
Strengths Development Guide.



Strategic
People
Group.



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Why work on your strengths?

Traditional management approaches focused on fixing weaknesses and management by exception – i.e. dealing with the problems. Peter Drucker (some would say the key influencer in management in the 20th Century) put forward the proposition that we should focus on strengths rather than weaknesses in individual development. Research over the last 20 years has verified that focusing on strengths can be the best approach. Key research findings are:

- In terms of individual development, focusing on strengths results in more improvements than focusing on weaknesses. In fact, strength based development results in twice the gains in competency set than weakness-based development. Focusing on strengths can lead to bigger improvements in the weakness areas than focusing directly on the weaknesses – especially where the weakness can be allied to the strength area. Weakness-based development can actually create a negative impact on a person's overall competency set.
- Exceptional leaders are not good at everything, in fact they have 3 – 5 strengths that they develop to their full potential. They take their natural talents and invest in developing them to make themselves extremely strong in these areas (click here to see The Extraordinary Leader).
- Actively using one of your strengths in a new and different way each day results in significant health benefits after 3 – 6 months. These health benefits include feeling happier, less stress, increased perceptions of vitality, and higher self esteem. The opposite is true of those who focus on their weaknesses (watch Martin Seligman, working on your strengths).
- Organisations focusing on strengths performed 36% higher than average, and organisations focusing on weaknesses performed 27% lower than average. They also made 150% more profit.
- Managers focusing on strengths were 86% likely to achieve their objectives; they were twice as likely to achieve them as weakness based managers. They spent more time with top performers, matched talents to tasks and focused on strengths when making employment decisions.
- Recrafting, or reconnecting, what people are doing in their job to their strengths results in significant improvements in job satisfaction, pleasure, engagement, and perceptions of meaning.

How to use strengths

What are your top strengths on the VIA strengths survey (<http://strategicpeoplegroup.pro.viasurvey.org/Account/Register>). Of those 24 which 4 or 5 seem to be the most accurate at describing your character?



- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

These are called your Signature Strengths. Use the information in the following pages to help you understand the strengths better.

- Every day for one week, use any one of your signature strengths in a new, different or more frequent way. Start by reading about the strength and some of the reading, videos or podcasts - then think about how to use it more. In order to extend your signature strengths you will need to be creative in the activity you plan. The guide will give you some ideas.
- Think about your cues for doing more of your strength (how will you remember to do it), and how will you reward yourself for doing it. Perhaps allocate 10 minutes per day? Eg, for curiosity it might be after morning tea break I am going to take 10 minutes to investigate something at work that I want to now how it works.
- If you journal at the end of the day, think about when things went well - what strengths were you using. When things didn't do well what was happening then?
- Print out these [strengths cards](#) (double side on short edge). Note on the card what you work on, when you will do it and what other strengths you will use to compliment it. Keep your five signature strengths cards with you to help you implement them.

resources

- ✦ Martin Seligman, working on your strengths
- ✦ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi on Flow
- ✦ The Extraordinary Leader
- ✦ Martin Luther King - Be the Best You Can Be
- ✦ The Gillian Lynn Story
- ✦ Trombone Player Wanted, Marcus Buckingham
- ✦ The business case for strengths, Marcus Buckingham

Making Habits

- ✦ Power of Habit
- ✦ Goal setting analogy - start with something small and you can achieve big things
- ✦ Put first things first
- How to Prepare Your Nervous System for New Goals



Strength & Activity	Effect
<p>Day 1 Strength</p> <p>Cue</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Reward</p>	
<p>Day 2 Strength</p> <p>Cue</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Reward</p>	
<p>Day 3 Strength</p> <p>Cue</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Reward</p>	
<p>Day 4 Strength</p> <p>Cue</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Reward</p>	
<p>Day 5 Strength</p> <p>Cue</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Reward</p>	



Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence

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

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence involves noticing and appreciating these attributes in various domains, from nature to art, to mathematics, to science, to everyday experiences. Appreciation of beauty and excellence refers to the ability to find, recognise, and take pleasure in the existence of goodness in the physical and social worlds. People high in this strength frequently feel awe and related emotions, including admiration and wonder, while walking in the woods or in a city, while reading novels, while learning about people's lives, and while watching sports or movies. They are responsive to all forms of beauty and are able to see beauty where many people overlook it. Another type of beauty that this strength engenders is moral beauty; when goodness displayed as kindness, compassion, forgiveness, etc. is observed, this character strength leads to the transcendent emotion of elevation in which the person feels struck by the goodness he or she has witnessed and experiences a motivation to act virtuously and good because of it.

*Te Mana o papa,
Hei
Whakamiharatanga*

Let the beauty of
the earth lift your
heart in wonder

Māori Whakataukī

What does research reveal about the benefits of this strength?

- Appreciation of beauty and excellence is a strength that may help people in coping with emotional challenges or other difficulties, and is often evident in their aftermath.
- The expression of this strength leads immediately to a positive emotional experience that can be identified as awe or elevation, and the experience of positive emotions has a number of positive benefits to well-being.
- This sense of awe and elevation when in the presence of great beauty or excellence heightens spirituality and self-transcendence.
- Appreciation of beauty and excellence is associated with life satisfaction and with mental health.
- Those high in appreciation of beauty and excellence are usually drawn to mindfulness, an approach to life that deals with being aware of and accepting of the present moment. This often leads to periods of calm, peace and acceptance of good and bad times.



Resources

- ▀ [Why Forest Bathing is Good for Your Health](#)
- ▀ [Why your community needs more green spaces](#)
- ▀ [Eight reasons why awe makes your life better](#)
- ▀ [The science of awe](#)
- ▀ [Four awe inspiring activities](#)
- ▀ [Why is nature so good for your mental health](#)
- ▀ [What awe looks like in your brain](#)
- ▀ [How awe sharpens our brains](#)
- ▀ [The benefits of feeling awe](#)
- ✦ [Awe video](#)
- ▀ [Awe may help us through the tough times](#)
- ✦ [Finding awe in the ordinary](#)
- 🔗 [Why We Should Seek Beauty in the Everyday Life](#)

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual routinely sees beauty all around and appreciates it when tasks are done with high quality or performed with excellence. He or she notices and appreciates beauty in the little things, experiencing awe of things that others take for granted. This person may admire great art, literature, and science, or feel enthralled by music, movies, and drama for not simply their entertainment value but for their artistic and social contributions as well. When at his or her best with this strength, this individual is witnessing good and virtuous acts all around and is inspired to self-improve because of it.

Exploring the strength of Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence

With what conditions (people, places, activities) is this individual most appreciative of beauty and/or excellence? How does appreciation of beauty or excellence affect this individual's work, relationships, use of leisure time, and community involvement?

How has an appreciation of beauty and excellence been nurtured?

To what extent does this person appreciate beauty as compared to excellence?



Does an appreciation of beauty or excellence ever stymie this individual, for example, does he or she translate it into high standards that are intimidating or paralyzing? What could this person do differently to have more experiences of beauty or excellence?

Underuse of Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence

When we are caught up in our daily routines and stressors, it is easy to lose sight of what is happening in the present moment. The present moment is where we connect with beauty and excellence, whether it be an experience in nature or a grand symphony performance. Even those high in this character strength may underuse it in certain situations and miss opportunities to find beauty in what can seem mundane or routine, such as work, long-term relationships, familiar surroundings, and even themselves. The practice of mindfulness can help a person focus in high fidelity on the present and can thereby activate appreciation where it otherwise might be underused. Also, people often see beauty and excellence more outside of themselves (in others and the external environment) than within themselves. Allowing oneself to appreciate one's own special qualities can result in self-regard that can have many positive payoffs.

Do it more!

- Research has shown that keeping a beauty log can enhance an individual's engagement with beauty around them. The key is raising one's consciousness. When something beautiful is seen or felt, whether it is from nature, is human-made (e.g., artwork), or is the virtuous behaviour of others (i.e., moral beauty), writing down thoughts and feeling in a log or journal can increase awareness and deepen experiences.
- Keeping an inspiration file – When I turn on my computer each morning (cue), I'll spend 10 minutes researching ideas that inspire me about my field and file these in my "excellence" folder for future reference (routine). My reward will be my cup of coffee (reward).
- Notice at least one instance of natural beauty around you every day.
- Arrange your work and home environments in a way that is aesthetically beautiful, and make changes periodically.
- Listen to a piece of music or watch a film and evaluate how it touches you. Did you appreciate the excellence involved in producing it?
- Share an appreciation of beauty or excellence with other like-minded individuals to help re-experience the positive emotions felt.
- Keep a "beauty log" to enhance your engagement with beauty.



Do it better!

A keen appreciation of beauty and of excellence-in-performance, when overplayed, can result in perfectionism, snobbishness, and intolerance of others who do not share this appreciation. One may take offence when others threaten or disregard natural beauty, which may lead one to take an extreme position or stance. One's personal and work relationships may suffer if one is overly critical of others who do not do things with as much care or as thoroughly as thought necessary. Additionally, personal achievements may be thwarted by one's own perfectionist standards. Sometimes making commitments to new challenges may be avoided for fear of not being able to perform at a high enough level. Perfectionism can also interfere with decision-making if there is excessive worry about making exactly the right decision.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

You can counterbalance the overuse by using your strength of perspective to assess whether something is good enough. And, you can use your self-regulation to allow yourself to stop once something is "good enough" (as opposed to perfect). Self-compassion and compassion for others is also helpful.



Bravery

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

Bravery involves acting on conviction even if unpopular, not shrinking from fear, and speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition. Bravery has been called corrective because, in some ways, it is used to counteract difficulties everyone faces. We typically think of bravery as physical, such as the bravery demonstrated by soldiers on a battlefield. Bravery is also psychological, such as when we face our problems in a direct way, when we admit our vulnerabilities, and when we seek help. Bravery is moral when we stand up for those who are less fortunate or cannot defend themselves or when we speak up in a group advocating for the rights of others. Bravery is not equivalent to fearlessness because fear is certainly experienced. Rather, bravery is the ability to do what needs to be done in spite of fear. This strength is evident when choosing to do the unpopular but correct thing, or facing a terminal illness with equanimity, or resisting peer pressure regarding a morally questionable shortcut. As a signature strength, bravery emerges regularly, not only in exceptional circumstances.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Bravery lowers anxiety, which in turn enhances the ability to tolerate ambiguous situations.
- Bravery helps people tolerate the vulnerability that is part of growing close to others, thereby helping in the formation and maintenance of close relationships.
- Bravery helps to break the prevailing cycle of abuse or injustice.
- Bravery builds resilience as challenges are overcome and active coping skills are built.
- Bravery involves taking action and risks, two critical ingredients for personal growth and achievement.
- Bravery is speaking up when things are wrong or unfair. Ultimately, such actions can lead to significant long-term benefits, often for the greater good of others. This honesty also engenders trust.

You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You must do the thing you think you cannot do.

Eleanor Roosevelt

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual views himself or herself as someone who does not typically shrink from fear or personal anxieties. He or she is often willing to face risks and uncertain situations.



These situations may be regarded as threatening by others or they may be situations that are internally fearful or threatening and not apparent as such to others. This person may express bravery through physical actions or by speaking up for what he or she believes is right despite opposition. Acting on convictions is important to this person. When at his or her best with this strength, this individual faces fear and takes action but not foolishly in ways that are likely to lead to his or her own demise.

Exploring the strength of Bravery

- How is bravery expressed, e.g., by taking physical risks, supporting unpopular positions, being emotionally vulnerable, thinking unconventionally?
- How does bravery lead this person in directions that have a positive impact on his or her life?
- How does bravery lead this person in directions that have a negative impact?
- How does bravery cause people to admire this person?
- How does bravery cause people to worry about this individual?
- How does bravery exclude this person from certain experiences or opportunities?
- How is bravery tempered so as not to put this person at undue risk?
- How important is bravery to this individual's self- image?
- What motivates this individual to act bravely?

Resources

- ▣ [How to live a more courageous life](#)
- ▣ [The confidence to say no](#)
- ▣ [Six ways to find your courage during challenging times](#)
- ▣ [Why is it so hard to ask for help?](#)
- ▣ [A Way to Teach Courage in the Classroom](#)
- ▣ [How to Cultivate Ethical Courage](#)
- ▣ [What Stops People From Standing Up for What's Right?](#)

Underuse of Bravery

Bravery comes in various forms and some people may have more of one form than another. For example, someone who is brave in the face of physical danger may not be as brave in taking unpopular stances that risk the disapproval of others. Sometimes bravery can be evoked by attenuating the intensity of the fear by realistically evaluating the risk and by diligent preparation to minimise risk. So, for example, if one is interested in increasing the use of bravery in making a decision whether to go skydiving, one could obtain data about the prevalence and types of skydiving accidents and take care in finding a reputable vendor and in preparing one's equipment. Also, quieting one's



autonomic nervous system (heart and breathing rates) can help make it conducive for bravery to be expressed.

In many cases, bravery is blocked by elevated fear or anxiety. Fear is an emotion that narrows one's vantage point and limits one's ability to see the bigger picture. Even those high in bravery will at times take a backseat to personal fears, thus there is always room to grow with this strength.

Do it more!

- Research is finding that one of the most common ways people can increase their bravery is to focus on the outcome of the courageous act. In other words, focusing on the beneficial outcome of a brave act rather than focusing on fears can increase the likelihood of acting bravely.
- Cultivating unexpected partnerships – When I sit down at my desk in the morning (cue), I will reach out to one new connection by 'cold' calling, email or LinkedIn to keep expanding my networks (routine). I'll reward myself by recording my progress in my Bravery Journal (reward).
- Resist social or peer pressure for noble values and causes in meaningful ways (write, speak out, participate in a protest, join an activist organisation).
- Speak up for or write about an unpopular idea in a group.
- Report to appropriate authorities an injustice, abuse, blatant unethical practice, or abuse of power or resources.
- Focus on brave role models for inspiration and a sense that change is possible.

Do it better!

Bravery can sometimes lead to foolhardiness or an overconfidence in measuring risks. This may be especially true when risks have been taken so often that a laxness develops in surveying the potential risks in new situations. In relationships, the other person can feel unsafe with extremely high risk-takers and may withdraw. Societal pressures and gender stereotypes play a role in the overuse of bravery as well. In the extreme, brave people can become "adrenaline junkies" looking for increased levels of risk in order to experience the rush that comes with such activities. Prudence and self-regulation can be used to modulate this overuse of bravery. It may also be useful to tap into love as a way of balancing risks relative to close relationships.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Use prudence to counterbalance bravery in different situations. You can allow yourself to have some prudent thoughts as a way to slow down from making decisions that might otherwise be impulsive or unhealthy.



Creativity

Creativity [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualise and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it

Creativity is thinking of new ways to do things. It involves producing ideas or behaviours that are recognisably original. Words like novel, surprising, ingenious, or unusual often are used to describe creative people. Creativity is found in degrees. At one end of the spectrum are those individuals who are highly recognised for their exceptional creativity, such as great scientists, poets, composers, and painters. This is often referred to as “Big C” creativity. “Small c” creativity is everyday creativity and ingenuity; it is at play when people are able to generate creative solutions to a variety of problems. What really distinguishes creative individuals is not intelligence, but their general approach in life to situations and problems.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Creativity sharpens practical intelligence especially when one is exploring the causes and consequences of everyday life events.
- Creativity helps in promoting divergent thinking (thinking about many ways to solve a problem), and it refines holistic thinking to a level of ideas and details that can be implemented.
- Self-confidence and strong self-knowledge, byproducts of creativity, help one feel comfortable in a variety of situations and adapt to challenges and stressors that come up.
- Creativity helps to inspire and motivate followers and oftentimes helps them become leaders themselves.
- Creativity, though fairly stable over time, can be enhanced by environments that are supportive, reinforcing, open, and informal. On the other hand, creativity can be impeded by time pressure, close supervision, or critical examination.
- Creativity helps drive one’s interest in activities and helps one generate ideas that others find interesting.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as an original thinker, one who can generate unique ideas and strategies that build knowledge and contribute to innovative applications or solutions. People often come to this person with a problem to solve, or when they are looking for help in creating something new or different (e.g., a program, a design, or a different way of organising something). When at his or her best with this strength, this individual is making connections and putting ideas together in unique ways that often inspire others and lead to new and interesting ideas.



