

STRENGTHS SPOTTING – WORKSHEET

OVERVIEW

In this activity, you'll engage in strengths-spotting of your work colleagues.

Strengths-spotting—observing and celebrating others' strengths—can make people feel recognized, valued, and accepted for who they are and affirm that their unique contributions are noticed, invited, and appreciated (Niemiec, 2018).

Research shows, however, that two-thirds of people are unaware of their strengths. They are disconnected from important aspects of their personal identity that, if consciously recognized and intentionally expressed, could benefit their work experience. Hundreds of studies have found that, when we consciously use characters strengths more and in new ways at work, we have more positive work experiences—including engagement, well-being, job satisfaction, and the experience of meaningfulness (Niemiec & Pearce, 2021).

Chances are good that some of your work colleagues are, in some ways, blind to their strengths. By spotting and expressing appreciation for their strengths, you may enable them to discover new parts of themselves and improve their work experience. Character strengths-spotting gives you an everyday opportunity to connect with others by validating qualities that make them feel special (Niemiec, 2018).

A list of VIA strengths—an evidence-based collection of character strengths—is provided in the chart below. This list is a good place to begin developing a common language around strengths. However, strengths-spotting can involve any type of strength you observe.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Observe:** Throughout the workday, mindfully observe the positive ways that colleagues contribute to you, the group, and/or the organization and which strengths they're displaying.
2. **Label:** Name the strengths that you notice. What do you observe? Labeling strengths in a consistent way can help develop a common language of strengths in your workplace or on your specific team.
3. **Explain:** Give an explanation for your observation. What were they doing when you noticed the strength? Elaborating in this way gives them an opportunity to think about their behavior in a new, positive way.
4. **Appreciate:** Express appreciation/affirmation. Why do you value that strengths expression? Expressing appreciation can deepen the experience, allowing the person to see and feel that their strengths matter—that *they* matter (Niemiec, 2018).

VIA CLASSIFICATION OF CHARACTER STRENGTHS & VIRTUES

VIRTUE OF WISDOM/INTELLECT	
Creativity	Original, adaptive, thinking of new ways to conceptualize and do things.
Curiosity	Taking an interest, discovering, exploring, openness to experience.
Judgment	Critical thinking, examining things from all sides, not jumping to conclusions.
Love of Learning	Mastering new skills and topics, adding to knowledge.
Perspective	Able to provide wise counsel to others, taking a big picture view.
VIRTUE OF HUMANITY	
Kindness	Doing favors and good deeds, helping, generosity, caring for others, compassion.
Love	Valuing close relationships, being close to people.
Social Intelligence	Being aware of motives/feelings of others and self, adaptable in social situations.
VIRTUE OF COURAGE	
Bravery	Not shrinking from threat, challenge, or difficulty; speaking up for what's right.
Honesty	Speaking truthfully, authenticity, lack of pretense, integrity.
Perseverance	Persistence, finishing what you start, overcoming obstacles.
Zest	Approach life with excitement and energy, full-heartedness.
VIRTUE OF JUSTICE	
Fairness	Treating people fairly and without bias, equal opportunity for all.
Leadership	Organizing activities and ensuring they happen, positively influencing others.
Teamwork	Citizenship, social responsibility, loyal, contributing fair share to group effort.
VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE	
Forgiveness	Forgiving wrongs, giving people a second change, accepting others' shortcomings.
Humility	Not regarding oneself as special, letting accomplishments speak for themselves.
Prudence	Being careful in choices, not taking undue risks.
Self-Regulation	Self-control, being disciplined, controlling emotions and appetites.
VIRTUE OF TRANSCENDENCE	
Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence	Notice and appreciate beauty, excellence, and skilled performance.
Gratitude	Being aware of and thankful for good things that happen, expressing thanks.
Hope	Optimism, expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it.
Humor	Playfulness, liking to laugh and bring smiles to others, light-hearted.
Spirituality	Connecting with the sacred, purpose, meaning, faith, religiousness.

References

Niemiec, R. (2018). *Character strengths interventions: A field guide*. Boston, MA: Hogrefe Pubg.

