BECOMING HAPPIER : Using and Developing Signature Strengths

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I believe that people possess signature strengths akin to what Allport (1961) identified decades ago as personal traits. These are strengths of character that a person owns, celebrates, and frequently exercises. In our interviews with adults, we find that almost everyone can readily identify a handful of strengths very much their own, typically between two and five. Here are possible criteria for a signature strength (Peterson & Seligman, 2004):

- a sense of ownership and authenticity ("this is the real me") vis-a-vis the strength
- a feeling of excitement while displaying it, particularly at first
- a rapid learning curve as themes are attached to the strength and practiced
- continuous learning of new ways to enact the strength
- a sense of yearning to act in accordance with the strength
- a feeling of inevitability in using the strength, as if one cannot be stopped or dissuaded from its display
- the discovery of the strength as owned in an epiphany
- invigoration rather than exhaustion when using the strength
- the creation and pursuit of fundamental projects that revolve around the strength
- intrinsic motivation to use the strength

My hypothesis is that the exercise of signature strengths is fulfilling, and these criteria convey the motivational and emotional features of fulfilment with terms like excitement, yearning, inevitability, discovery and invigoration.

The purpose of this exercise is twofold. First, identify your signature strengths by taking the VIA-IS online. Look at your top scores in light of the criteria just described for a signature strength and decide which of the top strengths qualify as signature strengths --as the real you.

Second, 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 interventions we have systematically tested and shown to have long-term positive effects on happiness (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). The critical ingredient is using the strengths in a new way. Here are some suggestions**:**

Ways to Use Character Strengths

CORE VIRTUE----WISDOM & KNOWLEDGE

acquisition and use of knowledge

I. Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: *Curiosity is taking an interest in all of ongoing experience. It involves actively recognizing and pursuing challenging opportunities and seeking out new knowledge. Curiosity can be broken down into three categories: interest, novelty seeking, and openness to new experience. It is this strength that drives individuals to make discoveries and to explore the boundaries of human knowledge.*

Movies: *October Sky* (1999) *Amélie* (2001-French)

1. Look for jobs in which you are charged with acquiring new information daily, such as journalism, research, teaching, etc.
2. Expand your knowledge in an area of interest through books, journals, magazines, TV, radio or internet, for half an hour, three times a week.
3. Attend a function/lecture/colloquium of a culture that differs from yours.
4. Find a person who shares your area of your interest and learn how he/she increases his/her expertise in that area.
5. Eat food of a different culture, explore its cultural context and become aware of your thoughts.
6. Connect with a person of a different culture and spend at least an hour, twice a month to learn about his/her culture.
7. Make a list of unknowns about your favorite topic.
8. Try things that challenge your existing knowledge and skills.
9. Visit at least one new town, state or country yearly.
10. Identify factors which might haven diminished your curiosity in an area and search three new ways to rejuvenate it.
11. Get engaged in more open-ended learning experiences (i.e., making ice cream to understand physics and chemistry or taking a yoga class to understand different muscle groups).
12. Explore processes of nature, for at least one hour weekly, by being in the woods, park, stream, yard, etc.

II. Creativity [Originality, ingenuity]: *Creativity is the process of using one's originality to devise novel ways to positively contribute to one's own life or the lives of others. Such originality can range from everyday ingenuity to groundbreaking work that becomes highly recognized. Creative people are able to apply their imaginations in new and surprising ways in order to solve the problems that they encounter. Traditional notions of creativity focus on artistic expression and scientific discovery, but this strength can be applied to any area of life in which obstacles can be addressed imaginatively.*

Movies: *Shine* (1996), *Amadeus* (1984)

1. Create and refine at least one original idea weekly in an area of your interest.
2. Do at least one assignment weekly in a different and creative manner.
3. Write an article, essay, short story, poem, draw, or paint in relation to your passion once a week.
4. Offer at least one creative solution to challenges of a sibling or a friend.
5. Compile an original and practical list of solutions or tips that will address common challenges faced by you and your peers.

   Look for different and creative ways to spend more time at tasks you do best**.**
6. Brain-storm ideas on a challenging task with your friends.
7. Audition for community theatre or choir.
8. Redesign your room or home.
9. Take a pottery, photography, stained glass, sculpture or painting class.
10. Learn about an exotic and creative art such as *Feng-shui* or *Ikebana*.
11. Read about famous creative people and identify what made them unique.
12. Use leftovers (food, stationary and such) to make new products.
13. Design a personalized card instead of buying.

III. Open-mindedness [judgment, critical thinking]: *Open-mindedness is thinking things through and examining them from all sides. It involves a willingness to consider evidence against one's own beliefs, plans, and goals, and to revise them if necessary. Open-minded people faithfully adhere to the standard of considering evidence fairly. This strength*

counteracts the pervasive "my-side bias" that prevents many people from considering views other than their own.