Exploring the strength of Creativity

- What holds this individual back from trying to be creative?
- What encourages creativity?
- How do real or anticipated reactions of other people affect one's creative efforts?
- How would this individual define creativity?
- How does this individual use creativity to help solve life problems or those of family, friends, and colleagues?

Resources

- ▣ [The Virtuous Cycle of Innovation and Wellbeing](#)
- ▣ [How your work environment influences your creativity](#)
- ▣ Explore [how creativity works](#).
- ▣ Discover [ten habits of highly creative people](#).
- ▣ Learn [five tips for reaching your creative potential](#).
- ▣ [What daydreaming does to your mind](#)
- ▣ [Six Ways to Break Your Creative Blocks](#)
- ▣ [Eight Lessons From My Research on Creativity](#)
- ✦ [How play can unleash your creativity](#)

Underuse of Creativity

Everyone has a process that facilitates creativity and when individuals are in circumstances that don't allow for this process, their creativity can be cut off or interrupted. For example, oftentimes the creative process is one that requires time for ideas to be incubated. When one is in a time- pressured situation, it may interfere with creativity. There are also situations in which creativity is off-putting to others. For example, suggesting a new and better way to do something may implicitly send a message to others that their ideas are not good enough. The social unease can be perceived even subconsciously and result in underuse of creativity in the name of not offending others. As we have come to learn that there are multiple forms of intelligence, creativity too can be expressed in different forms. For example, an artistically creative person can struggle to find creative solutions to interpersonal or emotional problems. It may be that a person can generalise the creative processes to some of these areas in which he or she is not ordinarily creative. For example, an artist who intuitively senses the nuances of different colours, may apply the same intuitive sensing to the nuanced differences in voice tone. Employing creativity in these instances can lead to higher levels of interest and engagement.



Do it more!

- Practicing divergent thinking is one of the most important research-based interventions to boost creativity. When facing a problem, brainstorm multiple alternatives rather than one solution to the problem.
- Finding fresh solutions – When I sit down for my morning coffee (cue), I'll spend ten minutes brainstorming as many ideas, solutions, possibilities to a problem or opportunity our team is facing (routine). To reward myself I'll share the best three ideas with another team member (reward).
- Create and refine at least one original idea weekly in an area of your interest.
- Do at least one assignment weekly in a different and creative manner.
- Write an article, essay, short story, or poem or draw or paint in relation to your passion once a week.
- Offer a creative solution to a challenge posed by a family member or a friend.
- Examine an event from your past when creativity was used for self-benefit or the benefit of others.
- Develop a creativity workbook: set aside time each day to think, learn, and perceive in novel ways.

Do it better!

Creativity can be energising but also can be a source of tension for both the creative person and those working with him or her. When someone continues to come up with new ideas and new projects, it can quickly become overwhelming to others involved. In addition, the person with many ideas and not enough perseverance will struggle with completing the projects and leave many loose ends. At the same time, for the creative person, it can be irritating when others don't appreciate a new way of doing things or seem resistant to new ideas. When creativity is a sweet spot, there will be situations in which it is better for the individual to lead with another signature strength or consciously temper creativity with love, kindness, social intelligence, leadership, or teamwork.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

When creativity is a sweet spot, there will be situations in which it is better for the individual to lead with another signature strength or consciously temper creativity with love, kindness, leadership, or teamwork. Using the strengths of perspective to see the big picture and social intelligence to spot the responses of others helps to balance creativity.



Curiosity

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

Curiosity is taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake, and finding new subjects and topics fascinating. It is exploring and discovering. Curiosity, interest, novelty-seeking, and openness to experience represent an intrinsic desire for experience and knowledge. It is fulfilling to find an answer, have a new experience, or learn a new fact. This strength can carry someone beyond openness to new experiences into actions associated with personal growth. Curiosity has a developmental trajectory: curious children tend to become curious adults. Because curiosity can never be satisfied in the same way twice, it is fuelled in both positive and negative ways. It may take the form of constantly asking questions, but not all questions are appropriate in all situations.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Curiosity is one of the strengths most robustly linked to satisfaction with life and work.
- Curiosity contributes to happiness, health and longevity, and positive social relationships.
- Curiosity can strengthen a marital relationship by keeping it new and interesting.
- Curiosity helps in seeking and finding greater meaning in life.
- Curiosity helps in embracing uncertain and new situations.
- Curiosity is often the entry point to many lifelong hobbies, passions, and pursuits.
- Curious people are more attracted to activities that offer opportunities for growth, competence, and a higher level of stimulation. Thus, they are likely to report having personal goals aimed at self-improvement.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as someone who takes an active interest in ongoing life experiences and finds new subjects and topics fascinating. Anything can be explored further, and there are always new people, places, situations, and work to discover. When this strength is at its best in this person, his or her mind is on fire with wonder and interest. He or she actively seeks information and asks questions that satisfy driving curiosity while exercising good judgment in not going too far with questioning so as to cause discomfort in others.



Exploring the strength of Curiosity

- With which people or in what circumstances does this individual feel comfort or encouragement in expressing curiosity?
- How has this individual's curiosity been affected growing up?
- When this person starts to wonder about something, what if anything gets in the way of pursuing his or her curiosity?
- How does curiosity play out across the different domains of life?

Resources

- ▣ [What Curiosity Looks Like in the Brain](#)
- ▣ [How to cultivate curiosity](#)
- ▣ [Five ways to listen better](#)
- ✦ [Six ways to be a better listener](#)
- ▣ [Five Reasons Why Intellectual Humility Is Good for You](#)
- ▣ [Intelligent Minds Like Tim Cook and Jeff Bezos Embrace the Rule of Awkward Silence. You Should Too](#)
- ▣ [Use this Harvard Professional HEAR Approach to be the person everyone wants to talk to](#)
- 🔗 [When It's Hard to Connect, Try Being Curious](#)
- ▣ [How Curiosity Can Help Us Overcome Disconnection](#)

Underuse of Curiosity

Sometimes curiosity is conditioned to be expressed in the context of acquiring knowledge and less so in the context of forming relationships. Curiosity about others – about what they think, feel, and have done - goes a long way in getting to know someone better and forming a closer relationship. However, as the saying goes, curiosity killed the cat, meaning that curiosity can lead to negative experiences in life. Those who have had such experiences can become reticent in expressing curiosity in certain contexts. For example, some people have learned to damper their curiosity in authoritarian contexts where it is expected that they follow directions instead of question. Otherwise curious people may find themselves underusing their curiosity in educational settings, with a boss, etc. Curiosity can pull a person in directions that take time and interest away from the immediate task at hand; therefore, it can be helpful for one to explore situations where curiosity is more and less appropriate. It is important to distinguish between wisely choosing to restrain one's curiosity and unwittingly underusing it where it could be useful. Alternatively, disengagement with the task or situation at hand can reflect a lack of curiosity. It may be a function of a person being on auto-pilot, simply going through the motions of life not paying attention to the details and nuances of what is going on all around. It is not uncommon to feel "trapped" or "lost" in the mundane routines of work life and home life. A higher dose of



curious seeking, curious exploring, or curious questioning can be an immediate way of lifting oneself back into the moment.

Do it more!

- Curiosity can be built by consciously paying attention to and tracking things in one's daily environment that have not been noticed before or things about familiar people that have gone unnoticed. The key is to encourage being "actively curious," asking lots of questions, and making new, mini discoveries.
- Thinking in questions – When I prepare my to-do list for the day (cue), I will note three questions to ask others about the work we're doing (routine). My reward will be to cross this first action off my list! (reward)
- In a more formal way, an individual may take an approach of naming three novel features of any activity that they are doing.
- Make a list of unknowns about a favourite topic.
- Try one new restaurant or new activity each week.
- Drive a different route home to explore a new area you live nearby.
- Travel on vacation to a new city or country each year.
- Practice being curious about an activity that previously held little interest for you or was distasteful. Pay attention to at least three novel features of this activity while doing it.

Do it better!

Curiosity unchecked can lead one to offend others by being overly nosy or intrusive. Incessant curiosity in others' affairs and feelings can cause them to withdraw to protect their own sense of privacy and boundaries. Curiosity can also lead to distraction from a task at hand, leading one to lose sight of the end goal.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

The saying "curiosity killed the cat" points to the dangers inherent in curiosity overplayed. It might be useful to consider bringing in the strengths of perseverance, perspective or prudence as counterbalances to unrestrained curiosity. Additionally, your character strength of social intelligence can help you notice when your curiosity is too much for someone.



Fairness

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.

Fairness is treating people justly, not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others, and giving everyone a fair chance. It is the bedrock of any system of justice. It is the product of moral judgment – the process by which people determine what is morally right, what is morally wrong, and what is morally proscribed. Along with the commitment to fairness in social relations, there is a highly tuned skill in the abstract logic of equitable arrangements - determining what is fair no matter whom or what is involved. Fairness includes two types of reasoning: “justice reasoning,” which emphasises logic, and “care reasoning,” which includes empathy, care, and the ability and willingness to take the perspective of others.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Fair-minded individuals are more likely to engage in positive, prosocial behaviour and less likely to engage in illegal and immoral behaviour or any type of behaviour that has a direct negative impact on others.
- Fairness is enhanced by the ability to take the perspective of others.
- A sensitivity to issues of morality and justice increases self-reflection and self-knowledge. Having a good moral compass enables individuals to get out of conflicting and ambivalent situations in a healthy manner.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as committed to the idea that the same rules apply to everyone, and is vested in giving everyone a fair chance. He or she does not let personal feelings or issues bias decisions about others. Everyone’s opinion counts, regardless of whether or not they share the same opinion. Compromise is important to this person. He or she is sensitive to issues of social injustice, has compassion for others, and possesses the perceptiveness necessary for relational understanding. When at his or her best, this individual uses the strength of fairness to actively work to establish equity and respect.

Exploring the strength of Fairness

- How is the strength of fairness expressed at work, home, and in the community?
- What are the circumstances in which it is easier or harder for this individual to compromise to a position of fairness?
- Are there people or situations encountered where this individual is given feedback about acting unfairly?



- What emotions does this person experience when injustice is perceived and how does that impact his or her ability to be fair?
- How does this individual's sense of fairness reconcile with the oft quoted proposition that "life is not fair"?

Resources

- ▣ Empathic neural responses are modulated by the perceived fairness of others
- ▣ Fairness works
- ✦ Moral behaviour in animals

Underuse of Fairness

Individuals high in fairness are typically concerned with equity across people and between people. Although fairness is a core strength for this individual, it is not uncommon for people to express their fairness strength strongly in one setting (e.g., home and personal life), yet lose sight of using it in other situations that are routine (e.g., at work) or vice versa. There may be missed opportunities to express this strength optimally across contexts.

While sometimes underuse of fairness can be nothing more than an oversight, sometimes the expression of fairness can be withheld for motivational reasons; for example, there can be the paradox of not treating someone fairly in reaction to perceiving that you have been treated unfairly by that person. Or, there can be times when being fair may be seen as giving someone an unfair advantage. As a small example, consider the tennis player who calls a ball out of bounds when it was close enough to the line that the fair call would have been to call it in. Similar examples can occur in other competitive environments, such as at work.

Do it more!

- Imagining the experiences and appreciating the differences of others can boost the strength of fairness. Perspective-taking, cultural awareness and sensitivity training, and role-playing are ways to develop a more "other-focused" perspective, particularly when facing complex moral dilemmas.
- Being fair to others – When reviewing my schedule each morning (cue), I'll look for one thing I can do today to make life a little easier for my colleagues or a client (routine). Then I'll grab my morning coffee (reward).
- Serve on the board of an organisation that offers unprivileged people a level playing field.
- Write a letter to an editor or speak up on an important issue concerning social justice.
- Speak up for the groups you belong to.



- Consider ways to be more fair with friends, family, and colleagues.
- Support others in exploring their beliefs and perceptions about people from diverse backgrounds.
- Consider different viewpoints when approaching a problem.

Do it better!

Fairness is the most prevalent character strength across the world. From early on, we pay attention to fair play and we react to injustice. At the same time, many things happen in the world that are not always fair, and we are often tempted to try to correct all injustices as they unfold before us. This can result in frustration and disappointment. It is important to choose our battles wisely.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Perseverance can help in addressing the injustices that are deemed most important, and compassion, kindness, and judgment can help in understanding other points of view. We can use self-regulation and prudence to help us rein in our fairness strength when we find ourselves using it in too many situations. Use teamwork to elicit the help of others to create a fair environment, honesty to challenge the thinking of people who are focused on their well-being over the well-being of others, and judgment to collect evidence about what is the fairest path forward.



Forgiveness

Forgiveness & Mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful

Forgiveness and mercy are letting bygones be bygones. They are granting pardon to those who have done wrong, accepting the shortcomings of others, giving people a second chance, and not being vengeful. Forgiveness is the character strength that undoes hatred. It can be defined as the removal or cancellation of a transgression or debt so that a transgressor becomes a candidate for a restored relationship with the offended party. Forgiveness is separate from the concept of reconciliation, which is the restoration of the broken relationship and involves the restoration of trust. However, with forgiveness, the psychological responses to the transgressor and transgression become more positive or benevolent.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Apologies promote forgiveness. Partners who characterise their relationship as highly satisfying, committed, and close are more likely to forgive when transgressions occur.
- Forgiveness contributes to productive interpersonal relationships, thriving teamwork, job satisfaction, high morale, innovative problem-solving, a sense of flexibility when facing change, and greater productivity.
- Forgiving people experience less of the negative emotions of anger, anxiety, depression, and hostility than less-forgiving people.
- Forgiveness contributes to emotional stability and likability.
- Forgiveness is associated with physical and psychological health benefits, such as emotional well-being, healthy lifestyle behaviours, social support, and spiritual well-being.

“Forgiveness means giving up all hope that the past will change”

Lily Tomlin

What does this mean about the individual?

This is someone who sees himself or herself as having a strong disposition to forgive. When this person's feelings are hurt, he or she manages to get over it fairly quickly, without holding a grudge. People scoring high for this strength often have a strong belief that relationships with people who have hurt or betrayed them can be mended. This individual is willing to give people a second chance; forgiveness helps moderate anger and resentment. “Letting go” of problems or conflicts comes relatively easy to this person. When at his or her best with this strength, this individual lets go of negative judgments or grievances, sees himself or herself and others realistically (both the good and the bad), yet still feels compassion, empathy, or some degree of positive feelings for them.



Exploring the strength of Forgiveness

- With what people and in which circumstance is it easy for this individual to be forgiving?
- Are there things that should not be forgiven?
- How does one reconcile forgiving someone with the sense that people should be held accountable for transgressions?
- What are the advantages of forgiving someone and what are the disadvantages?
- How does it feel to forgive someone?

