



## ACTIVITY: VIA CHARACTER STRENGTHS

The VIA Character Strengths are a list of 24 strengths that we all possess. Finding which strengths are our signature strengths – those which come most easily to us – can help us to find ways in which we can contribute to our communities and accompany our companions in our own journey. Knowing which strengths are our lesser strengths – those which require more effort or do not come as easily to us – can help us to seek others to help us and know situations in which we may need others' help. Remember: YOU HAVE ALL OF THESE STRENGTHS! Some may come more naturally to you than others, but they are all a part of who you are!

Review your survey results or, if you did not take the survey, look at the following list and identify five of the strengths that most describe you; strengths that come easily to you and are natural.

### STRENGTHS DESCRIPTIONS

1. **Love:** Valuing close relations with others, especially those in which sharing/caring are reciprocated; being close to people
2. **Kindness** [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, “niceness”]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
3. **Forgiveness:** Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
4. **Humility:** Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
5. **Gratitude:** Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks
6. **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
7. **Prudence:** Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
8. **Self-Regulation** [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
9. **Judgment** [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

10. **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
11. **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
12. **Humor** [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
13. **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
14. **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
15. **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
16. **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
17. **Creativity** [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
18. **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
19. **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
20. **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
21. **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

22. **Teamwork** [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
23. **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.
24. **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.

#### QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Consider the following questions and take some time to write your thoughts down:

1. What were my signature (top 5) strengths? Can I see the areas in my life where I am using these strengths to my fullest ability? What are things that I can do to improve these qualities that come more naturally for me?
2. What about strengths that do not come as easily to me? Would I be better at these things if you received support from others?
3. Are there strengths that I wish I could improve?
4. Which strengths can I share with others more?

## QUESTIONS FOR GROUP REFLECTION

Consider the following and discuss with the people around you:

1. Share your top strengths with your group. Are your strengths common among those around you? Which strengths to you seem surprising? Why do you think that is?

2. Do you think the strengths reflect the personalities of the ones who see them as their top strengths?

3. Does anyone in the group have strengths that you wish to grow in? Does anyone in your group want to grow in the strengths that you have?

4. How are these strengths part of your daily life?

5. How much have your strengths changed over the last couple of years? How do you think your strengths will shift for the next four years?

## CLOSING QUESTIONS

1. What struck you from today's retreat session?

2. How can you be more present to your community and those around you?

3. How can you take what you learned today and apply it to your daily life?