Movies: *No Man's Land* (2001-Bosnian)

1. Identify reasons of your last three actions that you are not happy with (not following through with a goal) and brainstorm better alternative ideas for the future.
2. Ask a trusted and wise friend to critically appraise your judgment on your last three significant actions.
3. Play devil's advocate on an issue that you have strong opinions about.
4. At least once a week, practice the common themes that exist across races and religions on an important issue.
5. Identify the last three actions for which you did not think your way through.
6. Start an activity and ask yourself -- Why? When? And how?
7. Attend a multi-cultural event and critically evaluate your views during and afterwards.
8. Identify causes of a perceived failure of an activity in the past. Are there any patterns? Take some time to think deeply about how can you improve.
9. When deciding about an important issue, write pros and cons and repeat them while taking breaks in between.
10. Mentor someone of a different ethnic or religious background.
11. Monitor if you often find information to confirm your opinions or seek new information to expand your view.
12. When you face the next challenge, first imagine the best and worst scenarios and then decide the most realistic course of action.

IV. Love of learning: *Love of learning involves enthusiastically studying new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge. People with this strength enjoy the cognitive engagement of acquiring new skills or satisfying their curiosity, even when the material benefits of learning may not be immediately available. Love of learning allows people to persist in the face of frustrations and obstacles that arise during the course of education, both formal and informal*.

Movies: *Billy Elliot* (2000), *A Beautiful Mind* (2001)

Songs: On the Road to Find Out (Cat Stevens)

1. Deliberately learn five new words, including their meaning and usage, at least twice a week.
2. Visit a new museum every month and write about new things learned.
3. Read a non-fiction book monthly on a topic you find absorbing and engaging.
4. Read and research about a topic by visiting the library at least once a week. Write one page of pragmatic ideas which can advance that field and discuss them with someone.
5. Converse with someone on a topic of mutual interest.
6. Follow an ongoing global event through newspapers, TV or internet.
7. Join a local book club.
8. Attend new gallery/exhibition openings in your area.
9. Read aloud with your loved ones.
10. Arrange a teach-learn date with a friend, learn a skill, and teach what you are best at.
11. Identify topics on which you can share your knowledge with your peers.
12. Attend seminars, workshops, and conferences in your area of interest.
13. Travel to new places and blend education with leisure.
14. Visit (with children) local factories and laboratories to understand process of production

V. Perspective [wisdom]: *Perspective, which is often called wisdom, is distinct from intelligence and involves a superior level of knowledge and judgment. This strength involves being able to provide wise counsel to others. It allows its possessor to address important and difficult questions about morality and the meaning of life. People with perspective are aware of broad patterns of meaning in their lives, their own strengths and weaknesses, and the necessity of contributing to their society.*

Movies: *The Devil's Advocate* (1997), *American Beauty* (1999)

Songs: My Way (Frank Sinatra), Strength, Courage, Wisdom, The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill (Lauryn Hill)

1. Explain the broad outlook of your life in one or two sentences as a weekly exercise.
2. Find purpose in the last five of your significant actions/decisions.
3. Find someone wise (alive or someone who has passed on), read or watch a film on their life, and identify how their life can guide your decisions and actions.
4. Read quotes of wisdom and re-write them in small practical action steps for yourself.
5. Offer advice, but only when asked and after listening empathically to the seeker.
6. Become aware of the moral implications and potential consequences of your future actions.
7. Reflect on the moral implications of scientific endeavors that directly affect your life.
8. Pursue endeavors which have a significant impact on the world.
9. Exercise optimism and patience with tasks which challenge you most.
10. Examine a world event from historical, cultural and economic perspectives.
11. Seek a role, at least once every three months which requires you to council others.
12. Schedule time when you can optimally muse, analyze, reflect, and synthesize on an issue about which you feel ambivalent.
13. Connect your beliefs with your emotions.
14. Build a network of friends and confidants with differing perspectives. Seek their council when you need expertise.
15. Mentor a child in your neighbourhood.

CORE VIRTUE----COURAGE

exercising will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal

I. Bravery [valor]: *Bravery is the capacity to take action to aid others in spite of significant risks or dangers. This strength allows people to avoid shrinking from the threats, challenges, or pain associated with attempting to do good works. Brave acts are undertaken voluntarily with full knowledge of the potential adversity involved. Brave individuals place the highest importance on higher purpose and morality, no matter what the consequences might be.*

Movies: *Schindler's List* (1993), *Life as a House* (2001)

1. Resist social or peer pressure for noble values and causes in meaningful ways (write, speak out, participate in a protest, join an activist organization).
2. Speak up for or write about an unpopular idea in a group.
3. Take small, practical steps for a constructive social change.
4. Report an injustice, abuse, blatant unethical practice, or abuse of power or resources to appropriate authorities, even if the perpetrator is someone close to you.