“The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”

Mahatma Gandhi

Resources

- ▣ [Forgiveness means giving up all hope for a better past](#)
- 🕒 [Practicing forgiveness can help to improve your wellbeing, your levels of grit and you ability to help others feel psychologically safe with you.](#)
- ▣ [How to let go of an old regret](#)
- ▣ [How to handle a toxic relationship](#)
- ▣ [Is a Grudge Keeping You Up at Night?](#)
- ▣ [What Happens When You Give People the Benefit of the Doubt](#)
- ▣ [Is resentment stopping you from feeling gratitude?](#)
- ✂ [Nine steps to forgiveness](#)
- ✂ [Eight Essentials when forgiving](#)
- ▣ [Can Mindfulness Make You Better at Apologizing?](#)
- ✂ [Forgiveness Quiz](#)
- 🕒 [A note to self on forgiveness](#)
- ▣ [Six Ways to Deal With Someone Who Wronged You](#)
- ▣ [Is it healthy to forgive yourself?](#)

Underuse of Forgiveness

Forgiveness can be underused as a result of running headlong into one's sense of justice. For example, when a person misbehaves or transgresses, the principle of justice says that that person should be punished. Forgiveness can make it feel like the transgressor is escaping the negative consequences that justice would dictate. Other times, a person may withhold forgiveness as a self-protective measure. For example, in forgiving, one may restore a relationship with the transgressor and thereby become more vulnerable to subsequent hurt and disappointment. But, if one maintains an unforgiving and even hostile stance, then with subsequent transgressions, the hurt will be tempered. Ultimately, a compelling reason for choosing forgiveness when these difficult conflicts arise has to do



with the harmful effects to oneself that accompany harbouring anger, resentment, and grudges.

Forgiveness can also be underused in its application to oneself. This can be the result of applying overly stringent standards to oneself or lack of compassionate understanding of one's misbehaviour or mistakes. It is not uncommon for people to be more forgiving of others than they are of themselves. When individuals do not employ this strength, they often suffer. It is easy to forget the adage that to be forgiving not only offers a "gift" to another but also is highly beneficial for oneself. Talking through these complex issues in a collaborative and exploratory way can bring clarity and greater levels of forgiveness.

Do it more!

- There are many ways to boost forgiveness. The following is one example of a five step process: Recall the hurt; empathise as best you can - see the situation from the other person's point of view; consider forgiveness as an act of altruism by recalling the gratitude felt over being forgiven; commit to forgive over the long-run; hold on to forgiveness. Forgiveness is a process that takes time and needs to be repeated and practiced.
- Injecting interactions with forgiveness – As I'm creating my daily calendar (cue), I'll reflect on yesterday's interactions, note any discomforts, and think about what we can learn from this experience to improve our next interaction (routine). Then I'll fill my jug of water (reward).
- Make a list of individuals against whom you hold a grudge, then either meet them personally to discuss it or visualise whether bygones can be bygones.
- Forgiveness can be built by writing about the personal benefits that may have resulted from a negative incident.
- Practice letting go of minor irritants in your life, such as dealing with a rude worker or someone cutting you off in traffic. Consider what the other person might be going through and see the humanity of the offender.
- Journaling, writing letters, and talking things through are pathways to forgiveness.
- Forgiving a close loved one can be difficult when they have hurt or disappointed you. Think of the transgression in the context of your entire relationship. Consider how the positive interactions outweigh this negative one.

Do it better!

Forgiveness and mercy unbind us from feelings of anger, resentment, and regret. This can contribute to or detract from building healthy relationships. When used too generously, forgiveness can lead to impaired judgment, causing one to stay in relationships that can be unhealthy, or in the extreme, abusive. Individuals high in this strength must remember that to forgive does not mean to forget, and that one must look out for one's own best interests. It is also important to reflect on how one might exercise self- forgiveness and self-compassion in establishing healthy relationships.



Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Maintaining perspective is a core part of determining which relationships are best to foster and which are wise to avoid. Use perspective to ask yourself what you would advise to someone else who is overusing their forgiveness. Also, be fair to yourself and your own feelings, knowing that your emotions are important to attend to and share.



Gratitude

Gratitude: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks

The Roman philosopher Cicero called gratitude “the mother of all virtues,” Gratitude involves feeling and expressing a deep sense of thankfulness in life, and more specifically, expressing thankfulness in response to a gift or kind act. The gift can be deliberate, such as a piece of art from a child, or generalised, such as a cool breeze on your face on a hot day. What marks gratitude is the psychological response to the gift: the transcendent emotion of grace – the sense that one has benefited from the actions of another. Grateful people experience a variety of positive emotions and may even be inspired to act in more virtuous ways – being more humble, for example, or persistent, or kinder. Gratitude involves empathy, too: grateful people not only recognise when they’ve been given a gift, but they can empathise with the effort involved by the giver. Theorists have identified three components of gratitude: (a) a warm sense of appreciation for somebody or something, (b) a sense of good will towards that person or thing, and (c) a disposition to act that flows from appreciation and good will. Gratitude typically makes people more open to experience, more conscientious, more extraverted, and more agreeable.

What does research reveal about the benefits of this strength?

- Gratitude positively affects cardiovascular and immune functioning.
- Gratitude is one of the strengths most robustly linked to satisfaction and happiness.
- Grateful students earn better grades.
- Grateful people enjoy their work.
- Grateful people have better exercise habits, positive moods, good sleep patterns, and less depression and are more likely to engage in a wide range of behaviours aimed at helping others.
- Grateful people have greater goal achievement and general optimism.
- Gratitude has religious or spiritual benefits as well, such as a feeling of interconnectedness with life, a general sense of responsibility towards others, and less of an emphasis on material goods.

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant.

Max DePree

Resources

- ▣ [Yes, Send that thankyou note](#)
- ▣ [How to give a meaningful thankyou](#)



- ▣ [For thanksgiving and beyond, an attitude of gratitude](#)
- ✦ [Three good things exercise](#)
- ▣ [Do men have a gratitude problem?](#)
- ▣ [The science of gratitude](#)
- ▣ [Six habits of highly grateful people](#)
- ✦ [Gratitude Quiz](#)
- ▣ [Four things I've learnt about gratitude](#)
- ▣ [Four Ways Gratitude Helps You with Difficult Feelings](#)
- ▣ [How to up your gratitude practice](#)
- ▣ [What is the best way to deliver a thank you?](#)
- ▣ [Is resentment stopping you from feeling gratitude?](#)
- ▣ [What Can the Brain Reveal About Gratitude?](#)
- ▣ [How Gratitude Motivates Us to Become Better People](#)
- ▣ [Is Gratitude Good for Your Health?](#)
- ▣ [How Gratitude Can Help You Through Hard Times](#)
- ✦ [Gratitude Letter](#)
- 🔊 [Why we give thanks](#)
- ▣ [Gratitude and Wellbeing: The Benefits of Appreciation](#)
- ▣ [Can practicing gratitude help your immune system?](#)
- ▣ [Nine Tips for Giving Better Feedback at Work](#)
- ▣ [Can gratitude make your job more meaningful?](#)

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual feels blessed for the positive things in his or her life and often expresses thankfulness directly to others. This person counts his or her blessings regularly and reflects on how he or she has lived or is living a richly blessed life. This comes across in the person's thinking, feelings, and words to others. Gratitude may be a big driver of positive emotions experienced by this individual and probably opens the door to the use of other character strengths, such as kindness and curiosity towards others and humility and forgiveness.

Exploring the strength of Gratitude

- What circumstances make it most likely this individual will express gratitude?



- What is most rewarding to this person about expressing gratitude and is it more rewarding with certain people?
- Are there people (e.g., family, friends, co-workers, mentors, community members) to whom this individual has not adequately expressed gratitude, simply as an oversight or for any other reasons?
- What concerns does this individual have, if any, in expressing gratitude to certain people?
- If someone does not express appreciation, does it make it less likely this person will express gratitude towards them?
- What effect does it have on other people when gratitude is expressed?
- To what degree is this individual's gratitude the result of feelings of appreciation as opposed to social convention?

Underuse of Gratitude

An underuse of gratitude can occur when an individual focuses inward. This might occur in a conversation or another social context where there are missed opportunities to express gratitude. For example, one may forget to express gratitude to parents, siblings, and even one's spouse or children. In some circumstances, it might be that an individual simply forgets to express gratefulness, and in other situations he or she might lose sight of the wider perspective on life, health, relationships, success, etc. Regarding the lack of perspective, one may not appreciate how much effort a friend or spouse went to in planning and arranging a vacation or special event, or as an employee, one may not have perspective on all of the pressures and important decisions that are the responsibilities of executives and that enable a company to keep people employed and provide good benefits.

Do it more!

- Counting one's blessings is one of the most widely researched interventions to boost gratitude. It involves reflecting on one's day and tracking the good things that happened throughout the day. Often the approach is to write down three of these good things that occurred, why one is grateful for them, and what role one played in the experience. Select one small yet important thing that you have taken for granted. Work on being mindfully attentive with it in the future.
- Notice how often you express gratitude and whether the sentiment is authentically felt.
- Express gratitude by leaving a note for someone who has offered help in the past.
- Write down good things that happened and then reflect on why these good things have happened.



- People who stop and count their blessings on a regular basis report greater satisfaction with life.

Do it better!

While the feeling and expression of gratitude has many benefits, being profuse in expressing gratitude can make others uncomfortable. It can cause others to doubt one's sincerity, and the next time one expresses gratitude, it might not be received as strongly. It is useful to be mindful of the degree to which and context in which one expresses gratitude. There are cultures in which an individual's overplay of gratitude can offend others; he or she may not be adhering to cultural values related to obligation and duty. The expression of gratitude can become an insult in such clashes of culture.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Apply the strength of social intelligence to ensure that the expression of gratitude is not overstated and is done in the appropriate context. Be curious about what gratitude feels like - get in touch with the balanced expression of it. What thoughts do you have? How does it feel in your body? Then, use your curiosity to understand what is going on in your mind when you are overplaying or forcing gratitude.



Honesty

Honesty [authenticity, integrity]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretence; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.

Honesty is speaking the truth, but more broadly, it is presenting oneself in a genuine and sincere way, being without pretence, taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions. This sometimes involves the courage to exercise one's will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, either external or internal. Honesty is a complex, rich human strength. While it involves accurately presenting information that can be verified - statements that are either true or false - it goes far beyond that. It is the defining character strength of those who make authentic statements. Honest people are consistently true to themselves and publicly represent their internal state, intentions, and commitments. Because honesty is a corrective virtue (protects us against errors in judgment), it shows up best in situations where the decision must be made between an easy thing and a right thing to do. Honesty is universally valued, but especially valued in close relationships. The complexity of this character strength is often revealed when we consider the multiple roles we play in society and how difficult it is to consistently stick to one's values. Honesty is more likely to be found among adults than adolescents. That said, very few people are completely honest all of the time - to others or even to themselves.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Honest people are typically viewed as trustworthy, which contributes to healthy, positive relationships.
- Taking personal responsibility for one's actions can lead to a greater sense of control of one's life.
- Honesty allows for more accurate self-assessment of intentions and commitment — to others and to oneself.

Resources

- ▣ [How to handle a toxic relationship](#)
- ▣ [Why people are more honest than you think](#)
- ▣ [Disagree productively at work](#)
- ▣ [Is there a better way to have an argument?](#)
- ▣ [How to disagree skillfully](#)
- ▣ [The art of disagreeing](#)



What does this mean about the individual?

This individual views himself or herself as being down to earth and authentic. There is little pretence and others know that he or she is genuine. This person's authenticity creates a sense of trust; what he or she says is meant sincerely. Being "real" is effortless; it is as easy as breathing. However, it is important to use social intelligence when sharing "truths" with others. Honesty without sensitivity can come across as being blunt or offensive.

Exploring the strength of Honesty

- How are commitments and agreements made and honoured in personal as well as professional relationships?
- When this person makes mistakes, how easy is it for him or her to take responsibility for those mistakes?
- How often does this individual neutralise guilt by making excuses, blaming, minimising, or rationalising the truth away?
- How is feedback given to others? Is it constructive, direct, or challenging?
- Spiritual practices that entail meditation, reflection, and enlightenment are thought to benefit honesty and authenticity.
- Honesty can be nurtured by modelling and through programs that encourage self-awareness such as youth development programs.

Underuse of Honesty

The truth can sometimes be difficult to face and therefore truthful people may find themselves underusing this strength when they do not want to be hurtful and cannot find a soft way to express the truth. There are also particular relationships in which the rules of the relationship do not include truthfulness. For example, some parent-child relationships develop around the rule of avoiding the truth since telling the truth would create conflict. Those historical "rules" can persist in relationships such that honest people can find it difficult to express themselves authentically in those relationships. Furthermore, some people high in honesty may have difficulty with the sense of vulnerability that comes with being truthful about their own feelings and therefore may underuse this strength in sharing feelings with others.

Do it more!

- Recognise the degree to which the individual alters or modifies one's own opinions, feelings and behaviour based on what they think other people's expectations are. Work to develop relationships in which they can be authentic.
- Walking your talk – When I sit down at my desk (cue), I'll take ten minutes to write down how I can show up at work today, and act in the ways I would expect and appreciate from others (routine). I'll reward myself by going and saying hello to a colleague I'm fond of (reward).



- Write about an issue about which moral obligation is felt. It helps to crystallise and integrate thinking.
- Provide honest feedback when asked to provide critical input.
- Identify an area of strong moral conviction.
- Set priorities according to these convictions.

Do it better!

We all know that there are times when telling the complete truth can cause problems. Honesty can be blunt and hurtful. It can also violate personal trust when “truths” are told about another that were shared in confidence. Some situations call for the truth, and in other situations it may be prudent to soften the bluntness of the truth. Notice how the message you deliver is received by others. Ask for honest feedback.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

To maintain a balance for honesty, other character strengths offer alternative ways of being/doing good. Sometimes the strength of kindness or prudence must take precedence. It's important to understand situations in which the truth needs to be softened. You can turn to your strengths of kindness and social intelligence to temper the bluntness or harshness of overused honesty.



Hope

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

Hope is expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it. Hope, optimism, and future-mindedness or future-orientation all represent an all-encompassing cognitive, emotional, and motivational stance towards the future characterised by sustained good cheer and goal-directed efforts. Individuals high in hope and optimism can experience hopeful expectations about everyday things as well as optimism about global concerns. They are anchored in the present but tethered to the future, constantly setting goals and planning strategies. Hope and optimism have significant positive consequences.

What does research reveal about the benefits of this strength?

- People who are hopeful are unlikely to be anxious or depressed.
- Hopeful students do better in school.
- Hopeful people persevere, especially when challenged. They are more resilient.
- Hope and optimism correlate with active problem-solving. Hope is associated with conscientiousness, diligence, and the ability to delay gratification.
- Hopeful people tend to be healthier, happier, and more successful.
- Hopeful people tend to establish positive and healthy relationships.
- Hope is correlated with lower performance anxiety.
- People high in hope retain more positive emotions after a failure.
- Hope leads to greater life longevity.

We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements in life, when all we need to make us really happy is something to be enthusiastic about.

Charles Kingsley

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual believes that the future has good things in store and see himself or herself as regularly looking on the bright side of life. This person sees and appreciates positives when others focus on negatives and is able to look bravely beyond obstacles to set and reach goals. When at his or her best, hope is expressed as realistic optimism as opposed to unrealistic Pollyannaism in which only the rosy side of the picture is seen.



Exploring the strength of Hope

- What are the conditions that lead this individual to be hopeful?
- What are the conditions that get in the way of feeling hopeful?
- What role does hope play during challenging times in life?
- To what extent does a fear of disappointment or failure temper the degree to which this individual allows himself or herself to feel hopeful?
- What personal impact does it have to perceive hopefulness in others?
- What are the dangers associated with feeling hopeful?

