-regulation
- Social Intelligence
- Spirituality, sense of purpose, & faith
- **Zest, enthusiasm, & energy**

2. Now plan to use **your** top five strengths **more** and in **new ways** over the coming week. Think about how you can use them in different areas of your life, and with the different people you come into contact with. Remember, aim to use the right strength, in the right amount, in the right situation...





3. Lastly, focus on the strengths of **curiosity, hope and optimism, gratitude, zest and energy,** and the capacity to **love and be loved.** See the suggestions at the end of this document regarding how to use these five strengths more.

In sum, strengths are elemental, inter-dependent, and universal. They change and develop, can be measured, and are expressed in degrees depending on context. They can also be underused, overused and misused. Most importantly though, the way you use your strengths has important consequences for your happiness and wellbeing.

More information on Strengths:

Books

- Linley, A. (2008). *Average to A+: Realising strengths in yourself and others.* Coventry, UK.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rath, T. (2007). *Strengths Finder 2.0.* Omaha, NE: Gallup Press.

Websites

- <http://www.viacharacter.org/>
- <http://strengths.gallup.com/>
- <http://www.cappeu.com/>

Research Articles

- Rashid, T. & Ostermann, R. F. (2009). Strengths-based assessment in clinical practice. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 65*(5), 488-498.
- Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2009). *Character strengths: Research and practice.* *Journal of College and Character, 10*(4), np.

Further Description of the 24 Strengths:

Note: The 24 character strengths are copyright, VIA Institute, 2004, www.viacharacter.org

1. **Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]:** Curiosity is taking an interest in all of ongoing experience. It involves actively recognising and pursuing challenging opportunities and seeking out new knowledge. Curiosity can be broken down into three categories: interest, novelty seeking, and openness






to new experience. It is this strength that drives individuals to make discoveries and to explore the boundaries of human knowledge.

2. **Creativity [originality, ingenuity]:** Creativity is the process of using one's originality to devise novel ways to positively contribute to one's own life or the lives of others. Such originality can range from everyday ingenuity to groundbreaking work that becomes highly recognised. Creative people are able to apply their imaginations in new and surprising ways in order to solve the problems that they encounter. Traditional notions of creativity focus on artistic expression and scientific discovery, but this strength can be applied to any area of life in which obstacles can be addressed imaginatively.
3. **Open-mindedness [judgment, critical thinking]:** Open-mindedness is thinking things through and examining them from all sides. It involves a willingness to consider evidence against one's own beliefs, plans, and goals, and to revise them if necessary. Open-minded people faithfully adhere to the standard of considering evidence fairly. This strength counteracts the pervasive "my-side bias" that prevents many people from considering views other than their own.
4. **Love of learning:** Love of learning involves enthusiastically studying new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge. People with this strength enjoy the cognitive engagement of acquiring new skills or satisfying their curiosity, even when the material benefits of learning may not be immediately available. Love of learning allows people to persist in the face of frustrations and obstacles that arise during the course of education, both formal and informal.
5. **Perspective [wisdom]:** Perspective, which is often called wisdom, is distinct from intelligence and involves a superior level of knowledge and judgment. This strength involves being able to provide wise counsel to others. It allows its possessor to address important and difficult questions about morality and the meaning of life. People with perspective are aware of broad patterns of meaning in their lives, their own strengths and weaknesses, and the necessity of contributing to their society.
6. **Bravery [valour]:** Bravery is the capacity to take action to aid others in spite of significant risks or dangers. This strength allows people to avoid shrinking from the threats, challenges, or pain associated with attempting to do good works. Brave acts are undertaken voluntarily with full knowledge of the potential adversity involved. Brave individuals place the highest importance on higher purpose and morality, no matter what the consequences might be.
7. **Persistence [perseverance, industriousness]:** Persistence is the mental strength necessary to continue striving for one's goals in the face of obstacles and setbacks. This sort of perseverance requires dedication, focus, and patience. Persistent individuals finish what they start, persisting in the quest to achieve their goals in spite of any hardships they encounter along the way. The broader and more ambitious one's goals are, the more necessary persistence is in order to achieve them.
8. **Integrity [authenticity, honesty]:** The strength of integrity is manifested in speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way. A person of integrity is open and honest about his or her own thoughts, feelings, and responsibilities, being careful not to mislead through either action or omission. This strength allows one to feel a sense of ownership over one's own internal states, regardless of whether those states are popular or socially comfortable, and to experience a sense of authentic wholeness.
9. **Vitality [zest, enthusiasm, vigour, energy]:** Vitality is an approach to life marked by an appreciation for energy, liveliness, and excitement. A vital person lives life as an adventure to be approached wholeheartedly. A life of vigour allows one to experience the overlap of the mental and physical realms of experience, as stress decreases and health increases. Vitality differs from contentment in that it involves greater psychological and physiological activation and enthusiasm.
10. **Love and being loved:** Loving individuals value close relationships with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated. Love can be expressed toward those we depend on, toward those who depend on us, and toward those we feel romantic, sexual, and emotional attraction to. This strength allows people to put their trust in others and make them a priority in making decisions. They experience a sense of deep contentment from their devotion.



