

Use Your Strengths

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When the Gallop poll asked people “What percentage of a typical day do you spend playing to your strengths?” a disappointing 17% of the respondents reported “most of the time.” Martin Seligman, Chris Peterson and Marcus Buckingham have become leaders in the *Use Your Strengths* movement. Following in the foot-steps of personality inventories such as the Myers Briggs Indicator, the Clifton Strengths-Finder and Seligman’s Signature Strengths are quizzes that help you determine your key strengths.

You can access these inventories at <https://www.strengthsfinder.com/> and <http://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx>

For our purposes the definition of strengths is a combination of 1) innate **talent**, like thinking logically, plus 2) **skill** in how to use the logic to design a bridge and 3) **knowledge** or understanding of the materials and necessary structure to complete the task. All strengths can be developed.

However, when you have strong inherent **talents** related tasks are more easily accomplished. For example, if you are like me, you expend a great deal of energy and effort to think with logic and detachment. However thinking more randomly and creatively comes with ease. You can learn the **skill** of writing a pro and con decision list and access the **knowledge** needed to decide which item goes on the pro or con side. Yet for the creative or intuitive person this process requires more exertion.

Your strengths are demonstrated to others by your actions. When you demonstrate *honesty* you say what you mean, you make promises you can keep and you refuse to lie. We know people who show their honesty with ease and others who struggle. Sometimes we have to do damage control and develop certain qualities such as honesty for the sake of relationships.

All strengths can be improved yet we blossom when we build on the ones that are naturally strong. As Seligman says, “Building strength and virtue is not about learning, training or conditioning, but about discovery, creation and ownership.” Here’s an exercise to help you determine which strengths you presently demonstrate with ease.

Name That Strength

Look over the 49 strength words in the below grid. If an important strength is missing add it to the “Other” Box. Choose three strengths that seem a fit for you and then answer the below questions.

On a scale of 1-10, 1= strongly disagree and 10=strongly agree, write down your response to the following statements.

	Strength #1	Strength #2	Strength #3
1. I have had success demonstrating it.	___	___	___
2. I tell myself, “I’m good at this!”	___	___	___
3. Other people acknowledge it in me.	___	___	___
4. I volunteer for activities that require it.	___	___	___
5. It is easy for me to demonstrate.	___	___	___
6. I am in the zone or in flow when I use it.	___	___	___
7. Time flies by as if I am on <i>a high</i> .	___	___	___
8. I seek out opportunities to use it.	___	___	___
9. Using it feels like meaningful fun.	___	___	___
10. I feel stronger when I use it.	___	___	___
 Total out of 100:	 ___	 ___	 ___

Acceptance	Detachment	Honesty	Methodical-ability	Playfulness
Adaptability	Discernment	Independence	Modesty	Practicality
Analytical thinking	Discipline	Inclusiveness	Motivation	Purposefulness
Assertiveness	Empathy	Innovation	Objectiveness	Reliability
Cooperativeness	Enthusiasm	Intuition	Observance	Respectfulness
Courage	Emotional Smarts	Kindness	Optimism	Responsibility
Courtesy	Esthetic Smarts	Leadership-ability	Orderliness	Service Orientation
Creativity	Forgiveness	Logic	Passion	Social Smarts
Curiosity	Generosity	Love of Learning	Patience	Others:

Take charge. Arrange to use your strengths whenever possible. Notice your improved work satisfaction.

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