Assessing for Signature Strengths

With the rapidly growing field of positive psychology, we are learning that when it comes to personal growth and healing, we can often accomplish more, faster by focusing on our strengths rather than focusing on our weaknesses. The first step is to be aware of what our strengths are.

Two positive psychology researchers* wanted to know what strengths were deemed desirable by nearly every society around the world. They set about reading all the major religious and philosophical writings available to them. It took them more than five years to identify 24 strengths that met their criteria.

In further research, they discovered that certain character strengths were learned and some were innate and had a profound effect on a person's life experience.

The innate strengths are called Signature Strengths. They seem to be with us all our lives whether we are aware of them or using them or not. Everyone has Signature Strengths-no matter how lost a person may be. It appears that most people have between three and seven; some are usually employed more than others. Many people experience profound changes in their measurable levels of happiness first by discovering what their Signature Strengths are, then learning to use them more in their daily lives. Try it for yourself.

Values in Action Signature Strengths Survey

The Signature Strengths Survey is a guide to help you identify those character strengths that most motivate, inspire and propel you through life -- even if you haven't used them often or even been aware of them until now. However, the survey results are not definitive. You are the only real authority on you.
You can take the survey as many times as you wish. The results can change some over time, however research has shown that your Signature Strengths will show up quite consistently.

1) Go to http://www.authentichappiness.org/Registration.html to register. The information you supply will only be used for scientific research and is confidential. *Write down your email address and password* so you can access this site again.

2) It will take about 45 minutes to complete the survey – there are 245 questions and the online program is not equipped to save the test for future completion. If a question doesn't apply to you, answer it as if it did. Consider your entire life, not just now. For the instrument to be most useful, realistic honesty and accuracy is essential.

3) After you have finished the survey and received your top 5 strengths (be patient while the site compiles the results), go to http://www.authentichappiness.org/all24/ , enter your email address and password again. It will give you the total results of your survey—all 24 strengths. ***Be sure to print it out.*** To differentiate between your strengths

(which can be learned strengths but not necessarily who you are) and Signature Strengths (which have been with you all your life and seem to come from your bones), consider your top 12 strengths. Ask yourself which strengths best correlate with the below criteria? The results are your Signature Strengths.

- A sense of ownership and authenticity (“This is the real me.”)
- Feelings of excitement while displaying it or seeing others display it.
- A rapid learning curve as the strength is first practiced.
- Continuous learning of new ways to enact the strength.
- A sense of yearning to find ways to use it.
- A feeling of inevitability in using the strength (“Try and stop me.”)
- Invigoration rather than exhaustion while using the strength.
- The creation and pursuit of personal projects that revolve around it.
- Joy, zest, enthusiasm, even ecstasy while using it.
- Overuse, or indiscriminate use, of the strength may have even gotten you in trouble at times.

Print your Signature Strengths on cards and place them where you can review them daily. By identifying your Signature Strengths and employing them frequently in as many ways as possible, you can significantly increase your life satisfaction and effectiveness. You can also use them as a balancing guide by noticing which strengths are overused and which are underused and then simply finding ways to employ the underused strengths more.

Focusing on your Signature Strengths is a simple, ongoing practice that can have a very positive, usually transformative, affect on your life. The possibilities are endless.
Let the adventure begin!