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11. **Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”]:** Kindness consists of doing favours and good deeds for others without the expectation of personal gain. This strength requires respect for others but also includes emotional affection. Kind people find joy in the act of giving and helping other people, regardless of their degree of relatedness or similarity.
 12. **Social Intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]:** Socially intelligent individuals are aware of the emotions and intentions of themselves and others. No matter what the social situation is, they attempt to make everyone involved feel comfortable and valued. Socially intelligent people are perceptive of others’ feelings and honest about their own, and are generally adept at fostering healthy relationships.
 13. **Citizenship [social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork]:** Citizenship involves working as a member of a group for the common good. People with this strength are loyal to the organisations of which they are members, ready to make personal sacrifices for their neighbours. The strength of citizenship is manifested through a sense of social belonging and civic responsibility. Good citizens are not blindly obedient, and when necessary they strive to change their groups for the better.
 14. **Fairness, Equity and Justice:** Fairness involves treating everyone according to universal ideals of equality and justice. Fair individuals do not let their personal feelings bias their moral or ethical decisions about others, but instead rely on a broad set of moral values. True fairness incorporates both a respect for moral guidelines and a compassionate approach to caring for others. This strength is applicable at all levels of society, from everyday interactions to international issues of social justice.
 15. **Leadership:** Leadership is the process of motivating, directing, and coordinating members of a group to achieve a common goal. Leaders assume a dominant role in social interaction, but effective leadership requires listening to the opinions and feelings of other group members as much as it involves active direction. Individuals who possess this strength are able to help their group to achieve goals in a cohesive, efficient, and amiable manner.
 16. **Forgiveness and Mercy:** This strength involves forgiving those who have wronged or offended us. Forgiveness entails accepting the shortcomings of others, giving people a second chance, and putting aside the temptation to hold a grudge or behave vengefully. Forgiveness allows one to put aside the self-destructive negativity associated with anger and to extend mercy toward a transgressor.
 17. **Humility / Modesty:** Humility and modesty involve letting one’s strengths and accomplishments speak for themselves. Individuals with this strength do not need to have low self-esteem, but merely avoid seeking the spotlight and regarding themselves as better than others. Humble people are honest with themselves about their own limitations and the fallibility of their own opinions, and are open to advice and assistance from others.
 18. **Prudence:** Prudence is a practical orientation toward future goals. It entails being careful about one’s choices, not taking undue risks, and keeping long-term goals in mind when making short-term decisions. Prudent individuals monitor and control their impulsive behaviour and anticipate the consequences of their actions. This strength is not synonymous with stinginess or timidity, but instead involves an intelligent and efficient perspective towards achieving major goals in life.
 19. **Self-Regulation [self-control]:** Self-regulation is the process of exerting control over oneself in order to achieve goals or meet standards. Self-regulating individuals are able to control instinctive responses such as aggression and impulsivity, responding instead according to pre-conceived standards of behaviour. This strength can apply both to resisting temptations, such as when a dieter avoids sugary foods, and to initiating actions, such as when someone gets up early to exercise.
 20. **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]:** Individuals with an appreciation for beauty feel a sense of awe at the scenes and patterns around them. They take pleasure in observing physical beauty, the skills and talents of other people, and the beauty inherent to virtue and morality. Beauty can be found in almost every area of life, from nature to arts to mathematics to science to everyday experience. This strength allows people to experience satisfaction and richness in everyday experiences.





21. **Gratitude:** Gratitude is an awareness of, and thankfulness for, the good things in one's life. Grateful individuals take time to express thanks and contemplate all that they have been given in life. Gratitude can be directed at a specific person, at a divinity, or simply expressed outwardly for the mere fact of existence. This strength is a mindset of appreciation and goodwill for the benefits derived from other people.

22. **Hope and Optimism [future-mindedness, future orientation]:** Hope is the expectation that good things will happen in the future. Hopeful individuals are confident that their efforts toward future goals will lead to their fruition. This strength leads people to expect the best from themselves and others.

23. **Humour [playfulness]:** Humour involves an enjoyment of laughing, friendly teasing, and bringing happiness to others. Individuals with this strength see the light side of life in many situations, finding things to be cheerful about rather than letting adversity get them down. Humour does not necessarily refer just to telling jokes, but rather to a playful and imaginative approach to life.

24. **Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]:** Spirituality is a universal part of human experience involving knowledge of one's place within the larger scheme of things. It can include, but is not limited to, religious belief and practice. Spirituality affords us an awareness of the sacred in everyday life, a sense of comfort in the face of adversity, and the experience of transcending the ordinary to reach something fundamental.