Resources

- [Why we need news that is hopeful not discouraging](#)
- [Five ways to restore your faith in humanity](#)
- [How hope can keep you happier and healthier](#)

Underuse of Hope

To be hopeful about positive things happening in the future opens a person up to disappointment when those hoped for events do not occur. Thus, generally hopeful people may find that there are certain aspects of life in which their fear of disappointment interferes with their hope. For example, a parent may be reticent to be hopeful about a wayward child's future because he or she would experience the disappointment so intensely. However, that very same person may be hopeful about business opportunities or the success of less intimate relationships, since disappointment in those contexts may be quite tolerable. At other times, hope may be hard to find when one is missing knowledge and perspective of what factors may exist that could provide reason for hope. For example, parents may not know of friends of their child who may be offering good advice and support during times of trouble. If an individual is holding hope in check, it can be a marker of suffering. Context is critical for every character strength, thus there will be situations in which it might be useful to underplay hope, but at the same time, one must monitor that this "underplaying" does not become a detrimental habit in and of itself.

Do it more!

- One research-based strategy that has been shown to boost hope is the – "best possible self" exercise. Take a moment to imagine a future in which one is bringing one's best self forward and everything is happening as one wishes. This should be visualised in a way that is pleasing and realistic. Then, consider the character strengths needed in order to make that image a reality.
- Building a hope-map – On the first Monday of each month (cue) I'll create a hope map, detailing a want-to goal, pathways to reach it and ways to maintain my motivation. Then



each morning I'll do one thing for ten minutes to move my pathways forward (routine). To celebrate, I'll make my morning cuppa (reward).

- Set a new goal and brainstorm ways to reach that goal.
- Watch a movie that promotes a message of hope and think about how the message applies to your life.
- List bad things that have happened, then find at least two positive aspects or insights gained from each.
- Document three past accomplishments in detail and let them inspire the future.
- Schedule at least 15 minutes twice a week for generating optimistic ideas.
- Write about your best possible self: take some time to imagine a future in which you are bringing your best possible self forward.

Do it better!

Hope is one of the most powerful character strengths because its positive effects are so wide-ranging and its effect on others can be so contagious. It is important, though, to simultaneously stay grounded. Real obstacles or warning signs may be overlooked for fear of losing hope. These obstacles and worries can be faced, however, while maintaining hope for goodness in the future. When one expresses hope with too much force, others may express a more pessimistic viewpoint as a counterbalance. Another overplay of hope occurs when individuals set too many goals and plans that cannot possibly all be met, so they end up feeling disappointed or discouraged.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

By using judgment to evaluate where you are now and curiosity to explore realistic future possibilities, you can balance the overuse of hope. Judgment offers rationality and logic while curiosity keeps the exploration flowing. These strengths help you anchor your hope while keeping it strong. In some situations, the strengths of prudence and social intelligence will be useful to balance the expression of hope.



Humility

Modesty & Humility: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is

Modesty and humility involve letting one's actions speak for themselves and not regarding oneself as more special than others. It is relatively uncommon for modesty and humility to appear as a signature strength. This temperance character strength protects us from excess and extreme destabilising emotions. It is defined in part by what a person refrains from doing, and may be more apparent to observers than to the individual. An individual high in modesty and humility does not seek the spotlight or toot his or her own horn. This person has good self-esteem and an accurate self-image and sees his or her place in the larger world. The accomplishments of this individual speak for themselves. Mistakes, gaps in knowledge, and imperfections are readily acknowledged. While modesty and humility are often used interchangeably, modesty is more external - a style of behaving, the choices one makes, or an absence of the "look at me" affectation. Humility is more internal - a non defensive willingness to see oneself accurately, including both strengths and limitations.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Modesty is linked to a satisfied life among older adults.
- Humility and modesty are linked with a good self-esteem and a positive self-view.
- Humble people are likely to have higher levels of gratitude, forgiveness, spirituality, and general health.
- Other people typically like humble individuals and feel less threatened by them.
- The experience of emotional wellness, a good ability to self-regulate, and feeling less self-preoccupied are additional benefits.

A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.

Lao Tzu

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as modest, someone who would rather blend into the crowd than stand out. He or she puts others first and does not act more special or more important than others. This contributes to this person being a well-liked. This individual lets his or her actions and accomplishments speak for themselves, preferring not to boast or have others boast about them. Humility protects this person from shifting into a mode of arrogance or being driven by ego. Instead, this person has a balanced and accurate view of himself or herself and sees his or her place in the larger world, readily acknowledging mistakes, gaps in knowledge, imperfections, and importantly, the role of others in successes.



Exploring the strength of Humility

- What are the advantages of being humble?
- How do others respond to this individual's humility?
- What is the basis for this individual's humility?
- How does humility limit this individual in life?
- How is humility balanced with a need for recognition and appreciation?

Resources

- ▣ [Three things leaders can do each day](#)
- ✦ [Level 5 Leadership](#)
- ▣ [How to bring your whole self to work](#)
- ▣ [How to infuse your company culture with Humility](#)
- ▣ [Learn how to cultivate humble leadership.](#)
- ▣ [Explore the benefits of admitting when you don't know.](#)
- ▣ [Discover how humility will make you the greatest person ever.](#)
- ▣ [Find out how humility affects relationships.](#)
- ▣ [Be humble, and proudly, psychologists say](#)
- ▣ [How Humility can help us bridge political divides](#)
- ▣ [Power corrupts our instinct for cooperation](#)
- ▣ [What does intellectual humility look like?](#)
- ▣ [Three Reasons for Leaders to Cultivate Intellectual Humility](#)
- ▣ [Five Reasons Why Intellectual Humility Is Good for You](#)
- ✦ [Making an effective apology](#)
- ▣ [How to stay open and curious in hard conversations](#)
- ▣ [The Upside to Admitting You Were Wrong Online](#)
- ✦ [Intellectual Humility Quiz](#)
- ▣ [Four ways to cool down your defensiveness](#)
- ▣ [Why is it so hard to ask for help?](#)

Underuse of Humility

Each of us has ego needs that vary over time. At some points in time we seek recognition and approval more than at other times. Thus, even people high in modesty can find themselves being uncharacteristically self-promoting in certain situations – either explicitly



or indirectly. Such instances of underusing modesty may be deemed acceptable since we do all have legitimate ego needs to one degree or another. Immodesty can also unwittingly occur when one naively does not realise the degree to which others have contributed to a success, and broadening one's understanding of contributions from various people can help restore appropriate levels of modesty. Furthermore, some situations call for modest people to be more forthcoming with their accomplishments than they may be comfortable doing – for example, in job interviews. How to express modesty in such situations can become a delicate balancing challenge. In some cultures, it is inappropriate to underuse humility, and individuals witnessing boastfulness will deliberately attempt to downplay the individual or strongly speak against his or her approach. In some situations, it may be appropriate or in one's best interest to limit humility. It is common for people to underplay this strength in job interviews or in certain business situations, but the context and one's own integrity may be the best judge as to whether this is appropriate or not.

Do it more!

- One intervention experts recommend is to look for humility/modesty exemplars among family, friends, philosophical lore, movies, or spiritual readings. Then create a “Hall of Humility” that is a listing of all of these findings and discuss how these learnings might be applied into daily life.
- Research suggests reflecting on our own values helps us be more intellectually humble when debating issues
- “Self-transcendent” emotions—feelings like awe that take us beyond the self, that we experience by, for example, taking walks in nature—can also help us be more humble.
- Emphasize effort and growth and normalize mistakes encourage the development of intellectual humility.
- Letting others shine – As I pack up to leave (cue), I'll spend ten minutes celebrating success with another colleague by explicitly recognising the efforts and accomplishments of myself and others. I'll use “we” and “us” rather than “me” and “I” so the celebration feels authentic (routine). Then I'll head home (reward).
- Notice if you speak more than others in a group situation, and focus on the other people in the group
- Determine whether you are less modest around certain people or groups, and if so, try a different approach.
- Write a personal account of a time when you were humble, but not self-deprecatory.
- Look for humility/modesty exemplars among family and friends, in philosophical lore, movies, or spiritual readings. Create a “hall of humility” with the findings, and when possible, ask the person about his or her use of humility and modesty in daily life.



Do it better!

Humility, when taken to its extreme, denies the reality of ego and accomplishment and may be taken by others as being insincere or “put on.” It deprives those around an individual of learning more about who that person is and benefiting from his or her insights and past successes. Using social intelligence may be useful in gauging the impact of such a response on others. Recognising one’s accomplishments and successes adds to a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy. It is important to remember that one’s successes can be recognised and “owned” without one being boastful about them. Extreme humility may come across to others as low self-esteem – as if one does not value oneself very much. The challenge is to find the right balance. It is also important to recognise that humility has different norms in different cultures, so understanding optimal expression of humility in one’s own culture is pivotal.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Use perspective to step back and evaluate your contributions. What evidence do you have for thinking that they are worthless? Use judgment and self-honesty to gather the evidence and add in new information to how you view yourself.



Humour

Humour [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes

Humour is perceiving what is comical or amusing in situations, and offering a lighter side. It is expressed through laughter, gentle teasing, and bringing smiles to other people. Playfulness is the foundation of humour. Humour can serve the greater good by making the human condition more bearable, by drawing attention to its contradictions, by sustaining good cheer in the face of despair, by building social bonds, and by lubricating social interaction. It is the antithesis of being grim, boring, literal, or too serious. Humour often buffers against despair. It is noteworthy that the loss of a sense of humour seems to cut across virtually all forms of psychopathology, which implies that a good sense of humour might well be one of the defining features of positive mental health. Humour is rarely mentioned in traditional discussions of virtues, and its moral flavour is not always obvious. Indeed, humour can be good or bad, and may draw people together or put people down. Humour is one of the value-added strengths in the VIA classification, meaning that it becomes a morally praiseworthy strength when coupled with other strengths. For example, social intelligence and self-regulation added to humour can ensure that humour is delivered with sensitivity in the right dose at the right time.

What does research reveal about the benefits of this strength?

Laughter establishes closeness and conveys meaning. It sends micro-messages to our conversation partner via its length, tone, and accompanying facial expressions. “It does the work of establishing cohesion,” said Michelle McSweeney, a Columbia University researcher.

- Humorous people are socially attractive.
- Humour buffers people from life stress and the hassles of daily living.
- People with a sense of humour tend to be healthier (e.g., one of the physiologic benefits of laughter is that it increases oxygenation of the blood).
- Humour helps enhance pleasure in life, which contributes to overall happiness.
- Humour can decrease social anxiety, thereby creating opportunities for social connection.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual views himself or herself as being able to put other people at ease through gentle teasing and playfulness.

He or she often sees the light side of the situation, and when sharing this perspective, it can often lighten the overall mood. Others look to this person to break the solemnity of a



moment and give perspective on the relative importance of things. This person is often considered the life of the party and can give voice to what other people are feeling or thinking. Feedback, when given with humour, is often an easier pill to swallow and thus can be an important communication tool. However, humour can also be hurtful to people and needs to be expressed with some prudence.

Exploring the strength of Humour

- How does this individual initiate playfulness, and how does that change from situation to situation?
- How do other people express playfulness? What can be gleaned from observing others?
- Timing is critical in being humorous; it is just as important to recognise when not to be funny as it is to recognise when humour is needed. What happens with well-timed humour and how is that different from poorly timed humour?
- What experiences or situations prompt a humorous response from this person?
- How can an awareness of humour be cultivated in everyday activities of life?
- Does this individual have relationships in which humour is shared? How does that humour impact those relationships?

Resources

- [How a Little Humor Can Improve Your Work Life](#)
- ✦ [The Funny Things Exercise](#)
- [When everything is heavy, a touch of humour can help](#)
- [Care for Joy: Evaluation of a Humor Intervention and Its Effects on Stress, Flow Experience, Work Enjoyment, and Meaningfulness of Work](#)
- [Four funny ways laughing is good for you](#)
- ✦ [Why great leaders take humour seriously](#)
- [Why play at work has positive impact](#)

Underuse of Humour

Humour lightens things up and therefore humorous people can underuse humour when “lightness” is either not what they are feeling or not what they are aiming for. They may not use humour when they are not feeling well or when they assume, rightly or wrongly, that it is socially inappropriate. So, for example, one might rightfully assume that humour has no place at a somber funeral, though wrongfully assume that it has no place in relating to one’s boss. Humour, when not expressed with negative energy (e.g., cynicism, ridicule), can also serve to bring people closer; therefore, humorous people may underuse humour in situations where they do not want to feel close with someone.



Do it more!

- Some research has found that keeping track of the humorous and funny things that happen each day is a way to boost this strength. Writing down three funny things that occurred throughout the course of the day can build awareness and increase the use of humour.
- Giving yourself permission to have fun at work – When I stop for lunch (cue), then I'll take the time to share a joke or a funny story with a colleague (routine). I'll celebrate by eating my food (reward).
- Bring a smile to someone's face through jokes, gestures, and playful activities.
- Find the fun and lighter side of a difficult situation.
- Watch a sitcom or funny movie with someone who has a strong appreciation of humour.
- Keep a humour diary to write down three funny things that happen each day.

Do it better!

Humour is a complex strength. While it can bring pleasure and levity to others, in certain forms it can be hurtful and demeaning. Humour that leans towards cynicism can be felt by others as negative and dark. So, as endearing as humour can be, it can also be off-putting. One needs to be sensitive to others to find forms of humour that put people at ease as opposed to putting them on guard. While using social intelligence can provide a “read” on how humour is impacting others, it also can be helpful to solicit feedback from friends and family to understand how one's humour affects others. Humour can be viewed by others as one's way of avoiding the serious issues of life or not taking life seriously enough, especially if it is used to throw others off track. It is useful to stay aware of the impact of humour on others and to keep an active awareness of the purpose it is serving personally.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Remember, humour, when used at the right time and in the right amount, can build relationships and contribute to well-being. This effect is magnified when humour is coupled with other character strengths, particularly kindness, perspective, and social intelligence. Use social intelligence to assess whether a circumstance is a good opportunity for humour and whether or not the person/people you are with will be ready to receive the humour. Be curious about the times when you have overused your humour with someone - how might that be a learning opportunity?



Judgment

Judgment & Open-Mindedness [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

Judgment involves looking at things from all angles. It is critical thinking: weighing all evidence fairly, thinking things through, and examining the evidence from all sides rather than jumping to conclusions. It also involves being open-minded and able to change one's mind in the light of evidence. Judgment and open-mindedness make the examined life possible. This type of logical and rational thinking is considered a corrective virtue; it corrects for a tendency to think in ways that favour one's current views and to seek out information consistent with them. Judgment and open-mindedness are the ingredients for stepping back and taking perspective. Open-mindedness does not mean indecision, and it does not mean uncritical tolerance of any and all points of view. Someone with this strength makes decisions and can feel strongly about certain courses of action. What marks good judgment is the consideration of other points of view, the gathering of relevant information, and the willingness to change one's mind.

Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.

Colin Powell

What are the benefits of this strength?

- People who can see things from more than one perspective are particularly skilled in times of change and transition.
- Judgment counteracts biased thinking, contributing to more accurate decision-making.
- Open-mindedness contributes to the search for meaning in life, by helping one to develop pathways to happiness that uncover a sense of what brings deeper meaning and purpose in one's life.
- Individuals with this strength are less swayed by singular events and are more resistant to suggestion and manipulation.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as someone who evaluates all sides of an issue equally, and he or she is less likely to be biased in decision-making. This person thinks through problems and challenges that arise and is not quick to jump to conclusions. When at his or her best using this strength, this individual weighs issues fairly, is empathic, and is flexible in that his or her mind can be changed in light of new, solidly grounded evidence. This strength can help in avoiding negative thinking traps.



Exploring the strength of Judgment

- How is judgment or critical thinking expressed by this person?
- How do emotions get in the way of the ability to be objective?
- What people and circumstances seem to bring out logical fact-based thinking in this individual?
- When this individual is thinking most rationally, does it ever cause loss of perspective of the big picture?
- How does this individual integrate his or her emotions and the emotions of others into a rational thinking process?
- With what people and in what circumstances is it difficult for this person to think rationally without being unduly confused by strong emotions?

