

FINDING YOUR STRENGTHS

We all have inherent strengths that help us accomplish our goals or get us through difficulties. Identifying our own strengths can help us figure out how we best cope with adversity as well as what will bring us the greatest happiness and satisfaction in life.

Two well-known happiness researchers — Dr. Martin Seligman and Dr. Christopher Peterson studied nearly 100 cultures around the world and tested 150,000 subjects to figure out the strengths that consistently bring happiness and increase our resilience every time we use them. On concluding their study they were able to identify 24 different character strengths that met their criteria. They called these traits “Values in Action Strengths.”

Here’s the list they came up with: Creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning, perspective and wisdom, bravery, persistence, integrity, vitality, the ability to love and to be loved, kindness, social intelligence, active citizenship and teamwork, fairness, leadership, forgiveness and mercy, humility and modesty, prudence, self regulation and control, appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humor and playfulness, and spirituality.

I know — it’s sort of a long list to sort through but I guarantee that several of these are part of who you are. To a certain extent we probably all use each of these virtues at various times. But there is no doubt that we use some much more than others.

You might consider looking through the list and picking 5-7 of these traits that seem to describe you best. You can also take a scientifically validated strengths survey at:

<http://viacharacter.org/Survey>



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Once you have a list of your core strengths it is helpful to think about these characteristics on a daily basis. Research has shown that people who do so benefit in three specific ways:

- They are more successful. People that are reminded daily of their strengths experience more goal progress and achievement. People who list their strengths prior to making a goal are more likely to achieve it.
- They are happier. Studies have shown that listing character strengths is one of the most effective ways to improve overall well being.
- They are more able to cope with illness, disability, injury or other setbacks. People who contemplate their own strengths are able to feel more satisfied and be more productive even when faced with significant life or health challenges.

So find your strengths and then give yourself permission to dwell on them a little every day.