5. Protect or stand up for someone (such as a younger sibling or a battered woman) who will not otherwise stand up for themself.
6. Ask difficult questions that help you and others face reality.
7. Clarify your values by thinking about how best they have served you in challenging situations.
8. Cultivate a reputation for recognizing and appreciating brave acts which are accomplished despite challenges.
9. Identify an area in which you generally shy away from confrontations. Practice the phrases, the tones, and the mannerisms that will enable you to effectively confront the situation next time.
10. Collect contemporary stories of bravery in everyday life situations.
11. Don't be afraid to be different but positive.
12. Don't be afraid to befriend someone who is different but positive.

II. Persistence [perseverance, industriousness]: *Persistence is the mental strength necessary to continue striving for one's goals in the face of obstacles and setbacks. This sort of perseverance requires dedication, focus, and patience. Persistent individuals finish what they start, persisting in the quest to achieve their goals in spite of any hardships they encounter along the way. The broader and more ambitious one's goals are, the more necessary persistence is in order to achieve them.*

Movies: *The Piano* (1993), *The Legend of Bagger Vance* (2000)

Songs: My Way (Frank Sinatra), On the Road to Find Out (Cat Stevens)

1. Plan a big project and finish it ahead of time.
2. Select two activities that you find engaging and meaningful and give 100% to them.
3. Set five small goals weekly. Break them into practical steps, accomplish them on time, and monitor your progress from week to week.
4. Work harder than usual at your most important goal.
5. Select a role-model who exemplifies perseverance and determine how you can follow her/his footsteps.
6. Read an inspiring quotation or poem which motivates you to achieve your goals.
7. Seed some flowering plants early in the spring and tender them throughout the summer.
8. Write your goals and aims and post them where you can see them regularly. Let them inspire you.
9. Manage a challenging task from start to finish at your work.
10. Take control of at least one new situation at home or work, one that you can handle. If you fail, revise your plan but don't give up until you finish.
11. Regularly articulate your goals into specific actions. This helps you to stay motivated and persistent.
12. Keep a checklist of things to do and regularly update it.
13. Attend a seminar or workshop on time management.
14. Share your goals with your loved ones. Let them inspire you regularly.
15. Think about what you would like to accomplish in the next five years. Develop a road map and assess how your present skills match with your goals.
16. Be aware how to cut your losses in tasks which don't require persistence.
17. For your next challenging task, make a realistic timeline.

III. Integrity [authenticity, honesty]: *The strength of integrity is manifested speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way. A person of integrity is open and honest about his or her own thoughts, feelings, and responsibilities, being careful not to mislead through either action or omission. This strength allows one to feel a sense of ownership over one's own internal states, regardless of whether those states are popular or socially comfortable, and to experience a sense of authentic wholeness.*

Movies: *A Few Good Men* (1992), *Erin Brockovich* (2000)
Songs: My Way (Frank Sinatra), Strength, Courage, Wisdom, The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill (Lauryn Hill), The Rose (Bette Midler), On the Road to Find Out (Cat Stevens)

1. Refrain from telling small, white lies to friends and family (including insincere compliments). If you do tell one, admit it and apologize right away.
2. Think of creative yet honest ways of relating to others.
3. Monitor every time you tell a lie, even if it is a small one. Try to make your list shorter every day.
4. Monitor to catch lies of omission (such as not volunteering important information when selling a used item) and think how would you feel if someone did the same to you.
5. Rate your satisfaction with authentic, honest, and genuine deeds vs. inauthentic and less then honest actions.
6. Monitor whether your next five significant actions match your words and vice-versa.
7. Write on issues about which you feel moral obligation. It helps to crystallize and integrate thinking.
8. Think and act fairly when your face the next challenge, regardless of its impact on your position or popularity.
9. Identify your area of strongest moral convictions. Set your priorities according to your convictions.
10. Seek roles with clear structure that allow you to be authentic and honest.
11. Learn and practice the ethical standards of your profession.

IV. Vitality [zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: *Vitality is an approach to life marked by an appreciation for energy, liveliness, excitement, and energy. A vital person lives life as an adventure to be approached whole-heartedly. A life of vigor allows one to experience the overlap of the mental and physical realms of experience, as stress decreases and health increases. Vitality differs from contentment in that it involves greater psychological and physiological activation and enthusiasm.*

Movies: *Cinema Paradiso* (1988, Italian), *My Left Foot* (1993), *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975)
Songs: My Way (Frank Sinatra)

1. Do something that you already do, but with more energy, including some creative and different elements.
2. Exercise at least 2-3 times a week, and notice how it affects your energy level.
3. Do a physical activity of your choice, one that you don't "have to do" and that you are not told to do.
4. Improve your sleep hygiene by establishing regular sleep time, eating 3-4 hours before sleeping, avoiding doing any work in the bed, not taking caffeine late in the evening, etc. Notice changes in your energy level.
5. Think of ways to make an assignment exciting and engaging before you undertake it.

6. Do a physically rigorous activity (bike riding, running, sports singing, playing) that you always wanted to do but have not done yet.
7. Sing in a choir or play an instrument.
8. Attend a dance club, concert, or a performing art event.
9. Watch a sitcom or a comedy film weekly.
10. Socialize with friends who like to laugh heartily.
11. Do at least one outdoor activity weekly such as hiking, biking, mountain climbing, brisk walking, or jogging, for an hour.
12. Take time to celebrate your next two accomplishments and victories.
13. Call old friend and reminisce good old times.