WHEEL OF LIFE – WORKSHEET

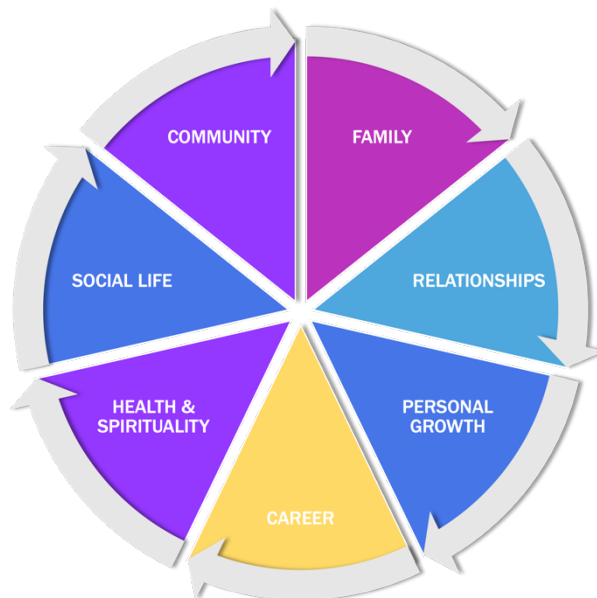
OVERVIEW

In this activity, you'll use your character strengths more and in new ways to make progress on goals in a valued life area to which you want to devote more attention.

Hundreds of studies have found that, when we consciously use characters strengths more and in new ways at work, we have more positive work experiences—including engagement, well-being, job satisfaction, and the experience of meaningfulness (Niemic & Pearce, 2021). Similar positive effects flow from strengths-use in our nonwork lives. In either domain, character strengths can be the goal itself (e.g., striving to build strengths of gratitude, kindness, or creativity) or can be the pathway for reaching a goal (e.g., using the strength of curiosity to develop relationships at work).

Many busy professionals struggle to prioritize all life areas that they value. Life areas that many people value include: family, relationships, personal growth, career, health, spirituality, social life, and community involvement. Goals focused on such values can be described as *self-concordant*—i.e., in alignment with our personal interests, values, talents, needs, and motives.

Research shows that progress on such goals (compared to personally-misaligned goals) more powerfully supports our mental health and well-being and aids our ability to persist in the face of obstacles (Sheldon, 2014). Goals based on intrinsic values—e.g., personal growth, health, self-acceptance, being fulfilled, meaningfulness in life and work, close and caring relationships, contributing to the community—are especially beneficial.



INSTRUCTIONS

- Pick An Area:** First, pick a life area that you value that you want to focus on over the upcoming month—e.g., family, relationships, personal growth, career, health, spirituality, social life, and community involvement.
- Select Strengths:** Select 1-3 strength(s) that you want to bring forth in the life area or that you want to use to help you achieve your goals in the area. Consider your signature strengths, happiness strengths, and other relevant strengths. A table of VIA character strengths is provided below. An asterisk appears by the “happiness strengths”—those that are most strongly associated with positive emotional experience. If you’d like to delve deeper, you can take the free [VIA assessment here](#). You can use [this worksheet](#) to help analyze your results.
- Create Goals:** Create two or three goals for using your strengths in your selected life area. For example, identify the specific situation(s) and person(s) on which you’ll focus. We’re more likely to achieve behavior change when we create specific goals and experience some “quick

wins” to fuel our motivation with positive energy. Also consider how you’ll measure progress on your goal.

- Pre-Plan to Overcome Obstacles.** Think about obstacles that you may encounter while working on your goals. Write down specific ways to minimize or overcome those barriers. How can you use your strengths (VIA or otherwise!) to help?

