

Solve it With Strengths

Here are ideas for solving virtually any problem by using one of the 24 VIA Character Strengths.

Strengths of Wisdom and Knowledge

Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge

Creativity [originality, ingenuity]: You are able to apply your imagination in new and surprising ways in order to solve the problems you encounter.

- Think of three different ways to tackle your challenge, complete your assignment or accomplish your goal.
- When you experience mental block, do something creative that you enjoy. It will help open your mind and generate new ideas.

Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: You take an interest in on-going experience for its own sake, find various topics fascinating, and enjoy exploring and discovering.

- Google is possibly your favorite tool. Look up different ways to tackle a problem.
- Ask others what they'd do in your position to get a range of ideas. Then choose the one that suits you best.

Love of Learning: You enjoy mastering new skills, topics and bodies of knowledge, whether on your own or formally. This is related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe your tendency to add systematically to what you know.

- Think of your challenge as a research project and gather all the information you need to move forward.
- If you have a favorite teacher or mentor, ask him or her for advice.

Open-mindedness [judgment; critical thinking]: You like to think things through and examine them from all sides, don't jump to conclusions, are able to change your mind in light of new evidence, and weigh all evidence fairly.

- When you're stressed about a situation, pause and imagine other points of view.
- Think of the ways you handled this kind of challenge in the past. What did you learn from those experiences that could help you now?

Perspective [wisdom]: People think you are wise and often come to you for advice. You are aware of broad patterns of meaning in your own life, and you have ways of looking at the world that make sense to yourself and others.

- Think about how you would advise someone else to handle the same situation.
- Take the big-picture view: think of what's really important, and focus on that.

Strengths of Courage

Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, either external or internal

Bravery [valor]: You do not shrink from threat, challenge, difficulty or pain; you speak up for what's right even if there's opposition; you act on your convictions even if they are unpopular. You may also be physically brave.

- You place a high importance on a higher purpose. Imagine the higher purpose that will be served if you face your challenges bravely.
- If you are confronting a situation in which you would normally be shy or afraid, muster your courage by taking a deep breath, standing up tall and telling yourself to be brave.

Perseverance [persistence, industriousness]: You have the mental strength necessary to continue striving for your goals in the face of obstacles and setbacks. You finish what you start and enjoy the feeling of finishing things.

- When faced with a big challenge, break it into smaller mini-goals and focus on completing one thing at a time.
- It's possible that your perseverance leads you to work too hard, and this can cause stress and anxiety. Give yourself a break now and then and do something fun, healthy or social.

Honesty [authenticity, integrity]: You speak the truth and present yourself in a genuine, authentic way, and take responsibility for your own feelings and actions.

- When faced with a challenge, speak up. Your honesty will help you express the need for help, understanding, more time to complete a project, additional resources, etc.
- If you find yourself in a challenging group situation, you may find it natural to step up and speak on behalf of the group, or say things the others might find difficult to say.

Zest [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: You are active and enthusiastic and live life as an adventure to be approached whole-heartedly. You enjoy being energetic and lively and can even infuse others with your excitement.

- When you feel stressed, burn off some of your energy with an activity you enjoy. Be sure to rest and recharge your batteries occasionally.
- If you are in a group that is facing a challenge together, you can be the one who encourages everyone to focus on a solution and helps them stay energized.

Strengths of Temperance

Strengths that protect against various types of excess

Forgiveness [mercy]: You forgive those who do wrong or offend you, and give people a second chance. You accept their shortcomings and do not hold a grudge or behave vengefully.

- If you're having a tough time with other people, focus on their positive qualities.
- If you are part of a group where conflict exists, you may be able to help the other parties be more forgiving and accepting of each other.

Humility [modesty]: You let your accomplishments speak for themselves and avoid the spotlight. You do not necessarily have low self-esteem, you just do not regard yourself as better than others.

- If you feel you might be in the wrong, admit it and apologise.
- If you're feeling pressured to perform perfectly, remember that you're only human and no one is perfect – but you can still be successful and happy.

Prudence: You have a clear idea of your future goals and are able to make sensible choices about your short-term actions in pursuit of those goals. You can manage your behavior so that you do not end up regretting what you say or do.