CORE VIRTUE----HUMANITY

tending and befriending others

I. Love: *Loving individuals value close relationships with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated. Love can be expressed toward those we depend on, toward those who depend on us, and toward those we feel romantic, sexual, and emotional attraction to. This strength allows people to put their trust in others and make them a priority in making decisions. They experience a sense of deep contentment from their devotion.*

Movies: *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), *The English Patient* (1996), *Sophie's Choice* (1982), *The Bridges of the Madison County* (1995), *Iris* (2001), *My Fair Lady* (1964)
Songs: The Rose (Bette Midler), Isn't She Lovely (Stevie Wonder)

1. Express (verbally and/or non-verbally) to your loved ones that no matter what happens, your love for them will remain unconditional.
2. Express your love through physical gestures (hugs, kisses, cuddling, giving a gentle massage).
3. Focus on the implicit motives of your loved ones, rather their behaviors.
4. Explore and appreciate the strengths of your loved ones.
5. Arrange a date with your mate that celebrates both of your signature strengths.
6. Express your love through gifts. When possible, create gifts yourself.
7. Always celebrate days or occasions that are mutually important.
8. Express your love creatively (e.g., through a poem, notes, sketches, photographs of an important place, event or situation which reminds you of mutual love).
9. Help your loved ones with a self-improvement plan (e.g., a new class, weight loss, exercise, a new career).
10. Plan and host a dinner party with your significant other.
11. Reunite at the end of the day and discuss how it went.
12. Attend a concert, theatre, movies, or go dancing with your loved one.
13. Engage in a favorite activity (e.g., hiking, going to an amusement park, biking, walking in the park, swimming, camping, jogging) together.
14. Attend your child's sporting events or performances (recital, play, etc) together.
15. Go out (without kids) for brunch or dinner.
16. Help your loved ones plan their future by helping them identify their signature strengths. Then, collaborate to design a future based on their signature strengths.
17. If you want to help your loved ones, first consider their strengths. Design your help around their strengths.
18. Tape record your parent's earliest recollections and share them with your children.

19. Make a family blessing journal in which everyone writes good things that happen to them daily.

II. Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "nice-ness"]: *Kindness consists of doing favors and good deeds for others without the expectation of personal gain. This strength requires respect for others but also includes emotional affection. Kind people find joy in the act of giving and helping other people, regardless of their degree of relatedness or similarity.*

Movies: *As Good as it Gets* (1997), *The Cider House Rules* (1999), *Promise* (1986)
Songs: Lean on Me (Al Green), You've Got a Friend (James Taylor or Mariah Carey), Time After Time (Cyndi Lauper or Tuck and Patti), Bridge Over Troubled Water (Simon and Garfunkel or Johnny Cash), I'll Be there for You (The Rembrants)

1. Do three random acts of kindness per week for those whom you know (e.g., small favors for friends and neighbors, calling sick or sad friends, getting groceries for a friend busy in exams, or baby-sitting, etc).
2. Do one random act of kindness weekly for someone you don't know.
3. Donate blood periodically.
4. Visit someone who is sick and in the hospital.
5. Visit someone in a nursing home or hospice.
6. Give gifts to others which involve experiential activities.
7. Take out a friend(s) on a surprise dinner and pay for it.
8. Say kinder and softer words to people when interacting through email, writing letters, talking on phone.
9. Cook a nice meal for your loved ones.
10. Share your belongings with others (e.g., lawn mover, snow blower, jump cables).
11. Make an inventory of your possessions, keep only what you absolutely need, and donate the rest.
12. Donate your time to others through helpful actions.
13. Greet others with smile.
14. While driving, give way to others or hold the door.
15. Help fix someone's flat tire.
16. Fix a community apparatus (such as playground equipment) even if you did not break it.
17. Stop and help someone who needs help on a highway.

III. Social Intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: *Socially intelligent individuals are aware of the emotions and intentions of themselves and others. No matter what the social situation is, they attempt to make everyone involved feel comfortable and valued. Socially intelligent people are perceptive of others' feelings and honest about their own, and are generally adept at fostering healthy relationships.*

Movies: *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989), *Children of a Lesser God* (1986), *K-Pax* (2001) *The Five Senses* (2001-Canadian)
Songs: Lean on Me (Al Green), You've Got a Friend (James Taylor or Mariah Carey), Time After Time (Cyndi Lauper or Tuck and Patti), Bridge Over Troubled Water (Simon and Garfunkel or Johnny Cash), I'll Be there for You (The Rembrants)