Resources

- ▀ [Why thinking like a scientist is good for you](#)
- ▀ [The Science of Helping Out - giving Advice is good for the giver!](#)
- ▀ [What does intellectual humility look like?](#)
- ▀ [Three Reasons for Leaders to Cultivate Intellectual Humility](#)
- ▀ [Intelligent Minds Like Tim Cook and Jeff Bezos Embrace the Rule of Awkward Silence. You Should Too](#)
- 🔊 [How to master the seven-step problem-solving process](#)

Underuse of Judgment

In some situations, it is easy to get caught up in emotion, passion, or ideas, and critical thinking then wanes. At these times, one's rational side is less present, and depending on the circumstance, this may or may not be optimal. These so called "hot emotions" that interfere with rational and critical thinking need to be "cooled off" in order to allow judgment and critical thinking to be expressed fully. There are numbers of ways to cool off one's own emotional state and that of another (e.g., counting, relaxation, exercise, mindfulness, getting distance, etc.).

There are also substances (medicines and illegal drugs) that may impair one's critical thinking, as can excessive fatigue related to inadequate sleep. Furthermore, there can be relationships that for any number of reasons do not encourage one to express critical thinking. For example, in some parental relationships, regardless of the fact that the child has grown to be an adult, the relationship pattern of the parent being the instructive and logical one persists. Boosting judgment can be a way to approach situations from both the head and the heart and may lead to wise choices.



Do it more!

- Seeking and considering other viewpoints is the cornerstone of open-mindedness. When one is having a discussion with a person with an opposing viewpoint, take an approach of asking at least one clarifying question. The approach should be one that involves “collecting information” rather than “evaluating information.”
- Playing devil’s advocate – When I write my to-do list (cue), I’ll think of at least one tough question to stretch our team’s thinking and broaden our perspective (routine). I’ll celebrate by inviting others to be part of the conversation (reward).
- Choose an area of your life and briefly live “as if” you have different opinions.
- Order a meal you would never ordinarily contemplate ordering, or see a movie that you wouldn’t typically choose to see.
- If you feel you might be biased about a particular topic, take an investigative approach and examine all the opposing views clearly and constructively.

Do it better!

Oftentimes, the judgment strength works well in tasks that require critical thinking and the consideration of many points of view. However, in personal relationships, a fact-based approach can be quickly overused and lead to interpersonal conflicts. In these situations, judgment must be accompanied by a heavy dose of listening, empathy, and self regulation. The use of curiosity can also help in exploring the other person’s opinions and ideas.

Judgment can also take on the form of indecisiveness in an endless quest for all the necessary information and points of view to make a good decision. The truth is that most decisions must be made with a limited amount of information. A highly reasoned approach can become overly rational at times, not giving enough consideration to emotions. This can be frustrating when one is interacting with those who make more intuitive or emotional decisions. It is important to not get too logical and lost in the head, overthinking and analysing everything.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

The role of feelings and “heart strengths,” such as gratitude, love, and kindness, can achieve a comfortable balance. It is helpful to recognise that many decisions in life are not irreversible and to distinguish between decisions that are greatest in importance and require more information gathering and those that are less important requiring less energy expenditure. Consider engaging your strength of perspective to take a step back and consider the bigger picture. Use kindness to yourself and others to help temper the message and take a constructive approach.



Kindness

**Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”]:
Doing favours and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them**

Kindness is the pervasive tendency to be nice to people. Kindness is compassion, concern for the welfare of others, a propensity to do favours for them, to take care of them, and to perform good deeds. Acts of kindness may be expressed in fleeting acts directed towards strangers and in profound acts directed to friends and family. Kind people go beyond smiles and pleasantries and choose to go out of their way to assist others in unfortunate circumstances. There is a real caring and concern for others. Kindness has a powerful effect on others.

Research has shown that merely seeing someone else act in an altruistic way leads others to do the same, at least in the short run. An altruist intentionally acts for another’s sake as an end in itself. Those who score high for kindness will likely score high in other-oriented emotions and strengths and may have a sophisticated and developed ability for moral reasoning. It is also likely that they have a personal ethic of responsibility to care for the welfare of others.

It is one of the beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

What are the benefits of this strength?

- People who give to others, in small and in large ways, tend to be happier as a result.
- People who are consistently kind and giving tend to be healthier and live longer than their less generous counterparts.
- Kind people are often likeable to others, which can provide opportunities to develop meaningful relationships.
- Kindness directed inward (self-compassion) can contribute to higher self-esteem, less anxiety and depression, and greater life satisfaction.
- Kind acts are likely to inspire others to kindness.

What does this mean about the individual?

This person sees himself or herself as going out of the way to offer help to those in need. He or she seems especially tuned in and aware of others and acts quickly when someone else’s needs become apparent. This person seems to instinctively know when to lean in with compassion or lend a hand. Other people readily identify this kindness strength in this individual. Kindness at its best is directed inward towards oneself, as well as outward towards others.



Exploring the strength of Kindness

- How are kindness and compassion expressed with different people in different situations?
- How are kind acts of this individual received by others?
- It is important to be sensitive to others in extending kindness; it can sometimes be perceived as placating or condescending. Using social intelligence can be helpful when expressing kindness.
- It can be helpful to think about an incident in the past — painful or joyful or merely ordinary – and focus on the role the character strength of kindness played.

Resources

- ▣ [What types of kindness will make you happiest](#)
- ▣ [The science of generosity](#)
- ▣ [Can we be trained to be more compassionate?](#)
- ▣ [Forget Survival of the fittest: Its kindness that counts](#)
- ▣ www.feedkindness.com
- ▣ [Loneliness at work hurts - what can you do?](#)
- ▣ [Kindness Linked to Relationships, Health, and Longevity](#)
- ▣ [Are you being intrusive or supportive? 8 tips for asking staff about their wellbeing](#)
- ▣ [Does the warm glow of giving ever get old?](#)
- ▣ [The Compassionate Instinct](#)
- ▣ [Ten ways to encourage people to give more](#)
- ▣ [Five limits your brain puts on generosity](#)
- ▣ [How to make giving feel good](#)
- ▣ [Kindness makes you happy ... and happiness makes your kind](#)
- ▣ [Seven tips for fostering generosity](#)
- ▣ [When you should help your coworkers and when to think twice](#)
- ▣ [Do We Have an Instinctive Urge to Be Kind?](#)
- ▣ [How kindness fits into a happy life](#)
- ▣ [How to build a culture of generosity at work](#)
- ▣ [Why We Need to Set Boundaries on Our Generosity](#)
- ▣ [Helpers High](#)
- ✧ [Random Acts of Kindness](#)
- ✧ [Eliciting altruism](#)



- [World Happiness Report Reveals More Sadness and More Kindness During COVID-19](#)
- [Is it really better to give than to receive?](#)
- www.Givitas.com/free
- [Wanting to help others could make you happier at work](#)
- [Do You Underestimate the Impact of Being Kind?](#)
- [The new antidote to anxiety: a new study says try a little kindness](#)
- [Bring kind is good for your health](#)
- Self compassion can help you deal with stress
- Why its more important to be kind than attractive
- <https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20240102-the-qualities-that-are-more-attractive-than-our-looks>

Underuse of Kindness

There is a paradoxical phenomenon whereby we can be least kind to those with whom we are most comfortable. So, sometimes a child can be more unkind with parents than with others and spouses can be more unkind with each other than with, for example, co-workers. In such instances it can be helpful for individuals to remind themselves to be as kind with those close to them as they would with a friend, or even a stranger. More commonly, people's kindness can tend to be extended to those with whom they are closest and not to strangers, and widening one's circle of kindness can yield lasting positive effects to oneself in addition to others. Random acts of kindness not only can positively affect the giver and receiver, but research shows that it can also inspire those who witness the act of kindness. In other words, expanding one's kindness into areas of underuse can have a ripple effect that can touch many.

Do it more!

- Some research notes there are benefits of practicing several random acts of kindness all in one day. Look for opportunities to conduct random acts of kindness and consider how you might set a plan to mix up the variety of kind acts committed each week.
- Speaking kindly to others – When I get ready to leave for the day (cue), I'll think about my day and identify someone to whom I can talk to or email on my way out regarding something that demonstrates my genuine interest or concern about them (routine). I'll celebrate by heading home (reward).
- Practice performing random acts of kindness.
- Practice self compassion, letting go of self-judgment.
- Notice and keep track of kind acts throughout the day.
- Do something kind, generous, or nurturing for oneself.



Do it better!

Though it is hard to imagine being too kind to others, there are instances when the expression may be over the top or even patronising. At other times, there may be an imbalance between what is given and what is received. Some individuals with this strength are very good at giving gifts, offering compliments, and taking time to help others; however, they struggle in being on the receiving end of these situations. Although kindness is not given in order to receive kindness in return, it is normal to expect some give and take in relationships, and when a relationship seems too one-sided, it can become strained. When this sort of imbalance occurs in a relationship, one person may feel as if he or she is being taken advantage of or under appreciated. Compassion fatigue – often experienced by those in the “helping professions” – can occur as a result of giving beyond one’s limits and resources. Sometimes kindness is felt as an accumulating debt that needs to be repaid and can cause discomfort or strain in a relationship.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

The most obvious way in which kindness overuse shows up is when someone does so much for others that they have little or nothing left for themselves. Ultimately when you give too much away, you feel drained and over-extended. Use judgment to look within and ask yourself: "Am I being kind to myself these days?" Be curious about your honest response. Enlist your creativity to arrive at small ways you can be kind to yourself without feeling selfish.



Leadership

Leadership: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the time maintain time good relations within the group; organising group activities and seeing that they happen.

Leadership is organising and encouraging a group to get things done while maintaining good relations within the group. It is setting goals and accomplishing them, enlisting effective help, building coalitions, and smoothing ruffled feathers. Effective leadership gives people the sense that their lives have lasting impact on the world. Leaders are comfortable managing their activities with the activities of others in an integrated system. Leadership goes beyond the “practice” or role; it is the personal quality of vision and force of personality that consistently inspire and empower others. At its best, leadership is knowing how to use one’s own character strength well to inspire others to be the best they can be.

The VIA Survey assesses what can be called informal leadership (“small l” leadership): taking it upon oneself to direct and guide a small group of which the leader is also a member. In contrast, “Big L” leadership is typically displayed by CEOs, politicians, and other movers and shakers. Big L leadership is harder to capture with a simple survey as it entails a complex blend of strengths and being in the right place at the right time.

Leadership is lifting a person’s vision to high sights, the raising of a person’s performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations.

Peter Drucker

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Socially, leaders are respected and valued by others, and they experience the benefits of being well respected and held in high esteem by others.
- Leadership is related to feeling emotionally stable, being open, sociable with others, and conscientious.
- Leaders are able to organise and materialise group plans effectively.
- Good leaders bring the best out in others. Leadership allows the individual to use and express a number of key character strengths, particularly vitality, social intelligence, curiosity, creativity, prudence, honesty, and self- regulation.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as someone who builds good group functioning and brings out the best in others. He or she is good at organising and planning group activities, helping everyone feel included in the group experience. This person can guide others and assume responsibility for the group’s success and challenges. Even when not in the role of being the official leader of a group, people tend to see this person as the leader. He or she



can influence the group to reach goals and treat everyone well. When at his or her best as a leader, this individual is displaying good social skills and social awareness and displaying a high level of flexibility in approaching different personality styles, at times being directive and delegating, at other times inspiring, and still at other times simply being supportive.

Exploring the strength of Leadership

- How is leadership expressed by this individual?
- How does this person feel when leading others?
- In what circumstances do this person's leadership tendencies become problematic?
- What have been this individual's greatest leadership successes and challenges?
- What are the keys to having people work together successfully towards a common goal or purpose?
- How does this person decide when to lead and when to allow others to lead?
- How do people respond to this individual's leadership?
- The two tasks of formal or informal leadership are getting things done and helping people get along. These are distinct but reinforce one another. Both need to be kept in mind when one is in any leadership role.

Resources

- ▣ [Three things leaders can do each day](#)
- ✿ [Level 5 Leadership](#)
- ▣ [Dropped a ball recently? Good!](#)
- ▣ [4 things great bosses say to a new employee that most bosses never think to say](#)
- ▣ [Three Reasons for Leaders to Cultivate Intellectual Humility](#)
- ✿ [The Extraordinary Leader](#)
- ✿ [Kim Cameron: "Positive Leadership: Strategies for Extraordinary Performance"](#)

Underuse of Leadership

People can be pulled into leadership positions by forces outside of themselves (e.g., being assigned a leadership role by others) or by forces within themselves (e.g., a desire to lead or control). A person high in leadership may underuse that strength when there are circumstances in which he or she is unclear about being called into a leadership role or because for any number of reasons his or her motivation to lead may wane. For example, because leadership involves the expenditure of considerable effort and the assumption of considerable responsibility, people high in leadership can find themselves feeling overwhelmed. This can cause them to consciously or unconsciously forgo leadership opportunities. People may also discover situations in which they underuse their leadership



strength because they defer to someone else. In such instances, it can be useful for the person to explore their reasons for deferring to another person.

Do it more!

- In addition to competently using one's strengths, leadership requires highly developed organisational skills. This takes planning and goal setting. Consider ideas and opportunities in which the individual can practice taking a leadership role in activities, groups, or organisations, even if the task seems minor or trivial.
- Stepping up – Before the morning meeting (cue), I'll spend ten minutes listing the ways I can help our team to achieve their goals (routine) and share at least one of these ideas with my colleagues (reward).
- Lead an activity, assignment, or project and actively solicit opinions from group members.
- Organise a family event that is intergenerational, including both young and old relatives.
- Organise an event at work or in the community.
- Consider key role models – past and present – in your life. What behaviours did they display? What standards did they set? What leadership characteristics might be best to imitate?
- Be the organiser of events and tasks. Look for opportunities to practice taking a leadership role in activities, groups, and organisations, no matter how minor the responsibility.

Do it better!

Leaders direct and control the efforts of others. When overplayed, leaders can be seen as over controlling and bossy. Leaders may also become resentful when others don't take responsibility and defer to them to organise everyone. Organising a group of people requires that they get involved. It is important for those in leadership roles to remember to step back from time to time to allow others to lead; good leaders build leadership in others. The VIA Inventory focuses more on everyday leadership involving organising activities and people; however, it is worth noting that when influential people abuse their power and negatively impact a group of individuals this is seen as a dangerous overuse of leadership.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Turn to your fairness, kindness, humility, and/or social intelligence to balance leadership. What is fair to the group? How can you be kind to each person? What don't you know? How is your behaviour impacting those around you?



Love

Capacity to Love and Be Loved: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people

Love is the capacity to love and to be loved. It is valuing close relationships with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; it is being close to people. The strength of love is characterised by a disposition to tend and befriend others. It is reflected in one's thoughts, behaviours, and emotions. Love, as defined by the VIA classification, assumes the capacity for reciprocity. Thus, while unrequited love, a crush, hero worship, or being a fan can feel like love, each falls outside the parameter of this character strength because the feelings are in only one direction. Love is marked by the reciprocal sharing of warmth, comfort, and acceptance. It involves strong positive feelings, commitment, and often, sacrifices. We can experience different types of love: companion love or friendship, familial love, and romantic love. The capacity to experience all of these types of love, scientists believe, is rooted in early attachment. Patterns of secure attachment, established in infancy, show up decades later in romantic relationships.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Love tends to facilitate tolerance, empathy, and forgiveness in relationships, which contribute to the health and longevity of those relationships.
- Loving and secure relationships are strongly linked with longevity, good health, and enhanced life satisfaction.
- Loving and secure relationships can provide a sense of meaning and purpose in life.
- Love is associated with healthy patterns of communication such as compromising and good conflict.

“Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By his love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him, which is not yet actualised but yet ought to be actualised. Furthermore, by his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualise these potentialities. By making him aware of what he can be and of what he should become, he makes these potentialities come true.”

Victor Frankl

Resources

- ▣ [Office Friendships](#)
- ▣ [Why relationships are the secret to healthy ageing](#)
- ▣ [Why you should prioritise friendships](#)
- ▣ [Rekindling old friendships](#)
- ▣ [How to handle a toxic relationship](#)
- ▣ [Six ways to grow social connections on the job](#)
- ✦ [The Magic Relationship Ratio](#)



- ✦ [How love and connection exist in micro-moments](#)
- ▣ [Seven ways to improve your relationships with co-workers](#)
- ▣ [Four ways to help your coworkers feel respected](#)
- ▣ [Want better relationships? Here's what to do today.](#)
- ▣ [Small Talk Has Big Benefits](#)
- ✦ [Love and kindness meditation](#)
- 🔊 [Encore: Why We Need Friends With Shared Interests](#)
- ▣ [A four day science backed guide to forging better friendships that will improve your life](#)

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as being able to form close loving relationships with others. He or she finds it easy and natural to experience loving feelings towards others and feels an ease in receiving love and affection expressed by others. It is energising when this strength is given expression. This is a core strength for this individual and as such is easily recognised by others. While this strength is dominant, it doesn't mean that it will always be expressed optimally across contexts. When this person is at his or her best in expressing love, there is an easy flow of positive emotions from and towards others that brings closeness and a strong feeling of emotional support. This strength is crucial in developing relationships that nurture and sustain life satisfaction.

Exploring the strength of Love

- Identify the people who matter most to this person across all of the domains of life (friends, family, partners, co-workers).
- What are the ways in which this individual expresses love to others and how is it received?
- How are expressions of love received by this individual? It is often easier to give than to receive, but good relationships are a two-way street.
- Love is often reflected in how we communicate with others, how we express our wants and needs, and how we establish give and take in relationships. It is also reflected in how we listen to and respond to good as well as bad news. Does this individual celebrate with others in a genuine way when good news is expressed? Respond with heartfelt compassion when bad news is shared?

Underuse of Love

Loving relationships appear to be one of the most important factors in promoting health and well-being. The character strength of love is a very powerful tool for developing healthy relationships. When expressed, it creates caring and supportive relationships that improve both parties in the relationship. Although love is a top character strength for this



individual, there may be relationships and situations in which he or she could express love more broadly or deeply. It is not uncommon for loving people to discover that they reserve their love mainly for particular family members, friends, and relationship partners or to find that their expression of love is confined to certain people and certain situations. Upon consideration, they would like to extend their love more broadly. For example, some people realise that they have taken their love for parents and family for granted and they decide they would like to strengthen those relationships by being more loving in them. Others recognise that it never crossed their mind to express love in the workplace and that, in fact, there are important and meaningful relationships there that they would like to strengthen through the expression of love. And still others, upon reflection, discover that they tend to overlook the “receiving” aspect of love and focus mostly on the “giving” of love, but this, too, can create an imbalance. Finally, love can be underused in terms of loving oneself – what some consider to be the precursor to loving and being loved by others.

Do it more!

- Journal about loving relationships and what is most valued in those relationships.
- Develop a loving kindness meditation practice in which you consciously tap into your inner resources of love through mental focus, imaging, and statements that focus on feeling and expressing love. Loving kindness meditation is an effective way to experience the strength of love and is associated with a host of mental and physical benefits. Ideally a practitioner should teach you the technique, but at the very least, read a book or two on the topic and practice with CDs that formally teach the practice.
- Loving others – Each morning when we’re making morning tea (cue), I’ll take the time to have a meaningful conversation with a colleague, by asking genuine questions about how they’re going/what’s going well for them (routine). I’ll celebrate by drinking my tea (reward).

Do it better!

Love, as all the signature strengths, can sometimes occur as a strong force that may be expressed “too” intensely or broadly for a particular situation and may actually diminish well-being or inhibit relationship building. Because this strength occurs naturally, it can be expressed automatically without consideration of the impact on oneself or others. This can cause discomfort in those who are less comfortable with overt expressions of emotion or who do not share the same intensity of feelings. This can lead individuals who over express love to feel unappreciated or drained from high levels of emotional giving. Additionally, a heavy dose of loving concern for others may make it difficult to set limits or to say “no,” which can also lead one to feeling depleted or used. It is common, in expressing love, to leave ourselves out of the equation, focusing on others and forgetting to turn our love inward.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!



Deploying the strength of fairness may be a way to count oneself in the mix; in other words, it is not fair to yourself or to others if all you do is express love and you deprive others of the opportunity to give it to you. Use fairness and social intelligence to reflect on how others feel about your expressions of love. Use judgment and curiosity to gather feedback on how they feel in the relationship.



Love of Learning

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

Love of learning is having a passion for learning for its own sake. It is mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally. Love of learning is sustained curiosity. It describes the way in which new information and skills are acquired and the deep interest shown with particular content. Positive feelings are often experienced in the process of acquiring skills, satisfying one's curiosity, building on existing knowledge, and/or learning something completely new. This strength helps people persist in the face of setbacks, challenges, and negative feedback. Love of learning is inherently fulfilling. However, positive feelings may not always be front-and-center in one's awareness while learning something. Sometimes an individual may not be especially mindful of anything other than the task at hand. Love of learning describes the process of engaging content that may or may not result in immediate achievement.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Love of learning leads to the development of a deeper base of knowledge, enhancing competency and efficacy.
- Love of learning supports positive experiences, which, in turn, may predispose an individual to psychological and physical well-being.
- Viewing a new setback or challenge as an opportunity for learning and growth leads to greater perseverance.
- Love of learning has been associated with healthy, productive ageing.

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.

John F. Kennedy

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as having a passion for learning for its own sake. He or she digs deep into topics and is never satisfied with a shallow understanding of things. It feels good to this person to increase knowledge by reading, going to museums and libraries, taking classes, or watching educational television. He or she sees most life experiences as learning opportunities, e.g., watching a movie, having a conversation, or driving to work. When this individual is learning something new, it is like a door opens and there is a strong desire to keep digging for more information. Love of learning may lead to a state of flow in which time flies by as one is soaking up new information.



Exploring the strength of Love of Learning

- What areas of learning (factual knowledge, people, skills, philosophy, or spirituality) are most interesting?
- What areas of learning are least interesting?
- What does this individual love about learning?
- What ways of learning (e.g., reading, experiential, solitary, social) are most/least engaging?
- How does knowledge improve this individual's life?
- How does the breadth and depth of this individual's knowledge impact his or her relationships, from people recently met to people who are close?

Resources

- ✦ [Growth mindset](#)
- ✦ [How to Be a Lifelong Learner](#)
- ✦ [Embracing discomfort can help us grow](#)
- ✦ [How to make sure you keep growing and learning](#)
- ✦ [How to unlock the talent in yourself and others](#)

Underuse of Love of Learning

Love of learning, like curiosity, can become associated with particular topics as opposed to being distributed equally across all topics and situations. Underuse may simply reflect a lack of interest or lack of opportunity to pursue one's interests. Sometimes the pursuit of learning is limited by the time constraints imposed by one's lifestyle. In such instances, it may be useful to review how the person's life choices reflect his or her priorities and to consider whether love of learning is receiving its proper priority. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for people to forget to apply their love of learning to relationships - striving to know more about others. There are many aspects of the people we know best that we can learn more about and better understand.

Do it more!

- To build love of learning, it's important to identify where the highest interests in learning are and then work to discover the preferred ways of learning about that subject; whether self initiated, by reading, searching the internet, through a class, via hands-on experiences, peer learning groups, or by viewing video clips or documentaries. Pursue the learning of interest, systematically digging deeply into the material.
- Learning about people – When I sit down for lunch (cue), I'll try to chat with at least one colleague about what they're working on and see what I can learn (routine). My reward will be my lunch (reward).
- Visit a museum every month and write about new things learned.
- Read a nonfiction book monthly on a topic you find absorbing and engaging.



- Converse with someone on a topic of mutual interest.
- Develop a new hobby or explore more deeply a current hobby.
- Consider the importance of a subject as an incentive to learn something about a topic that would not normally interest you.

Do it better!

Sometimes people with love of learning can come across as being a “know it all.” Their enthusiasm for learning can lead to a desire to share “too much” information, and they either overwhelm people with information or monopolise the conversation. Such individuals may not be aware that so much sharing is overkill because it is routine for them to gather knowledge and facts and then share those as much as possible. It is important for them to understand that they may be unintentionally sending a message of perceived intellectual superiority and that they should share their knowledge judiciously. Otherwise, they may find those they are talking with trying to avoid or minimise conversations.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Checking in with others using social intelligence to understand and “take in” their feedback is a way to temper love of learning. Be curious about what they want to know about and what they already know. Applying curiosity and kindness/empathy in a conversation by asking questions of other people (e.g., What do you think of this information I just shared?) will go a long way to bring balance to these situations.



Perseverance

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

Perseverance is sticking with things. It is finishing what one starts, persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles, taking pleasure in completing tasks. Perseverance involves the mustering of one’s will in the face of contrary impulses. It is not fear that threatens action, but boredom, tedium, frustration, and difficulty. Perseverance is not laziness, giving up, losing heart, losing interest, or taking shortcuts. Studies have shown that when people think they will succeed, they persist longer at both easy and difficult tasks. Persistent people are likely to have an internal locus of control and are more likely to attribute failure to lack of effort than to bad luck, creating a greater sense of personal control.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Perseverance helps to improve skills, talents, and resourcefulness as well as build other character strengths.
- Perseverance builds self-confidence, a general sense and belief that things can be accomplished in life and that personal control can be exerted so one performs effectively.
- Persistent people are often seen as dependable — people who follow through on commitments. This contributes to one being a valued team member and builds trust that can be a foundation for good relationships.
- Perseverance pushes the focus to task completion, not to perfection, therefore it increases one’s flexibility and self- control.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as capable of putting forth high effort over a long duration of time to achieve a goal. Others see this person as a hard worker. He or she sets goals and regularly reaches them. This individual resists the temptation to do something easier and perhaps more pleasurable. Perseverance helps this individual fight off obstacles that are frustrating, boring, or difficult. He or she stays focused on goals and does not take shortcuts, digging deep to find internal energy and motivation to work long hours and stick with a challenging task when necessary. This person takes pleasure in getting the job done and done well.

Exploring the strength of Perseverance

- When does persevering feel engrossing as opposed to a chore?
- What motivates this individual to persevere?



- What causes this individual to stop persevering?
- What role do others play in helping or hindering perseverance?
- When this individual succeeds in persevering, how does that affect how he or she approaches subsequent challenges?

Resources

- ▣ [Six ways to find your courage during challenging times](#)
- ▣ [Three Reasons for Leaders to Cultivate Intellectual Humility](#)

Underuse of Perseverance

Perseverance is often driven by the hope and confidence that one's efforts will be fruitful. Some people feel more confident in certain domains of their lives than others. For example, some may feel that they are more effective at work than in their personal relationships; therefore, they may find that they are persevering more or underusing perseverance in certain relationships. When exploring a person's underuse of perseverance, consider how realistic the person's expectations are with regard to how effective he or she can be. For example, a person may underestimate his or her effectiveness at advising friends and family and therefore may not persevere in trying to be helpful. However, there is wisdom in recognising what situations to push forward versus letting go. Sometimes diffusion of responsibility can cause a person to not try hard because he or she thinks it is someone else's responsibility. There are times when pushing forward through obstacles and challenges is necessary to succeed.

Do it more!

- Reframing setbacks or failures as learning opportunities and ideas for growth can boost the strength of perseverance. Set backs can be viewed as providing useful information so that the individual can overcome obstacles, be less inclined to “give up,” and persist toward their goal.
- Delivering what matters most – Each morning when I complete my daily planner (cue), I will prioritise the three goals I most need to accomplish (routine). My reward will be ticking these off as I go (reward).
- Set small goals weekly. Break them into practical steps, accomplish them on time, and monitor your progress from week to week.
- Reframe setbacks as challenges and start anew.
- Work harder than usual at an important goal.
- Select a role model who exemplifies perseverance and determine how to follow in his or her footsteps.
- Partner with someone who is highly perseverant.



Do it better!

An important issue for highly perseverant people is knowing when to give up or let go. When perseverance is too dominant, there can be an unrelenting stubbornness to push forward, in spite of evidence supporting the wisdom of letting go. A symptom of this phenomenon can be viewed in those who “overwork” themselves, especially at the expense of family, relationships, and self-care. Feedback from trusted others should be listened to carefully; this helps in building perspective. In relationships, there may be a vulnerability to persist even when the relationship proves to be unhealthy. Intimate relationships or friendships may become a project that one works at with great persistence, failing to recognise that the relationship is not a good one.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Use perspective to step back and see the bigger picture of when "enough is enough" for a project that should be paused, shifted in direction, or abandoned. Perspective can also help you attend to your health and relationships to make sure you are "staying well" during challenging projects, periods of intense work, or difficult relationships.



Perspective

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

Perspective, often called wisdom, is the ability to take stock of life in the bigger picture. It is the product of knowledge and life experiences, but it is more than the accumulation of information: perspective is the coordination of this information and its deliberate use to improve well-being. In a social context perspective allows one to listen to others, to evaluate what they say, and then to offer good advice. Perspective entails the acquisition and use of knowledge. Thus, wise people have expert knowledge about what really matters, and they know how to plan and manage it. They possess knowledge about procedures, as well as feelings and values, and can balance this knowledge with the situation, knowing that what is wise in one situation may be foolish in another. Those with perspective can address important and difficult questions about conduct and meaning for the good of all involved. They also tend to possess strong self-knowledge. They bring both feeling and rationality into decisions and have a wide-angle view of life's patterns in relationships and life's meaning. Wise people take the needs of others into consideration and understand their own limitations. They see into the heart of problems and frequently are sought out for advice.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Wisdom is more robustly linked to the well-being of older people than are conditions such as physical health, socioeconomic status, financial situation, and physical and social environments.
- Individuals with perspective are valued by others seeking counsel since those individuals help them see the big picture and alternative points of view.
- Perspective involves applying strengths according to the “golden mean” – the right strength, the right amount of strength, and in the right situation.
- Perspective enables people to learn from mistakes and from the strengths of others.
- Perspective enables people to judge both the short and long-term consequences of actions.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as having the ability to stand back and see the bigger picture. Other people come for advice to gain insight and ideas. He or she is a truly good listener and knows how to ask the right questions at the right time. This person is aware of what he or she knows and does not know and can admit to short-comings and areas where knowledge is lacking. Beyond seeing the big picture, he or she senses what others are thinking and feeling and can respond with insight. It is important for this



individual to exercise judgment/critical thinking with perspective to avoid sharing too much information and risk being perceived as a “know-it-all.”

Exploring the strength of Perspective

- When has perspective been most helpful personally and with others?
- At times when it has been difficult to gain perspective, how has this individual worked to see the big picture?
- Standing on the sidelines and observing can provide perspective, but sometimes it feels like missing the action. How can someone hold and share perspective and still stay connected?
- What are the instances in which perspective has been easiest to share?
- Are there missed opportunities to express this strength?
- Imagine having a conversation with a wise person about a problem. Imagine the full dialogue in terms of questions asked, answers given, and advice offered.