Suggestions for Using Five Particular Strengths:

(adapted from Tayyab Rashid: "340 ways to use the VIA Character Strengths")

Optimism & Hope

1. Recall a situation when you or someone close to you overcame a difficult obstacle and succeeded. Focus on what strengths were involved to make this happen.
2. Think of a time when life was not so good, and then find at least two positive aspects for each period of time recalled.
3. Visualise where and what you want to be after one, five, and ten years. Sketch a pathway that you can follow to get there. Consider what strengths you will need on this pathway.
4. Watch a hope inspiring movie, such as *Life is Beautiful* (1998 - Italian) or *Good Will Hunting* (1997), or listen to optimistic music, such as *Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World*.
5. Read about someone who succeeded despite difficulties and setbacks. Notice how they accomplished their success.
6. Mentally rehearse your next anticipated challenge. Build perspective by managing obstacles rather than trying to eliminate all of them.
7. Document three past accomplishments in detail and let them inspire your future. Consider the strengths you used.
8. Surround yourself with optimistic and future-minded friends, particularly when you face a setback.

Curiosity

1. Look for jobs in which you are charged with acquiring new information daily, such as journalism, research, teaching, etc.
2. Watch a curiosity inspiring movie, such as *Amélie* (2001 - French)
3. Expand your knowledge in an area of interest through books, journals, magazines, TV, radio or internet.
4. Attend a function/lecture/colloquium of a culture that differs from yours.
5. Find a person who shares your area of interest and learn how he/she increases his/her expertise in that area.
6. Eat food of a different culture, explore its cultural context and become aware of your thoughts.





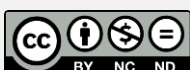
7. Connect with a person of a different culture and learn about his/her culture.
8. Make a list of unknowns about your favourite topic.
9. Try things that challenge your existing knowledge and skills.
10. Visit new towns, states or countries.
11. Get engaged in more open-ended learning experiences (i.e., making ice cream to understand the physics and chemistry in this process, or taking a yoga class to understand different muscle groups).
12. Explore processes of nature by being in the woods, park, stream, yard, etc.

Zest and Energy

1. Do something that you already do, but with more energy, including some creative and different elements.
2. Exercise at least 2-3 times a week, and notice how it affects your energy level.
3. Do a physical activity of your choice, one that you don't "have to do" and that you are not told to do.
4. Improve your sleep hygiene by establishing regular sleep time, eating 3-4 hours before sleeping, avoiding doing any work in the bedroom, not taking caffeine late in the evening, etc. Notice changes in your energy level.
5. Watch an energy inspiring movie, such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)
6. Think of ways to make an assignment exciting and engaging before you undertake it.
7. Do a physically rigorous activity (bike riding, running, sports singing, playing) that you always wanted to do but have not done yet.
8. Sing or play an instrument.
9. Attend a dance, club, concert, or performing art event.
10. Socialise with friends who like to laugh heartily and who are full of energy.
11. Do at least one outdoor activity weekly such as hiking, biking, mountain climbing, brisk walking, or jogging.
12. Take time to celebrate your next two accomplishments and victories.

Love

1. Express (verbally and/or non-verbally) to your loved ones that no matter what happens, your love for them will remain unconditional. If not verbally, close your eyes and visualise it.
2. Express your love through appropriate physical gestures (hugs, kisses, cuddling, gentle massage).
3. Focus on the implicit motives of your loved ones, rather than their behaviours.
4. Explore and appreciate the strengths of your loved ones.
5. Arrange a date with your mate that celebrates both of your signature strengths.
6. Watch an inspiring movie filled with love, such as *The English Patient* (1996).
7. Express your love through writing or gifts. When possible, create gifts yourself.
8. Celebrate days or occasions that are mutually important.
9. Express your love creatively (e.g., through a poem, notes, sketches, photographs of an important place, event or situation which reminds you of mutual love).
10. Help your loved ones with a goal (e.g., a new class, weight loss, exercise, a new career).
11. Reunite at the end of the day and discuss how it went. Focus on what strength you used.
12. Attend a concert, theatre, movies, or go dancing with your loved one.
13. Engage in a favourite activity (e.g., hiking, going to an amusement park, biking, walking in the park, swimming, camping, jogging) together.
14. Go out (without kids) for brunch or dinner.
15. Help your loved ones plan their future by helping them identify their signature strengths. Then, collaborate to design a future based on their signature strengths.





Gratitude

1. Count three of your blessings (good things that happened to you) before going to bed every day.
2. Express your gratitude to someone whom you haven't told before, preferably through a personal visit.
3. Every day, select one small yet important thing that you take for granted. Work on being mindful of this thing in the future.
4. Notice how many times you say thanks and whether you mean it every time.
5. Express gratitude by leaving a note for someone who has helped your intellectual growth.
6. Express thanks to all who contributed to your success, no matter how small their contribution might have been.
7. Express thanks without just saying "thanks"- be more descriptive and specific (e.g., "I appreciate your prudent advice").
8. Set aside at least ten minutes every day to savour a pleasant experience. Decide to withhold any conscious decisions during these ten minutes.
9. Express gratitude to public officials such as police officers, fire fighters, and postal workers.
10. Before eating, think of all people who have contributed to what you are eating. Do this at least once a week.
11. Over dinner, talk with your loved ones about two good things that happened to them during the day.
12. Think of three past adversities and identify three unexpected goods they led to.
13. Reminisce about your best moments of recognition, achievement, praise, and connection.

