



# Character Strengths

Lesson workbook


Your companion guide

# Table of Contents

Lesson topic	Page
Before you jump in	4
Part 1. Why do strengths matter	5
Part 2. What are strengths; how do we identify them	7
Part 3. Using your strengths	13
A closer look at strengths	18
Personal action plan	43
References and suggested readings	44
Learn more with Zone Positive	45

## General instruction for watching all Zone Positive videos



The “Pause” button is here. If you don’t see this bar on your screen, roll your cursor over the lower left hand corner of your screen and the bar should reappear. Click on the Right Arrow  to resume watching the video.

**Important Note:** If you want to pause the video and go to another website, open a new window in your web browser. This will enable you to return to the video lesson and resume where you left off.

# Part 1: Why do strengths matter

## Key Points

**When we are able to use our strengths, we are satisfying our natural urges. We feel good about ourselves—we thrive and we feel invigorated. We perform better. We are more productive. We have greater contentment and satisfaction. There is a sense of accomplishment and meaning in our work and personal life.**

**By contrast, a continual focus on trying to fix weaknesses leaves us frustrated—suppressing our natural tendencies. This can lead to anger and becoming psychologically and physically drained. Overtime, these negative emotions can lead to depression.**

**As we learned in the Zone Positive lesson on Positive Emotions, a certain amount of negativity is part of the human condition and plays an important role in helping us function in life. However, it is a question of balance. Research suggests that positive emotions should be three times more present in your life than negative emotions.**

**Many people can not answer the question, “what are my strengths”. Becoming aware of your strengths and using them in your everyday life contributes to your overall happiness. By exercising strengths, people are more likely to experience positive emotions, to engage in valued activities, to achieve a sense of meaning and purpose in life, and to build positive relationships with other people. These experiences in turn lead to a more productive, satisfying and flourishing life. Using your strengths everyday is one of the most powerful ways to enhance your personal well-being-- in essence, moving you from doing “just OK” to actually thriving in your life.**

## Seminal Research from Park, Peterson and Seligman on Character Strengths, 2004

Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, Vol. 23, No. 5, 2004, pp. 603-619

### STRENGTHS OF CHARACTER AND WELL-BEING

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We investigated the relationship between various character strengths and life satisfaction among 5,299 adults from three Internet samples using the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths. Consistently and robustly associated with life satisfaction were hope, zest, gratitude, love, and curiosity. Only weakly associated with life satisfaction, in contrast, were modesty and the intellectual strengths of appreciation of beauty, creativity, judgment, and love of learning. In general, the relationship between character strengths and life satisfaction was monotonic, indicating that excess on any one character strength does not diminish life satisfaction.

*Positive psychology* is an umbrella term for theories and research about what makes life most worth living (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

# Part 1: Why do strengths matter

## Exercise 1: Answer the following questions

1. List 5 things that you enjoy doing– activities that make you feel energized and successful. These activities could be in any aspect of your life such as work, home etc.. Why did these items make the list?

What I like

Why I like

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. List 5 things that you don't particularly enjoy doing– perhaps because they make you feel drained and frustrated; why did these items make the list?

What I don't like

Why I don't like

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. What differences do you notice in the “why” column? What percentage of your time do you spend on the first list of items (likes)? How about on the second list of items (don't like)?

_____
_____
_____