Resources

- ▣ [Why thinking like a scientist is good for you](#)
- 🔗 [Episode 19: How to Stop Dwelling](#)
- ▣ [The Science of Helping Out - giving Advice is good for the giver!](#)
- ▣ [Three Reasons for Leaders to Cultivate Intellectual Humility](#)
- ▣ [To Resolve Conflicts, Get Up and Move](#)
- ▣ [Five Reasons Why Intellectual Humility Is Good for You](#)
- ✳️ [Gaining perspective on an argument](#)
- ▣ [Four ways to cool down your defensiveness](#)

Underuse of Perspective

The strength of perspective requires being able to see the big picture and being able to share one’s insights to help another. Underuse may occur when, for any number of reasons, one does not want to help another person. For example, one might be angry with someone or consider oneself in competition with that person, and therefore, either consciously or, more commonly, subconsciously, not want to provide insights that could be helpful or give the other person a competitive advantage. States of high emotion or stress can also impair one’s ability to find perspective. Sometimes this emotionality is subconscious, for example, in some family relationships, causing an otherwise perceptive person to experience difficulty finding perspective when it comes to family relationships.



Do it more!

- An intervention that has been shown to boost wisdom-related knowledge is to imagine having a conversation with a wise person about a problem. Imagine the full dialogue in terms of questions asked, responses given, the nuances of the discussion, and any advice that would be offered.
- Making the complex simple – On my way home (cue), I'll reflect on the ideas and challenges I've encountered today and see if there is a simple, meaningful way to explain what's unfolding to my team tomorrow (routine). My reward will be walking in the front door (reward).
- Monitor times in which you offered good advice and counsel to others.
- Consider a situation in your life to which you could bring your perspective to bear. Write about how you might use your wisdom in this situation.
- Describe how past experiences in which you used perspective have served you.

Do it better!

It is important to use judgment with perspective to avoid coming across as pompous or all-knowing. Sometimes perspective can be offered in ways that convey that those seeking perspective are less enlightened, and this can be off-putting. In some roles, such as parenting, providing perspective can seem intrusive and unintentionally suggest that there is only one perspective of the situation. It can also be frustrating when others don't embrace the wisdom one is sharing. It is important to understand that everyone must find his or her own wisdom, and sometimes the perspective of another is not what is being sought.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Be curious about what wise people are thinking when they are handling challenging situations. What have they already considered? Use curiosity to explore new possible responses for yourself.



Prudence

Prudence: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted

Prudence is being careful about one's choices, not taking unnecessary risks, and not saying or doing things that might later be regretted. Prudence, like other temperance strengths, protects us from excess. People high in prudence are far-sighted and deliberate. They innately possess a form of practical reasoning and self-management that helps them achieve long-term goals by considering carefully the consequences of their actions - those taken and not taken. Long-term goals are not sacrificed for short-term pleasures. Prudence is akin to judgment/critical thinking, but different in that evidence is weighed against future courses of action and personal costs or benefits. It leads people to do things in a judicious way. It applies to all areas of life, not just to spheres of money, work, and achievement. There are many misconceptions about prudence. It is not excessive caution, thrift, or compulsive self-restraint. It is not timid conformity or a lack of spontaneity. And, it is not compliance with rigid rules.

What does research reveal about the benefits of this strength?

- Prudence is associated with intelligence and optimism.
- Prudence is associated with physical health, job performance, and student achievement.
- Prudence helps us to avoid the mishaps of life, both physical and psychological.
- Prudence is closely linked with the ability to be conscientious and is associated with cooperativeness, assertiveness, interpersonal warmth, and insightfulness.
- Prudence is associated with productivity.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as a cautious person, someone who thinks before acting or speaking. He or she considers the consequences of actions and tries not to say or do things that might be regretted later. This individual is careful with choices and would not consider himself or herself to be a risk-taker. Prudence leads to being practical in making decisions and plans, and it comes across in this person's ability to reason and think through situations, such as weighing the costs and benefits of actions. When at his or her best, this individual expresses prudence with perspective to see the larger picture and with bravery to take acceptable risks that allow for growth and making progress towards goals.



Exploring the strength of Prudence

- How does prudence or caution pay off for this person?
- In what areas of life is this individual most prudent and in what areas of life is he or she least prudent?
- How does it feel to be prudent?
- How do other people respond to this individual's prudence?
- How does caution hold this individual back, if at all, from positive life experiences?

Underuse of Prudence

Though being prudent is generally comforting to people high in this character strength, it can at times cause them to feel bad about their lack of spontaneity, and they may even feel pressure from others to throw caution to the wind. In response, prudent people can find themselves swinging to the other extreme of being imprudent. This can be more or less deliberate. For example, a prudent person may purposefully decide to approach a vacation in a spontaneous fashion instead of following his or her impulses to plan every detail.

In other words, the person may decide that there are relatively safe havens in life where he or she can afford to be less cautious. Though this may, at first glance, appear as underuse of prudence, instead it is a matter of deliberate balancing of the strength. Alternatively, in a less deliberate and self-aware fashion, a person may find himself or herself underusing prudence in response to peer pressure or as a result of "loosening up" with alcohol. In such instances, it can be helpful for the person to explore situations where he or she underuses prudence so as to more consciously make wise choices.

Do it more!

- Practice conducting cost-benefit analyses of problems. Write out the costs and benefits of taking a particular action and the costs and benefits of not doing that action (resulting in four quadrants).
- Planning ahead – When I get to work (cue), then I'll spend ten minutes thinking about the meetings I'll attend today and my intentions for each (routine). Then I'll have my coffee (reward).
- Think twice before saying anything. Practice noticing the effects throughout the week.
- Drive cautiously; notice your mental activity and bodily sensations as you do so. Remind yourself that there are fewer time-bound emergencies than you think.
- Remove all extraneous distractions before you make your next three important decisions.
- Consult with a trusted friend or significant other to get his or her view before taking on another project or assignment.



- A cost-benefit analysis can be conducted when facing difficult or risky situations: What are the benefits of doing "x"? What are the costs of doing "x"? What are the benefits of not doing "x"? What are the costs of not doing "x"?
- Write about ways you use prudence in family life, at work, and in the pursuit of pleasure.
- Examine an event from the past when prudence was used to your own benefit and the benefit of others.

Do it better!

Prudence is a fundamental strength in that it protects us from making mistakes and getting into dangerous or risky situations. However, we all make mistakes and some mistakes are not so disastrous. It is important to keep perspective on what really is at risk. Prudence can come across as being stuffy, inhibited, or superior, which can cause distance or breed resentment in many situations. When prudence is overused it can keep us from reaping the rewards that come with taking certain risks.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Many situations require finding the balance between the strengths of bravery and prudence. Bring in bravery and judgment to challenge your thinking, and consider new information about possible new ways to do things, or new experiences to plan. Make a plan to take a small risk and monitor what happens. The use of social intelligence as well as teamwork, or love can help one gather other views, listen carefully, and think through the various options.



Self-Regulation

Self-Regulation [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions

Self-regulation is controlling one's appetites and emotions and regulating what one feels and does. Individuals high in self-regulation exert control over their responses as they pursue goals and live up to standards. They monitor and manage their thoughts, emotions, impulses, performances, and other behaviours. Giving into emotional pain or pleasure is a deliberate choice. These individuals are not self-disciplined for its own sake, and they are neither austere nor ascetic. Rather, they have an internal locus of control and use it to experience all the fulfilment and positive outcomes available. They are high in self-efficacy, believing they have the ability to achieve their goals. People high in self-regulation are often admired for their ability to control their reactions to disappointment and insecurities. Conversely, failure in self-regulation is central to a large number of the personal and social problems that plague people across the world.

What does research reveal about the benefits of this strength?

- Children who are most successful at delaying gratification early on are more successful academically and socially and that success is long lasting.
- People with high self-control report fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression, are better able to control anger, and generally get along better with people.
- People skilled at self-regulation are in charge of their emotions rather than the other way around.
- Self-regulation is associated with achieving goals and being successful in many endeavours, including academic, athletic, and work performance.
- Self-regulation is linked with better personal adjustment, such as having fewer physical and psychological symptoms and having a greater sense of self-acceptance and self-esteem in relationships.
- Self-control helps prevent addictions.

One can have no smaller or greater mastery than mastery of oneself.

Leonardo da Vinci

Resources

- [The contagion effect - why you should look after yourself](#)
- [The Power of Habit](#)



What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as a disciplined person. He or she can control impulses, desires, and emotions as deemed appropriate. This individual knows when “enough is enough.” He or she is able to keep up with healthy habits of living. When at his or her best with self-regulation, this person exercises discipline and self-control in balance while allowing himself or herself simple pleasures and remaining in touch with emotions and staying reasonably flexible in his or her routines. This strength helps this individual to keep a sense of balance, order, and progress in life and helps him or her to be successful in achieving goals.

Exploring the strength of Self-Regulation

- How does self-regulation play a role in this person’s greatest successes in life?
- What areas of this individual’s life are best regulated?
- How are unwanted impulses controlled (e.g., techniques, strategies)?
- Which areas of life or what circumstances are most challenging for this person in terms of regulating emotions and impulses?
- How does this individual think and feel about himself or herself when self-regulation is high?
- What thoughts and feelings does this person have about himself or herself when self-regulation is low?
- How do other people (friends, family, co-workers, acquaintances) respond to this individual’s self-regulation?
- What areas of life would be improved if greater self-regulation could be applied?
- How does self-regulation impair, if at all, staying in touch with one’s emotions and the emotions of others?
- How does self-regulation impact this individual’s tolerance for situations that are vague or unpredictable?
- How does self-regulation impact this individual’s tolerance for change?

Underuse of Self-Regulation

Self-regulation can express itself unevenly across the domains of a person’s life. For example, one may be highly self-regulated in terms of work and less so with regards to eating, sleeping, and fitness habits. Research indicates that self-regulation uses up psychic energy, and therefore, maintaining some areas where one is less self-disciplined may be necessary to avoid “burn out.” Some areas of under-regulation may be acceptable whereas others may be deemed to be areas for self-improvement.



Some people may be strongly self-regulated in a particular domain (e.g., keeping an exercise routine) and then impulsive and unbalanced in another domain (e.g., controlling anger). Clearly, it is impossible to be self-regulated perfectly in every situation, thus a modicum of self-kindness and self-forgiveness when one's self-regulation falters are helpful strengths to employ.

Do it more!

- Research has found that the best way to build this character strength is to exercise some area of discipline on a regular basis. Self-monitoring is one pathway. Consider a behaviour one wishes to change (e.g., eating more healthy, exercising more, managing finances better) and begin to track it with honest detail (e.g., keeping a food diary or an exercise log). Continue to closely monitor the behaviour while slowly making changes.
- Starting early – When I open my laptop (cue), I'll spend ten minutes powering through any urgent emails (routine), and then celebrate by going to have a tea and chat with a colleague (reward).
- Self-regulation can be built by exercising it on a regular basis. It can be likened to a muscle, which can be fatigued by exercising it too much in too short a period of time. When taking on multiple goals, tackle them one at a time and not simultaneously.
- Take a new approach to an exercise routine, using your signature strengths to pursue your goal.
- Make a to-do list, come up with an action plan, and begin to carry it out.
- Practice a mindfulness meditation exercise one time per day for 5 minutes. Having such a routine will contribute to your self-control.
- The next time you feel angry, take a moment to investigate the emotion and use self-soothing strategies rather than reacting in an unhealthy way.
- Choose an area of your life in which there is high self-regulation, and use this area as the foundation for building self-regulation in other areas of your life.

Do it better!

Our lives would be havoc and our communities chaotic without good measures of self-regulation. But, when people overuse self-regulation and become obsessive and rigid, their routines can come to wreak havoc on their relationships. Such individuals may appear “uptight” and over-controlling to others and they may come across as being superior in some way. It is important to keep perspective, to keep the big picture in mind, and to use social intelligence as a cuing mechanism to see the impact of one's behaviour on others and to choose targets of self-regulation wisely.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

A good counterbalance to self-regulation is zest. When you express excitement, energy, and enthusiasm you tend to not be so inhibited. Turn to what fuels your passion to manage the overuse. It is important to keep perspective, to keep the big picture in mind,



and to use social intelligence as a cuing mechanism to see the impact of one's behaviour on others and to choose targets of self-regulation wisely.



Social Intelligence

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

Social intelligence is knowing what makes other people tick. It is being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself, and knowing what to do to fit into different social situations. Social intelligence facilitates social connection. Individuals who strongly possess social intelligence have the ability to process information or signals concerning motives, feelings, and others' psychological states directly relevant to their own well-being and that of others. They exhibit capacities in regard to experiencing and strategising about emotion and are adept at perceiving emotions in relationships — of self and others'. They can use this information in reasoning: thinking abstractly to understand similarities and differences among things and recognising patterns. Social intelligence is complex, comprising different skills including empathy and, in particular, the ability to take another's perspective.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Social and emotional intelligence help in negotiating successful transactions with other people, whether social or business.
- Social intelligence contributes to one having a high level of comfort across a variety of social situations, opening up opportunities for meeting new people and participating in new experiences.
- Noticing differences among others — especially with respect to their moods, temperament, motivations, and intentions — and then acting upon these distinctions establishes trust and helps in building relationships.

Resources

- ▣ [How to bring your whole self to work](#)
- ▣ [Why You Need a Network of Low-Stakes, Casual Friendships](#)
- ▣ [What Happens When You Give People the Benefit of the Doubt](#)
- ▣ [Whats the best strategy for empathy](#)
- ✳ [Increase your self awareness with one simple tip](#)
- ▣ [How noticing emotions at work can build trust](#)
- ▣ [Power corrupts our instinct for cooperation](#)
- ▣ [How small moments of empathy affect your life](#)
- ▣ [Seven ways to improve your relationships with co-workers](#)
- ▣ [The Superpowers of Sensitive People](#)



What does this mean about the individual?

This person sees himself or herself as being able to “read” other people and situations well. He or she seems to “take it all in” and react accordingly and with flexibility. Using social intelligence is energising to this person and feels like being “in the zone.” There is an easy discourse that occurs between this individual and others. Others easily recognise this person’s strong social intelligence and find comfort in their ability to read and gauge the situation. This individual may also have more self-awareness and be able to better understand his or her own reactions across social situations. Self-awareness and self-care are important in exercising this dominant strength.

- Exploring the strength of Social Intelligence
- It is important to understand how social intelligence works across different situations. What are the situations that have had the most positive outcomes for this individual?
- It is important to double-check the “read” on situations, to be mindful of differences in beliefs, attitudes, needs, and wants so that faulty assumptions are not being made.
- It is important to stay aware of personal feelings.

Underuse of Social Intelligence

Social intelligence emerges from insight and perspective as to what makes other people be the way they are. Such insight can be impeded when strong negative emotions are present and when psychological motivation to understand is conflicted, as in the following examples. When one is angry at someone for being mistreated, one’s ability to understand the offending party can become compromised. There may be relationships in which one has historically been hurt and misunderstood and therefore, at some level, one does not want to generously extend understanding to the offending party. And lastly, there are some relationships formed in childhood in which one finds oneself, even as an adult, thrown back into a childlike role in the relationships. Thus it may be difficult for such individuals to apply their social intelligence to parents, siblings, teachers, and extended family members.

Do it more!

- Noticing what motivates your team to act – During our morning team meeting (cue), I’ll try to spot the strengths in at least one colleague and note what I’ve seen and how I might help them use this strength as we go about our work (routine). To celebrate I’ll have a healthy snack (reward).
- Social intelligence can be cultivated through the practice of mindfulness, increasing awareness of the thoughts and feelings of one’s self and others. After one becomes aware of an emotion, the next step is to label it, and if appropriate, express it to another. It may be useful to consider how this has an impact on the social context.



- Attend an uncomfortable social situation as an active observer and describe this without any judgments.
- Withhold a powerful and decisive argument that would win a discussion but might hurt someone's feelings.
- Attempt to find at least one positive element in someone's seemingly negative motives.
- Note and appreciate others in light of their positive attributes.
- An awareness of personal feelings might be enhanced by consciously focusing on the feeling, labelling it, and addressing it or consciously letting it go.

Do it better!