- When you're feeling stressed about what you have to do, remind yourself of the long-term goal you're trying to achieve by doing it.
- Although you tend to think about the future, don't forget to relax and enjoy yourself in the present, too.

Self-Regulation [self-control]: You are self-disciplined and can control instinctive actions such as aggression and impulsivity in order to achieve goals or meet standards. This strength can apply both to resisting temptations, such as when a dieter avoids sugary foods, and to initiating actions, such as when someone gets up early to exercise.

- In times of stress, just focus on what needs to be done and do it.
- Reward yourself now and then for doing a good job. You are not a machine.

Strengths of Humanity

Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others

Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”]: You enjoy doing favors and good deeds for others, helping them and taking care of them.

- When life gets hectic, do a small favour for someone or get involved in a worthy cause.
- Don't forget to show a little kindness to yourself, too. Do something you enjoy or that helps you relax and recharge.

Love (capacity to love and be loved): You value close relations with others, especially when the sharing and caring go both ways. You are also able to express how you feel to those you love.

- When you're feeling stressed and pressured, spend some time with someone you love.
- If you're experiencing difficulty in a relationship, try to focus on that person's positive qualities.

Social Intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: You are aware of others' emotions and intentions, as well as your own. No matter the situation, you attempt to make everyone feel comfortable and valued.

- You probably have good friendships. When times are tough, spend time with someone who helps you relax or who can help you meet your challenges.
- Use your knowledge of yourself to help motivate and direct your thoughts and actions.

Strengths of Justice

Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life

Teamwork [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: You work well as a member of a group or team. You are loyal to organizations to which you belong and do your share.

- When faced with a challenge, rally a group of people to help you face it together.
- Ask friends or family members if they would like to partner with you to achieve common goals.

Fairness: You treat everyone according to universal ideals of equality and justice. You give everyone a fair chance and do not let your personal feelings bias your decisions about others.

- In interpersonal challenges, try to see the other person's point of view.
- Make sure you're being treated fairly, too. If you're struggling with a situation in which fairness is lacking, speak up in favor of fairness all around.

Leadership: You are able to motivate, direct and coordinate the members of a group to achieve a common goal. Although leaders assume a dominant role in social interaction, effective leadership requires listening to the opinions and feelings of other group members as much as it involves active direction.

- Where a group is struggling to focus and get things done, offer to take on some of the leadership responsibility.
- Organize something fun to help everyone blow off some steam.

Strengths of Transcendence

Strengths that forge connections to the universe and provide meaning

Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]: You feel a sense of awe at the scenes and behaviors around you, and find beauty in almost every area of life, from nature and arts to the skills and talents of other people. You experience satisfaction and richness in everyday experiences.

- When life gets crazy, stop and smell the roses. Appreciate the sights, sounds, tastes, touch and smells of the world around you.
- If you're struggling with someone else, imagine that person at his or her best.

Gratitude: You are aware of and thankful for the good things that happen, and take time to express thanks.

- Counting your blessings is a great way to counteract stress and pressure. Scientists have said it is impossible to feel fear and gratitude at the same time – so go for gratitude.
- If you're working in a group, help others see that there are things to be thankful for.

Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: You expect the best in the future and work to achieve it, believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.

- When you feel stressed, imagine how things could be better – and then ask how you can help make that happen.
- Mentally rehearse for your next anticipated challenge. How can you draw on past experience to handle the next one better?

Humor [playfulness]: You like to laugh and tease and bring smiles to other people. You see the light side of situations and can find something funny in almost anything.

- Laughter is a wonderful antidote to stress. Watch a funny show or YouTube video, or spend time with a friend who also likes to laugh and enjoys your sense of humor.
- In a group, you can lighten the tension by commenting on the funny side of things. Just be careful not to overdo it – too much humor can sometimes annoy certain people.

Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]: You have coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe and know where you fit within the larger scheme of things. Your beliefs guide your behavior and provide comfort to you.

- Prayer, meditation, journaling, attending a religious service – these are all ways you might find peace in times of stress.
- Keep the big picture in mind, and let that guide your behaviour.