1. Withhold a powerful and decisive argument which will win you the discussion but might hurt someone, at least twice a month.
2. Listen to your friends and siblings empathically, without preparing rebuttals, and simply reflect your feelings.
3. If someone offends you, attempt to find at least one positive element in their motives.
4. Attend an uncomfortable social situation as an active observer and describe what you observe without any judgments.
5. Note and appreciate others in the light of their positive attributes.
6. Write five personal feelings daily for four weeks and monitor patterns.
7. Watch a favorite TV program or film muted and write feelings observed.
8. Express feelings appropriately to someone you have not done so far, and process them together.
9. Ask someone close to you about times you did not emotionally understand him/her and how he/she would like to be emotionally understood in the future.
10. Listen to others with unconditional regard.
11. Notice when your family and friends grow. Congratulate them and record specific observations.
12. Identify which of your friends relates most emphatically with others. Observe them closely.
13. When working with others, emphasize the value of being agreeable.
14. In your close relationships, speak plainly and directly about your needs and wishes.
15. Perceive and acknowledge three sincere gestures of a friend.

healthy community life

CORE VIRTUE----JUSTICE

I. Citizenship [social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork]: *Citizenship involves working as a member of a group for the common good. People with this strength are loyal to the organizations of which they are members, ready to make personal sacrifices for their neighbors. The strength of citizenship is manifested through a sense of social belonging and civic responsibility. Good citizens are not blindly obedient, and when necessary they strive to change their groups for the better.*

Movies: *LA Confidential* (1997), *Finding Forester* (2001), *Awakenings* (1990)
Songs: Lean on Me (Al Green), You've Got a Friend (James Taylor or Mariah Carey), Time After Time (Cyndi Lauper or Tuck and Patti), Bridge Over Troubled Water (Simon and Garfunkel or Johnny Cash), I'll Be there for You (The Rembrants)

1. Pick up litter on curbsides and put it in trashcans.
2. Volunteer weekly for a community service project in your town, one that deals with what you are best at.
3. Facilitate a group discussion and achieve consensus on a conflicting issue.
4. Help at least one person yearly to set goals and periodically check on their progress.
5. Arrange or attend at least one social gathering monthly.
6. Spend at least half an hour weekly cleaning a communal place.
7. Decorate a communal place.
8. Play sports for your town or school.
9. Start a book club.
10. Car pool or give someone ride to work regularly.

11. Start a community garden.
12. Donate blood or become an organ donor.
13. Seek a role in an organization or club that brings people of diverse cultures closer.
14. Volunteer for activities such as serving as a Big Brother or Big Sister or constructing a Habitat for Humanity house.
15. Organize a social gathering to bid farewell a parting neighbor or welcome a new neighbor.
16. Volunteer to deliver Meals on Wheels in a poor neighborhood.
17. Ask your neighbors, especially elderly ones, if they need anything from super market.
18. Shovel snow or scrape ice for a neighbor.
19. Cook a favorite meal for your neighbor or a friend.

II. Fairness, Equity and Justice: *Fairness involves treating everyone according to universal ideals of equality and justice. Fair individuals do not let their personal feelings bias their moral or ethical decisions about others, but instead rely on a broad set of moral values. True fairness incorporates both a respect for moral guidelines and a compassionate approach to caring for others. This strength is applicable at all levels of society, from everyday interactions to international issues of social justice.*

Movies: *The Emperor's Club* (2002), *Philadelphia* (1993)

1. The next time you make a mistake, self-monitor to see whether you admit it.
2. The next time you present an argument, self-monitor to see whether you compromise fairness for social desirability.
3. Encourage equal participation of everyone, especially those who feel left out in a discussion/activity.
4. Self-monitor to see whether your judgments are affected by your personal likes and dislikes or are based on principles of justice and fairness.
5. Recall and write about instances where you were unfair or could have been fairer. Consider how you could improve your future behavior.
6. Self-monitor to see whether you think about or treat people of other ethnicities and cultures stereotypically.
7. Serve on a club or organization that offers unprivileged people a leveling playing field.
8. Write a letter to an editor or speak up on an important issue concerning social justice.
9. Politely discuss fairness with a friend whom you notice shows gender or ethnic bias.
10. Volunteer or learn about an organization which educates and campaigns for equal human rights.
11. Explore an ongoing event anywhere in the world where human rights are being violated and write your reactions and suggestions to promote social justice on that issue.
12. Watch a film or a documentary which exemplifies fairness, social justice, and equity.
13. Read biographies of famous people who exemplify social justice such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King, and Nelson Mandela.
14. Speak up for your group.

