

Values In Action (VIA) Classification of Character Strengths

CHARACTER STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES: A Handbook and Classification

By Christopher Peterson Martin E.P. Seligman

www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu

1. **Wisdom and Knowledge** – Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge
 - **Creativity** [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
 - **Curiosity** [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering
 - **Judgment & Open-Mindedness** [critical thinking]: 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
 - **Love of Learning**: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows
 - **Perspective** [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people

2. **Courage** – Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal
 - **Bravery** [valor]: 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 but is not limited to it
 - **Perseverance** [persistence, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; “getting it out the door”; taking pleasure in completing tasks
 - **Honesty** [authenticity, integrity]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions
 - **Zest** [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated

3. **Humanity** - Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others
 - **Capacity to Love and Be Loved**: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
 - **Kindness** [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
 - **Social Intelligence** [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick

4. **Justice** - Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life
- **Teamwork** [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
 - **Fairness**: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.
 - **Leadership**: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the time maintain time good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.
5. **Temperance** – Strengths that protect against excess
- **Forgiveness & Mercy**: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
 - **Modesty & Humility**: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
 - **Prudence**: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
 - **Self-Regulation** [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
6. **Transcendence** - Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning
- **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence** [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience
 - **Gratitude**: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks
 - **Hope** [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
 - **Humor** [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
 - **Religiousness & Spirituality** [faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the 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

My Top 5 Signature Strengths

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Take one of the signature strengths you have identified, and for the following week, use the strength in a new way every day. This is one of the methods systematically tested and shown to have long-term positive effects on happiness. **The critical ingredient is using the strengths in a new way. High achievers spend most of their time in their areas of strength.**