



Strengths Building Activities

Ideas for authentic living



INTRODUCTION

When you exercise your “top strengths” you increase your well-being, positive mindset and resiliency. You can also grow your “lesser strengths,” making them important and powerful tools in your life. Here are activities that you can use to build any of your 24 VIA character strengths.

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Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence

Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and skills for example, in nature, art, mathematics, science, and in everyday experience.

- Go to a museum and pick out a piece of artwork or a display that has aesthetic value and touches you because of its beauty.
- Take a walk with a friend and comment on something pleasing to look at.
- Attend a concert and enjoy the sound for its musical value. Or pick music you enjoy and listen to it appreciatively each night. Or ask a friend to recommend the most beautiful music he or she enjoys.
- Keep a journal and record something nightly from your day that struck you as beautiful or skillful.
- Find something that is pleasing to you in aesthetics or value, such as a scene in nature, an object or a physical activity, and draw inspiration from it throughout the day.



Bravery

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.

- Introduce yourself to someone new.
- Stand up for someone you agree with, even if you are outnumbered by people with opposing views.
- Take action in a situation that you have been avoiding.
- Do one small thing daily that pulls you out of your comfort zone.
- Speak up for an unpopular idea you believe in.



Creativity, Ingenuity and Originality

Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things.

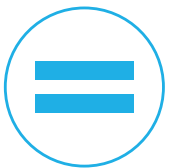
- Keep a journal, draw/paint a picture, or write a poem.
- Submit a piece to a literary magazine or newspaper.
- Decorate/change your work or living space into a new creative design.
- Find a new word each day and use it creatively.
- Change your profile on social media to reflect your creativity.



Curiosity

Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering.

- Ask questions (in meetings, with friends, at school, at work, etc.).
- Discover new places.
- Explore the stacks and/or tables in the library or bookstore. Pick a book or magazine that interests you and spend some time skimming it.
- Eat something new that you would not have tried otherwise.
- Go to a lecture or watch/listen to a speaker online about something you find fascinating.



Fairness

Treating all people fairly and with justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.

- Allow someone to speak their peace while keeping an open mind and not passing judgment.
- Stay impartial in an argument between friends despite your beliefs—help mediate for a peaceful resolution by encouraging each person to be fair with one-another.
- Notice when you treat someone based on a stereotype or pre-conception; resolve not to do it again.
- Resolve daily to treat others the way you would want to be treated.



Forgiveness

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

- Think of someone that you found hard to forgive. Try to see the situation from their perspective.
- Keep a journal of all the ways you forgive self and others. Only include positive statements of how you are forgiving, releasing, and letting go of past grievances.
- Make contact with someone who has upset you in the past. Let them know that you forgive them, or simply be kind to them so that they know you have let it go.
- When someone does something that you do not understand, try to understand his/her best intentions rather than fixating on their actions.
- Give people the “benefit of the doubt” by being slow to judge and quick to forgive.



Gratitude

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

- Each morning before stepping out of bed, make a mental note of 3 things you are grateful for and that you will appreciate that day.
- Every day, thank someone for something that you might otherwise take for granted (e.g., thanking the janitor who cleans a public building).
- Keep a record of the number of times you use the words “thank you” in a day. Over the course of a week, try to double the number of times that you say those words.
- Call or text a co-worker/partner/family member/friend each day and thank him/her for something you appreciate.
- Keep a journal, and each night, make a list of three or more things that you are truly thankful for. (Your list can be as basic as indoor plumbing, food, clothing, etc.).



Honesty

Speaking the truth; presenting oneself in a genuine way; acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.

- Refrain from telling small, white lies to others, including to yourself.
- Evaluate your values and actions and see if they align. Commit to taking action to be in alignment where needed.
- If you misrepresent the truth, admit it and apologize right away.
- At the end of each day, identify something you did that was attempting to impress people, or to put on a show. Resolve not to do it again.
- If you do or say something not in accordance with your values, sincerely apologize and make a commitment to behave in accordance to your values going forward.



Hope

Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future can be achieved.

- Keep a journal, and every night, record a decision you made that day that impacted you positively.
- When you are in a bad situation, turn it around to see the optimistic side of it. You can almost always find some good in a situation, such as looking at the glass “half-full” instead of “half empty.”
- Create a daily, realistic goal. Note your success at the end of the day and remind yourself that you can continue to create consistent, small victories each day.
- Collect quotes about hope. Print those which you find meaningful and display them where you can view them often.
- When you notice the negative self-talk of your Inner Critic, counter it with positive self-talk and uplifting thoughts from your Inner Coach.



Humility

Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special.

- Don't talk about yourself at all for a full day.
- Don't post anything about yourself on social media for a week. Spend that week only commenting positively on others' posts.
- Find a way in which someone you know has a talent different than yours. Show appreciation to that person.
- Look for ways to compliment others rather than seeking compliments for yourself.
- Find ways to include other people in projects you would normally excel in and share the credit.



Humor

Liking to laugh and tease; making others smile and laugh; seeing the light side.

- Make a daily effort to make someone smile or laugh.
- Learn a joke and tell it to your friends.
- Watch something on TV or on a device that you find funny.
- When in a tense situation, look for the humor in it to lighten the mood.
- Learn a magic trick and perform it for your friends.