III. Leadership: *Leadership is the process of motivating, directing, and coordinating members of a group to achieve a common goal. Leaders assume a dominant role in social interaction, but effective leadership requires listening to the opinions and feelings of other group members as much as it involves active direction. Individuals who possess this strength are able to help their group to achieve goals in a cohesive, efficient, and amiable manner.*

Movies: *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Dances with Wolves* (1990)

1. Lead an activity, assignment or project and actively solicit opinions from group members.
2. Organize a family event that is intergenerational, including both young and old relatives.
3. Organize an event (surprise birthday party, shower, etc.) at your work that involves your colleagues.
4. Mentor a child in your neighborhood who would benefit from your skills.
5. Stand up for someone who is being treated unfairly.
6. Rotate leadership of an event or activity. Give others the chance to be leaders.
7. Read a biography and/or watch film of your favorite leader and evaluate how he/she inspires you in practical ways.
8. When two people are in an argument, mediate by inviting others to share their thoughts and emphasizing problem solving.
9. Help coach Little League or other youth sports even if you don't have a child playing.
10. Initiate and lead a new family tradition such as thematic reunions, anniversaries, surprise parties, family strength dates, etc.
11. Organize a town-wide or block-wide yard sale.
12. Host a block party or holiday open house.
13. Gather and lead a group to clean a local park or cemetery.
14. Start a fitness or health group with your co-workers.
15. Participate in a local political campaign.
16. Make a list of possible ways that you could improve your leadership style.

CORE VIRTUE----TEMPERANCE

protecting against excess

I. Forgiveness and Mercy: *This strength involves forgiving those who have wronged or offended us. Forgiveness entails accepting the shortcomings of others, giving people a second chance, and putting aside the temptation to hold a grudge or behave vengefully. Forgiveness allows one to put aside the self-destructive negativity associated with anger and to extend mercy toward a transgressor.*

Movies: *Pay it Forward* (2000), *Terms of Endearment* (1983), *Dead Man Walking* (1995), *Ordinary People* (1980)

1. Remember times when you offended someone and were forgiven, then extend this gift to others.
2. Evaluate your emotions before and after forgiving someone.
3. Understand from the offender's perspective why he/she offended you. Then assess whether your reaction is hurting you more than offender.
4. Make a list of individuals against whom you hold a grudge, then either meet them personally to discuss it or visualize whether bygones can be bygones.
5. Meet a person who offended you in the past, especially if he/she is a family member. Tell them that you have forgiven them, or just be kind in your interaction with them.

6. Ask for forgiveness from a Divine power according to your faith and assess how you feel afterwards.
7. Pray for the noble behavior of your offender.
8. Identify how a grudge tortures you emotionally. Does it produce disruptive emotions (anger, hatred, fear, worry, sadness, anxiety, jealousy and such)? Write three ways these disruptive emotions affect your behavior.
9. Plan out what your response should be the next time someone offends you. Remind yourself of your plan (rehearse if possible) and periodically affirm, "No matter how he/she offends me, I will respond as I have planned."
10. Imagine your offender and consider whether you have any payback fantasies. Imagine in detail what might happen if you forgive the offender. Journal your reactions. Start with a moderate offense and continue till you achieve forgiveness and resolution. During this exercise continuously remind yourself this is a forgiving exercise, not a grudge-holding one.

II. Humility / Modesty: *Humility and modest involve letting one's strengths and accomplishments speak for themselves. Individuals with this strength do not need to have low self-esteem, but merely avoid seeking the spotlight and regarding themselves as better than others. Humble people are honest with themselves about their own limitations and the fallibility of their own opinions, and are open to advice and assistance from others.*

Movies: *Gandhi* (1982), *Little Buddha* (1994)

1. Resist showing off accomplishments for a week and notice the changes in your interpersonal relationships
2. At the end of each day, identify something you did to impress people or put on a show. Resolve not to do it again.
3. Resist showing off if you notice that you are better than someone else.
4. Resist showing off when others shows off.
5. Notice if you speak more than others in a group situation.
6. Dress and speak modestly.
7. Compliment sincerely if you find someone is authentic and better than you in some ways.
8. Use environmental resources modestly (use recycled products, limit use of products which harm the environment, etc.).
9. Admit your mistakes and apologize even to those who are younger than you.
10. Utilize your sexual energies modestly (have one committed sexual partner).
11. Ask a trusted friend for honest feedback about your weaknesses.

III. Prudence: *Prudence is a practical orientation toward future goals. It entails being careful about one's choices, not taking undue risks, and keeping long-term goals in mind when making short-term decisions. Prudent individuals monitor and control their impulsive behavior and anticipate the consequences of their actions. This strength is not synonymous with stinginess or timidity, but instead involves an intelligent and efficient perspective towards achieving major goals in life.*

Movies: *Sense and Sensibility* (1995)

1.

1. Think twice before saying anything. Do this exercise at least ten times a week and note its effects.

2. Drive cautiously and note that there are fewer time-bound emergencies than you actually think.
3. Remove all extraneous distractions before your make your next three important decisions.
4. Consult with your significant others before making a final decision.
5. Visualize the consequences of your decisions in one, five, and ten years' time.
6. Do a risk-benefit analysis before making a final decision.
7. Make important decisions when you are relaxed, not anxious or depressed.
8. Before cheating or lying even for trivial things, ask yourself whether you will need ten more lies to hide the first lie.
9. Avoid competitive situations that generally end in win-loss outcomes or in which you or your opponent have little chance to win.
10. Don't hesitate to check as often as necessary to ensure all relevant details of your next important task are covered.
11. Evaluate the quality, efficiency, and wisdom of your next three projects and write down methods of improvement.