VIA CLASSIFICATION OF CHARACTER STRENGTHS & VIRTUES

VIRTUE OF WISDOM/INTELLECT	
Creativity	Original, adaptive, thinking of new ways to conceptualize and do things.
Curiosity*	Taking an interest, discovering, exploring, openness to experience.
Judgment	Critical thinking, examining things from all sides, not jumping to conclusions.
Love of Learning	Mastering new skills and topics, adding to knowledge.
Perspective	Able to provide wise counsel to others, taking a big picture view.
VIRTUE OF HUMANITY	
Kindness	Doing favors and good deeds, helping, generosity, caring for others, compassion.
Love*	Valuing close relationships, being close to people.
Social Intelligence	Being aware of motives/feelings of others and self, adaptable in social situations.
VIRTUE OF COURAGE	
Bravery	Not shrinking from threat, challenge, or difficulty; speaking up for what’s right.
Honesty	Speaking truthfully, lack of pretense, integrity, authenticity.
Perseverance	Persistence, finishing what you start, overcoming obstacles.
Zest*	Approach life with excitement and energy, full-heartedness.
VIRTUE OF JUSTICE	
Fairness	Treating people fairly and without bias, equal opportunity for all.
Leadership	Organizing activities and ensuring they happen, positively influencing others.
Teamwork	Citizenship, social responsibility, loyal, contributing fair share to group effort.
VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE	
Forgiveness	Forgiving wrongs, giving people a second change, accepting others’ shortcomings.
Humility	Not regarding oneself as special, letting accomplishments speak for themselves.
Prudence	Being careful in choices, not taking undue risks.
Self-Regulation	Self-control, being disciplined, controlling emotions and appetites.
VIRTUE OF TRANSCENDENCE	
Appreciate Beauty & Excellence	Notice and appreciate beauty, excellence, and skilled performance.
Gratitude*	Being aware of and thankful for good things that happen, expressing thanks.
Hope*	Optimism, expecting the best in the future and working creatively to achieve it.
Humor	Playfulness, liking to laugh and bring smiles to others, light-hearted.
Spirituality	Connecting with the sacred, purpose, meaning, faith, religiousness.

References

Niemiec, R. M., & Pearce, R. (2021). The practice of character strengths: Unifying definitions, principles, and exploration of what's soaring, emerging, and ripe with potential in science and in practice. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 1-16.

Sheldon, K. M. (2014). Becoming oneself: The central role of self-concordant goal selection. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 18*, 349-365.

STRENGTHS ALIGNMENT – WORKSHEET

OVERVIEW

In this activity, you'll use your character strengths more and in new ways during some of your everyday work activities to make them more meaningful or enjoyable.

Hundreds of studies have found that, when we consciously use characters strengths more and in new ways at work, we have more positive work experiences—including engagement, well-being, job satisfaction, and the experience of meaningfulness (Niemiec & Pearce, 2021). Character strengths can be the goal itself (e.g., striving to build strengths of gratitude, kindness, or creativity) or can be the pathway for reaching a goal (e.g., using the strength of curiosity to develop relationships at work). We can use character strengths as a pathway to make progress on meaningful goals in all areas of our lives.

INSTRUCTIONS

- Pick Work Activities:** First, pick 2-3 activities that you do every day at work (e.g., team calls, advising clients, research, etc.) and think about the objectives you're trying to accomplish during those activities.
- Select Strengths:** Select 1-3 strength(s) that you want to bring forward more or in new ways during your selected activities to achieve your objectives. Consider your signatures strengths, happiness strengths, and other relevant strengths. A table of VIA character strengths is provided below. An asterisk appears by the "happiness strengths"—those that are most strongly associated with positive emotional experience. If you'd like to delve deeper, you can take the free [VIA assessment here](#). You can use [this worksheet](#) to help analyze your results.
- Create Goals:** Create two or three goals for using your strengths in your selected activities. For example, identify the specific situation(s) and person(s) on which you'll focus. We're more likely to achieve behavior change when we create specific goals. Also consider how you'll measure progress on your goal.
- Pre-Plan to Overcome Obstacles.** Think about obstacles that you may encounter while working on your goals. Write down specific ways to minimize or overcome those barriers. How can you use your strengths (VIA or otherwise!) to help?

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Sheldon, K. M. (2014). Becoming oneself: The central role of self-concordant goal selection. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 18*, 349-365.

About The Author

Dr. Anne Brafford, JD, MAPP, PhD, is the owner of [Aspire](#), an education and consulting firm for the legal profession. Previously a partner at Morgan Lewis, Anne now focuses on individual and workplace thriving, including topics like positive leadership, workplace well-being, work engagement, motivation, mental health, inclusion, and retention and advancement of women lawyers. Her aim is to help the legal profession build engaging workplaces where people and businesses can grow and succeed together. Her ABA-published book, [Positive Professionals](#), provides science-based guidance for increasing engagement in law firms. Anne has earned a PhD in positive organizational psychology and a Masters of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP). She is a co-founder of the Institute for Well-Being in Law and the creator of Well-Being Week in Law. Anne can be reached at abrafford@aspire.legal.