A keen awareness of what motivates others may lead a person to a point of becoming overly cautious or inhibited. It can also lead the person to misinterpret situations and “read” too much into passing comments or the suggestions of others. This may come across as being “too sensitive.” It is important to balance this strength out with those of judgment and perspective — to keep the bigger picture in mind. Also, those who are exquisitely empathic may take on the pain and suffering of others, which can lead to depression or feeling overwhelmed. Practicing mindfulness can be a very effective method of staying balanced emotionally. Interestingly, there is tendency for people high in emotional intelligence to choose helping occupations that are often emotionally difficult.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

It is critically important to practice self-compassion, exercise good judgment, and maintain perspective to stay balanced.



Spirituality

Religiousness & 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

Religiousness and spirituality refer to the conviction that there is a nonphysical (transcendent) dimension to life. They refer to having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe, having beliefs about where one fits within the larger scheme, and having beliefs about the meaning of life that shapes our actions and provides comfort. Transcendence includes those strengths that connect us to the larger universe. One's beliefs are the filter applied to everyday experiences, influencing relationships and the determination of what is ultimately meaningful. Religiousness and spirituality are universal. Spirituality is believed to describe both the private, intimate relationship between humans and the divine and the range of virtues that result from that relationship. Religiousness is an individual's degree of acceptance of the prescribed beliefs associated with the worship of a divine figure, and that individual's participation in public and private acts of worship.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- Religiousness/spirituality provides a feeling of being grounded, increases optimism, and helps provide a sense of purpose and meaning in life, which in turn contributes to an overall sense of well-being.
- People who are religious/spiritual often experience benefits in their physical and psychological health and are resilient in the face of life challenges.
- Religious youth show greater self-regulation and better academic performance and tend to see the world as a more coherent place.
- Religiousness is associated with avoidance of risky and rule-breaking behaviours.
- In family life, religiousness is associated with lower levels of marital conflict, greater perceived spousal support, more consistent parenting, and more supportive relationships between children and their parents.
- Religiousness and spirituality have also been linked to forgiveness, kindness, compassion, altruism, volunteerism, and philanthropy.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual has particular beliefs as to how the universe was constructed and derives deep meaning from this. Spiritual faith and beliefs are important to this person. The sense of the larger scheme of the universe and this person's beliefs shape much of his or her conduct in life and provide comfort, particularly during times of difficulty. This individual may view himself or herself as a spiritual person, a religious person, or both. He or she



does things in life to be spiritual such as meditation, prayer, spiritual contemplation, attending religious services, or communing with nature. When at his or her best with this strength, this individual is accepting and open-minded, and the centredness that often comes with spirituality can be both reassuring and uplifting to others.

Exploring the strength of Spirituality

- What positive role (relationships, health, achievement, community involvement) does spirituality play in this individual's life?
- How does this individual define spirituality for himself or herself?
- How is spirituality related to this individual's religious practice?
- How does spirituality impact relationships with others?
- What role does spirituality play during challenging times in life?
- To what extent does this individual feel that there is one true way to be spiritual for all people as opposed to people finding their own ways?
- Do the beliefs and behaviours that are the expressions of this individual's spirituality cause problems in life, e.g., in relationships, at work, or elsewhere in life?

Resources

- ▣ [Eight reasons why awe makes your life better](#)
- ▣ [The science of awe](#)
- ▣ [Virtuous activities of the soul](#)
- ▣ [What awe looks like in your brain](#)
- ▣ [Six ways to incorporate awe into your daily life](#)
- ▣ [Three Ways to See Meaning in Your Life](#)
- ▣ [Awe may help us through the tough times](#)
- ▣ [Can gratitude make your job more meaningful?](#)

Underuse of Spirituality

This character strength has to do with seeing oneself and one's life in the context of the big picture of nature. One's spiritual awareness can sometimes slip to the sidelines in the ordinary course of living one's life. Routine and mundane activities often do not evoke spirituality. People high in spirituality understand what cues and contexts do evoke their sense of spirituality, and inserting those cues (nature, meditation, quiet, music, liturgy, etc.) can help when spirituality is being underused. Similarly, spirituality may be lost in the heat



of interpersonal conflict and the hot emotions that accompany such conflict. Cooling off the emotional intensity can help make room for spirituality.

There are seemingly infinite pathways for expressing this strength, both formally and informally. Thus, each individual will need to evaluate within themselves whether they feel they are finding meaning in life and/or connecting outside themselves in a way that leads them to feel fulfilled and spiritually nourished or not. Oftentimes, when an individual is underplaying or not observing the role of meaning and purpose in their life, they are left feeling disconnected and disengaged with the world around them.

Do it more!

- Consider who might be “a wise, spiritual role model.” Researchers describe this as taking an approach of “observational spiritual learning.” The model could be someone from a book or movie, someone in the public eye, or a person in one’s life. Reflect on how this person has conducted their life in a way that is spiritually-driven and meaning-filled.
- Searching for meaning in small tasks – When I write my to-do list each morning(cue), then I’ll notice any tasks I’m dreading and ask myself “why does this matter” and “who will benefit” until I find the purpose in small things (routine). To celebrate I’ll have my coffee (reward).
- Spend some time every day in at least one activity that connects you with the universe or something “greater” than yourself.
- Spend 10 minutes daily in contemplation, prayer, or meditation.
- Read a spiritual or religious book every day for half an hour.
- Look for “the sacred” in everyday experiences, particularly in the environment; seek out any moment as an opportunity to discover the sacred, the meaningful, or holy.
- Learn from a spiritual role model.

Do it better!

Spirituality when overexposed can lead to a diffusion of responsibility in deference to believing that a higher power is making all the important determinations. Sometimes this can lead to a person being seen as fanatical or on the fringe since relating so much to the spiritual realm can remove one from having both feet planted squarely in the physical realm where most others dwell. It can also cause one to be seen as self- righteous, as if that person considers himself or herself better than others. It is important to be mindful of the impact of this strength on one’s close relationships.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Strong spirituality can be balanced with humility - recognizing that there are many ways to express spirituality and that each person has their own views. Your social intelligence can help you empathize and understand others' views and your love can help you connect with others through meaning and humanity.



Teamwork

Teamwork [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share

Teamwork is defined as a sense of duty to the groups of which one is a member. The virtue of justice includes character strengths that are broadly interpersonal and relevant to the optimal interaction between the individual and the group or community. People high in teamwork have a sense of identification and obligation that stretches beyond them to include family, friends, co-workers, neighbours, etc. Such people work for the good of the group, rather than for personal gain, are loyal to friends and can be trusted to pull their own weight. They have a strong sense of duty. Satisfaction comes from contributing to the group, not by disparaging other groups. These individuals are admired for their ability to meld their energies with others towards a common goal. They are not likely to be blindly obedient, but rather exercise informed judgment in the interests of the whole.

My responsibility is getting all my players playing for the name on the front of the jersey, not the one on the back.

Unknown

What the benefits of this strength?

- Those high in teamwork elicit and experience a higher level of social trust and have a more positive view of others.
- Teamwork fosters a feeling of connectedness and enhances meaning through shared purpose.
- Teamwork contributes to feeling engaged in work, developing high-quality connections with others, and being creatively involved in the group process.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself as a team player and thrives in working as a group member, even more than working alone. This person feels a sense of duty to the groups he or she is part of and works hard for the betterment of the group rather than personal gain. This person supports the group and respects the leaders. He or she enjoys the harmony of the greater group or community. The strength of teamwork helps this individual to feel connected to others and builds a mutual confidence within the group that more can be accomplished when everyone contributes.

Exploring the strength of Teamwork

- What is most gratifying about being part of a team?
- What is most challenging about being part of a team?



- Are there circumstances in which working alone is preferred to working in a group? How does this individual feel and act when carrying more than his or her fair share of the weight?
- How are individual needs for recognition and appreciation achieved when one is part of a team effort?
- Does teamwork extend into this person's personal life, e.g., parenting, family, partner, friendship?

Resources

- ▣ [Is your team safe?](#)
- ▣ [How to bring your whole self to work](#)
- ▣ [Too many bad meetings? 20 tips for a healthier meeting culture](#)
- ▣ [How remote work affects communication and collaboration](#)
- ✦ [Building a psychologically safe workplace](#)
- ✦ [How to resolve conflict at work](#)
- ▣ [Power corrupts our instinct for cooperation](#)
- ▣ [Is stress making you withdraw from people?](#)
- ▣ [5 Things High-Performing Teams Do Differently](#)
- ▣ [Seven ways to improve your relationships with co-workers](#)
- ▣ [Why is it so hard to ask for help?](#)
- ▣ [Wanting to help others could make you happier at work](#)
- ▣ [How to Stop the Pain of Wishing People Were Different](#)
- ▣ [How to foster multigenerational friendships at work](#)

Underuse of Teamwork

A common cause for people underusing the strength of teamwork is when completion of a task can be accomplished in a more time-efficient manner by doing it alone. In fact, at the centre of the word “collaborate” is the word “labor” – meaning it often takes more effort to work with others than to do something by oneself. Teamwork can also be underplayed when one loses confidence in the competence and trustworthiness of one's team members. It may be that confidence can be restored by team members working together to learn about each others' strengths and what they can look to each other for when allocating various tasks and responsibilities.

There may be instances in which working independently may be counterproductive and it would be helpful to work in concert with a team. No matter how talented any one individual is, it is important to find value in the strengths of other team members and to



find ways where mutually high strengths work together and differing strengths might complement one another.

Do it more!

- In order to become a better team member, it is important to notice and express positive emotions (e.g., gratitude, joy, humour, hope) to other team members. In addition, it's important to take an open-minded and curious stance in understanding others' points of view as opposed to just advocating for one's own.
- Valuing loyalty – When I turn on my computer (cue), then I'll do one ten minute favour for one of my team members – like sharing an article, connecting them to someone, or sending some feedback (routine). Then I'll tick it off my to-do list (reward).
- Volunteer weekly for a community service project in your town.
- Validate the successes and acknowledge the character strengths of others on your team.
- Write about ways you use teamwork in your work or pursuit of pleasure.
- Examine an event from your past where you used teamwork to your benefit and the benefit of others.
- Participate in service learning programs (working with others for social good) that show positive outcomes such as increased tolerance, trust, or commitments to equal opportunity and cultural diversity.

Do it better!

When teamwork is overplayed, it can lead to discomfort and over dependence on others. This can detract from relationships and can impede progress. When an individual puts too much emphasis on teamwork he or she loses sight of the value of his or her own contributions and the value of working independently on behalf of the group. There are situations for virtually any team in which working independently adds to progress made by the group (e.g., personal training on a topic, doing independent research to bring back to the team, etc.). It is important to keep a broad view to balance the efficacy of the group with personal goals and achievement.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Use judgment to assess what support you need from others. Use your curiosity to find out what support they want from you. In addition, use your social intelligence to explore the character strengths, talents, skills, and passions of the people on your "team" to see what they already bring to the table and how you can help.



Zest

Zest [vitality, enthusiasm, vigour, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and Activated

Zest is approaching life with excitement and energy, not doing things halfway or halfheartedly, and living life as an adventure. It is strongly associated with happiness and life satisfaction, and it is the strength that most characterises people who love their work and regard it as a “calling” in their life. Zest is as much a property of the body as it is of the mind. It refers to a feeling of being alive, full of energy, and displaying enthusiasm for any and all activities. Zest is not nervous energy or hyperactivity. Zest at its deepest level refers to feeling alive. Vitality, one of the synonyms of zest, is derived from the Latin word *vita*, meaning life. Independent of health status, people with zest feel physically well and psychologically content. They experience meaning and purpose rather than feeling lost, disconnected, or aimless.

What are the benefits of this strength?

- People with zest are likely to view their work as a “calling” in life, in that work is deeply fulfilling, meaningful, and purposeful.
- Zest is strongly connected with happiness and well-being through heightened pleasure, engagement, and meaning across life domains.
- Zest draws other people in, providing opportunities for developing fun and meaningful relationships.
- Zest allows for a fuller expression of abilities, skills, and talents.
- Zest can activate inspiration, motivating people to undertake and complete new projects.

What does this mean about the individual?

This individual sees himself or herself approaching life with excitement and energy. He or she looks forward to each new day and can't wait to get started. This person fully participates in life and does not view it from the sidelines. His or her enthusiasm is contagious and people want to be around this individual. Life is lived courageously as an adventure, and never halfway or halfheartedly. When at his or her best using zest, this individual's enthusiasm for living is expressed in a balanced way that creates happiness with others and builds meaningful relationships.

Exploring the strength of Zest

- What conditions (people, places, activities) bring out this individual's zest?
- What conditions put a damper on enthusiasm or zest?



- How does zest cause positive things to happen in this person's life?
- How does zest lead this person, if at all, in directions that he or she later regrets?
- Good health habits (e.g., healthy nutrition, exercise, and sleep) set the stage for zest but are not themselves sufficient. How do these health habits influence zest?
- How does the energy level of others influence the expression of this person's enthusiasm or zest?
- Zest is well described as a value-added strength, meaning that its moral nature is best revealed when it is combined with other signature strengths. Which strengths might combine best with zest?

Resources

- ▀ [The contagion effect - why you should look after yourself](#)
- ▀ [Ways to weave self care into your workday](#)
- ▀ [The link between leadership and well being](#)
- ▀ [Theres a proven link between effective leadership and getting enough sleep](#)

Underuse of Zest

One's zest can wane under certain circumstances, some more controllable than others. For example, when fatigued or sick one's zest can be diminished, and anything one can do to stay healthy and rested can improve zest when it otherwise would be compromised. Scheduling activities when one is more energetic and feeling well can elevate zest. Also, certain people and circumstances can interfere with the feeling of zest – e.g., being around negative and critical people. Minimising one's exposure to energy-sapping experiences and people can be one solution, while staying focused internally on one's own interests, values, and motivations can keep zest alive in the face of opposing forces.

Underusing zest refers to situations in which expressing zest would likely result in positive outcomes for the individual or group and for some reason the individual is missing the opportunity. Individuals can examine their days and ascertain how much they activated themselves in their work, play, and interactions and whether they felt that it was optimal considering the context. Note that zest can be expressed when sedentary as well, e.g., the typing of an enthusiastic email.

Do it more!

- Building zest involves increasing energy. While being mindful of what is manageable per one's physical health status, find ways to increase daily movement, exercise, or activities to engage in. Wearing a pedometer is one way to measure activity and self-motivate toward increases in activity level. The first step is to get a baseline of the average amount of steps taken daily and then slowly work on incremental increases each week.



- Being well – When I wake up each morning (cue), I'll spend ten minutes walking the dog (routine). I'll reward myself with breakfast (reward).
- Do something that you already do, but with more energy and vigour.
- Exercise at least two times a week and notice how it affects your energy level. Or, get a pedometer and increase the number of steps you take each week.
- Think of ways to make an assignment or task exciting and engaging before you undertake it.

Do it better!

While many people are drawn towards individuals high in this strength, the energy, when constant and strong, can become overbearing to people. It may lead individuals to shut down when around the highly zestful individual or to avoid the person. It is important to be tolerant and accepting of others who are not as excited and energetic.

Dial up other strengths to do it better!

Self-regulation can be helpful in reining in excessive energy, and social intelligence will assist one in keeping a good read on the context and impact on others.

simply

The work we do has its roots in positive psychology. The tools and techniques that have been developed from this research are simple to come to grips with and resonate strongly with managers and staff. Despite being simple, they are well-researched and have substantial empirical backing showing impact on engagement, innovation, collaboration, happiness, resilience and individual wellbeing.

better

Put simply, our focus is on making things better. Our approach to working with individuals and organisations has demonstrable and positive impacts on the way things work - making people more effective in their leadership, and organisations more innovative, customer focused, safer and productive. We relish the opportunity to see people and organisations develop to their full potential.



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