IV. Self-Regulation [self-control]: *Self-regulation is the process of exerting control over oneself in order to achieve goals or meet standards. Self-regulating individuals are able to control instinctive responses such as aggression and impulsivity, responding instead according to pre-conceived standards of behavior. This strength can apply both to resisting temptations, such as when a dieter avoids sugary foods, and to initiating actions, such as when someone gets up early to exercise.*

Movies: *Forest Gump* (1994)

1. Set goals to improve your everyday living (e.g., room cleaning, laundry, doing dishes, cleaning your desk) and make sure you complete the tasks.
2. Monitor and eliminate distractions (phone, TV, computer) while focusing on a particular assignment.
3. Eliminate objects of temptation (dieting – don't eat junk food; alcohol – don't socialize in bars; smoking – replace cigarettes with chewing gum; shopping – leave credit card or money at home)
4. Start a regular workout routine and make sure you stick to it.
5. Next time you get upset, try to control your emotions and focus on positive attributes.
6. Avoid talking about others in their absence.
7. When you get upset, try to do a progressive relaxation
8. Self-congratulate for self-regulation when you successfully resist an indulgence.
9. Carefully create routines that you can follow thorough systematically. Make minor adjustments as needed but keep the core elements intact.
10. Establish a regular time and a place for most of your activities.
11. Identify your role models and examine them in detail. Let these details inspire and regulate your goals.
12. Pay close attentions to your biological clock. Do your most important tasks when you are most alert.
13. Do partial or complete fasting or deliberately resist a comfort (e.g., chocolate, ice-cream, sex, TV) for a while. Reward yourself with it after accomplishing a challenging task.

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CORE VIRTUE----TRANSCENDANCE

forging connections to the larger universe and providing meaning

I. Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]: *Individuals with an appreciation for beauty feels a sense of awe at the scenes and patterns around them. They take pleasure in observing physical beauty, the skills and talents of other people, and the beauty inherent to virtue and morality. Beauty can be found in almost every area of life, from nature to arts to mathematics to science to everyday experience. This strength allows people to experience satisfaction and richness in everyday experiences.*

Movies: *Out of Africa* (1985), *The Color of Paradise* (2000- Iranian)
Songs: Isn't She Lovely (Stevie Wonder), Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World (Israel Kamakawiwo'ole)

1. Notice at least one instance of natural beauty around you every day (sunrise, sunset, clouds, sunshine, snowfall, rainbows, trees, moving leaves, birds chirping, flowers, fruits and vegetables, etc).
2. Make your surroundings aesthetically beautiful.
3. Listen a piece of music or a watch a film and evaluate how it touches you aesthetically.
4. Visit a museum, pick a piece of art, and consider how it touches you aesthetically.
5. Write your aesthetic/artistic reactions to another person's artistic expression.
6. Appreciate a beautiful piece of architecture, dress, sculpture, pottery, poetry, prose, etc.
7. Explore expression of beauty in different cultures.
8. Hang a bird feeder and observe the birds.
9. Decorate the outside of your home on special occasions.
10. Explore beauty in the face of a child.
11. Take mental pictures of art and note how they affect your everyday life. Do they make you feel more happy, cheerful, and fulfilled?
12. Take pictures of natural scenes or your loved ones and make them your PC's desktop.
13. Note weekly how the goodness of other people affects your life.
14. Think of something that contains beauty, love, and connection at least once a day.
15. For next three projects, pick at least one. Instead of doing it meticulously, prioritize to do it with care and an appreciation for beauty.
16. Attend local exhibits of clothes, jewelry, cultural artifacts, and paintings.
17. Experience at least once a day the excellence, beauty, and joy expressed through colors, sounds, flavors, images, ideas, aromas, sensations, or words.
18. Notice how others appreciate beauty and excellence through specific words, expressions, gestures, and actions.
19. Notice and admire excellence of someone's character strengths.
20. Appreciate the subtle changes of different seasons.

II. Gratitude: *Gratitude is an awareness of and thankfulness for the good things in one's life. Grateful individuals take time to express thanks and contemplate all that they have been given in life. Gratitude can be directed at a specific person, at a Divinity, or simply expressed outwardly for the mere fact of existence. This strength is a mindset of appreciation and goodwill for the benefits derived from other people.*

Movies: *Sunshine* (2000), *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991)
Songs: Strength, Courage, Wisdom, Isn't She Lovely (Stevie Wonder)