Judgment and Open-mindedness

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.

- Go to a multi-cultural event.
- Advocate for and discuss an issue from the side opposite to your personal views.
- Hang out with someone who is different from you in some way.
- Go to a different spiritual or religious setting from your own belief system.
- Pick something you believe and make a list of other perspectives.



Kindness

Doing favors and good deeds for others; taking care of them.

- Leave a large tip.
- Do a random act of kindness every day. Make it anonymous if possible.
- Be a listening ear to a friend. Ask them how their day was and actually listen to the answer before telling them about your own day.
- Send a kind text to a different friend/family member/colleague each day for a week.
- Pitch in with your time and resources to help someone in need (e.g., friend, family member, colleague, stranger).



Leadership

Encouraging your group to achieve while maintaining good relations; organizing and completing group activities.

- If leading a group, treat everyone with respect and express appreciation for their contributions.
- Organize a study group, get together, or team project.
- Lead by example—practice aligning your values, words and your actions daily.
- Volunteer to lead a group if given the opportunity.
- Find something you are passionate about and join an organization/group/club related to that passion. Be willing to lead in any way you are asked.



Love

Valuing close relations with others, especially when sharing and caring are reciprocated.

- Tell your partner/sibling/parent/friend that you love them.
- Send a loved one a message to say that you were thinking about him/her.
- Give a loved one a big hug.
- Write a nice note where someone you love will find it sometime during the day. Do this in a new place, or for a new person, every day.
- To increase your self-compassion and self-love: write down your top 5 strengths and post them, or read the *Authentic Strengths* book or blog.



Love of Learning

Mastering new skills, topics and bodies of knowledge; related to the strength of curiosity but, also includes the tendency to add systematically to what one knows.

- Discover one new place where you live every day.
- Ask a question to learn something new from a colleague or friend.
- Daily, read a chapter of a book on a topic that you want to know more about.
- Google a new topic you are interested in and learn more about it.
- Watch a TED Talk or listen to a podcast about something you find intriguing but haven't found the time to learn about.



Perseverance

Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; taking pleasure in completing tasks.

- Finish work ahead of time.
- Notice your inclination to procrastinate on a task that requires effort, and choose to complete the task.
- Plan ahead— use a calendar for projects and assignments.
- Set a STRONG Goal© and stick to it.
- In the morning, make a list of things that you want to get done that day that could be put off by rationalizing delays. Make sure to get them done that day.



Perspective

Ability to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people.

- Write down a new, meaningful quote each day.
- Consider teachings from wise leaders or wisdom literature before responding to a friend seeking advice.
- Think of the wisest person you know—note some of their strengths and try to incorporate them into your daily life.
- Look up inspiring people in history and learn their views on important issues of their day and/or find a significant quotation that they said.
- Reflect on your perspective on various topics and how to communicate your perspective in a way that makes sense to yourself and others.



Prudence

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

- During a conversation, think twice before saying anything. Weigh the probable effect of your words on others.
- Think about the motto “better safe than sorry” at least three times a day. Try to incorporate its meaning into your life.
- Before you decide to do something important, reflect on it for a moment and consider if you want to live with its consequences 1 hour, 1 day, or 1 year later.
- Always wear a seatbelt when traveling in a car, always wear a helmet when doing sports that recommend helmets, etc.
- Consider risks and rewards when making decisions.



Self-Regulation

Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one’s appetites and emotions.

- Clean or organize your living space. Every day, pick up whatever mess you made during the day.
- Make a resolution to not gossip. When you feel the urge to talk about someone, remember your resolution and stop yourself before you talk.
- Exercise four days each week (if you don’t already do this).
- In the evenings, make an agenda for the following day. Stick to that agenda.
- For one week, choose to eat only healthy food.



Social Intelligence

Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing how to adapt to social situations.

- Meet one new person each day by introducing yourself or interacting in some way.
- Go into a new social situation and try to participate.
- Develop your self-awareness by reflecting on what motivates your behavior.
- Whenever you talk with someone, seek to understand how they see the world differently than you.
- When you encounter someone eating alone or doing an activity alone, be friendly and invite them into your group.



Spirituality

Believing in a 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.

- For five minutes a day, relax and think about the purpose of life, and where you fit in.
- Reflect on the things you can do to improve the world or your community and make a list that you will work to accomplish.
- Explore different religions in a respectful manner. You can do this by going to a library, looking on the Internet, or asking your friends about their religions.
- Invest in a book of affirmations or optimistic quotes. Read a few every day.
- Spend a few minutes a day in meditation or prayer.



Teamwork

Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.

- Volunteer.
- Take on added responsibility within an organization you are already a part of.
- Pick up litter that you see on the ground.
- Clean an area of your home which is used by all.
- Organize a get together for a group of your friends, family or colleagues.
- Do your share in a group/team project.



Zest

Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated.

- Go out of your way to become more involved and enthusiastic in a cause you support.
- Join a new club, sports team, or group you are excited about.
- Do something because you want to, not because you feel obligated to do it.
- Get a good night's sleep and eat healthfully to give yourself more energy during the day.
- Do something physically vigorous during the day.