1. Consider how this statement describes your usual mental state: "A still mind sees what is good and present. An anxious mind sees what is negative and missing." Still your mind for five minutes in the morning and in the evening.
2. Count three your blessings (good things that happened to you) before going to bed every day.
3. Express your gratitude to someone whom haven't told before, preferably through a personal visit.
4. Every day, select one small yet important thing that you take for granted. Work on being mindful of this thing in the future.
5. Notice how many times you say thanks and whether you mean it every time.
6. Express gratitude by leaving a note for someone who has helped your intellectual growth (e.g., a high school teacher).
7. Express thanks to all who contributed to your success, no matter how small their contribution might have been.
8. Express thanks without just saying "thanks"-- be more descriptive and specific (e.g., "I appreciate your prudent advice").
9. Write three apprehensions that you feel when you wake every morning. Before you go to bed, write three good things that happened to you and why. Then evaluate your apprehensions in light of the good things.
10. Set aside at least ten minutes every day to savor a pleasant experience. Decide to withhold any conscious decisions during these ten minutes.
11. Write a letter to an editor about an event that brought your community closer.
12. Express gratitude to public officials such as police officers, fire fighters, and postal workers.
13. Before eating, think of all people who have contributed to what you are eating. Do this at least once a week.
14. Over dinner, talk with your loved ones about two good things that happened to them during the day.
15. Think of three past adversities and identify three serendipitous goods they led to.
16. Reminisce about your best moments of recognition, achievement, praise, and connection.

III. Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: *Hope is the expectation that good things will happen in the future. Hopeful individuals are confident that their efforts toward future goals will lead to their fruition. This strength leads people to expect the best from themselves and others.*

Movies: *Gone with the Wind* (1939), *Life is beautiful* (1998-Italian), *Good Will Hunting* (1997)
Songs: Strength, Courage, Wisdom, The Rose (Bette Midler), Somewhere Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World (Israel Kamakawiwo'ole)

1. Recall a situation when you or someone close to you overcame a difficult obstacle and succeeded.
2. List all the bad things that happened to you, then find at least two positive for each.
3. Visualize where and what you want to be after one, five and ten years. Sketch a pathway that you can follow to get there.
4. Record your negative and positive thoughts and notice how they affect your future performance.
5. Read about someone who succeeded despite difficulties and setbacks.

6. Recall bad decisions you made, forgive yourself, and see how you can make better decisions in the future.
7. When facing adversity, focus how you overcame a similar adversity in the past.
8. Mentally rehearse your next anticipated challenge. Build perspective by managing obstacles rather then trying to eliminate all of them.
9. For the next three challenging tasks, identify what would work best for you, thinking your way into right action or acting your way into right thinking.
10. Document past three accomplishments in detail and let them inspire your future.
11. Surround yourself with optimistic and future-minded friends, particularly when you face a setback.
12. Schedule at least fifteen minutes twice a week to spend generating optimistic ideas. Write them down and list actions you can take to realize your ideas. Discuss your ideas with your friends and make them partners in your endeavours.

IV. Humor [playfulness]: *Humor involves an enjoyment of laughing, friendly teasing, and bringing happiness to others. Individuals with this strength see the light side of life in many situations, finding things to be cheerful about rather than letting adversity get them down. Humor does not necessarily refer just to telling jokes, but rather to a playful and imaginative approach to life.*
Movies: *Patch Adams* (1999)

1. Bring smile to someone's face every day through jokes, gestures, and playful activities.
2. Learn a new joke three times a week and tell them to friends.
3. Watch a sitcom, funny show/movie, or read a comic daily.
4. Cheer up a gloomy friend.
5. Find the fun and lighter side in most situations.
6. Be friends with someone who has great sense of humor.
7. Impersonate someone and share this with someone close to you.
8. Go out with your friends at least once a month for bowling, hiking, cross-country skiing, biking, and such.
9. Make a snowman when it snows or play volleyball at the beach.
10. Send funny emails to your friends.
11. Dress up for Halloween.
12. Play with your pet daily.
13. Go watch fireworks with your loved ones.
14. Go with your loved ones to a baseball, hockey, or basketball game.
15. Go with your loved ones to a holiday show.

V. Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]: *Spirituality is a universal part of human experience involving knowledge of one's place within the larger scheme of things. It can include but is not limited to religious belief and practice. Spirituality affords us an awareness of the sacred in everyday life, a sense of comfort in the face of adversity, and the experience of transcending the ordinary to reach something fundamental.*

Movies: *Contact* (1997), *The Apostle* (1997), *Priest* (1994, British)

1. Spend some time every day in at least one activity that connects you with a higher power or reminds you where you fit in the large scheme of things.
2. Spend ten minutes daily in breathing deeply, relaxing, and meditating (emptying the mind of thoughts by focusing on breathing).
3. Mindfully worship and/or pray for five to ten minutes a day.
4. Read a spiritual or religious book every day for half an hour.

5. Explore different religions – take a class, research over the internet, meet a person of different religion, or attend the congregation of a different religion.
6. Note whether your everyday actions have any spiritual significance. If not, think ways of connecting the two.
7. Explore a fundamental purpose of your life and link your actions to that purpose.
8. Reflect how your spiritual beliefs and practices connect you with others authentically.
9. Make a weekly list of experiences that forge strong connections in your life.
10. Write your eulogy or ask your loved ones how they would like to remember you.
11. Build relationships with people who appreciate your ability to help them identify and solve problems.
12. Connect with people and organization that enhances your signature strengths.