

Breaking the Ice: Ways to Introduce Strengths to a Group

Many people who are familiar with strengths-based work still wonder about effective ways to bring strengths into a group setting. Below are two tried and true exercises to get your group session off to a great start.

WHAT:

Character strengths are the basic building blocks of a flourishing life. Everyone has a unique profile of strengths that reflect their personal identity. However, many people don't have an active awareness of their strengths and the power they possess by harnessing them. It's your job to make the introduction!



WHY:

Research proves character strengths are the pathways to well-being. The VIA Classification provides you and your peers with a common language for discussing the best qualities in each other. When you weave character strengths into situations you create a positive, uplifting environment that inspires participation and motivation.



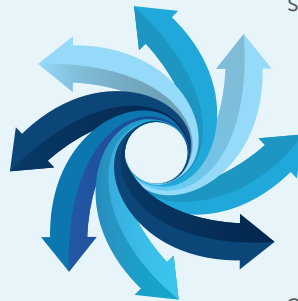
HOW: Breaking the Ice with Strengths

1. You, At Your Best

This exercise helps individuals practice strengths spotting and improves strengths fluency.

Invite individuals to get into groups of 2 or 3 with the VIA Classification. Each person will take turns being the storyteller and the other individual(s) will use the Classification to listen for the strengths being expressed and share feedback with the storyteller.

Tell a story about a time when you were at your best. Create a narrative with a beginning, middle and end describing the experience and how you acted in a way that made you feel authentic and proud.



2. Character Strengths 360

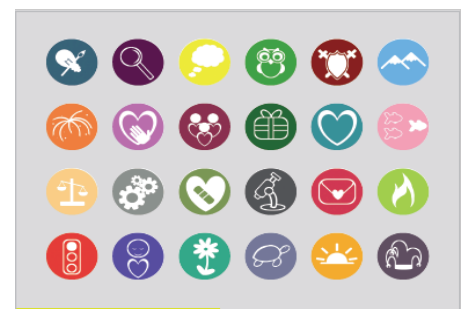
This exercise is a great way to help individuals overcome strengths blindness. Individuals should be encouraged to get additional feedback from other friends and family members.

Each person will choose the top 5 strengths they see most strongly in each of the other group members. They will put a checkmark next to the strengths on the individual's VIA Classification and provide a brief rationale or example of how they have seen this person display each strength they checked off.

WANT MORE LIKE THIS?

Character Strengths Interventions

Dive deeper into these exercises and more with *Character Strengths Interventions: A Field Guide for Practitioners*. This groundbreaking new book has over 100 easy, yet effective, research-based activities for teaching and applying character strengths to individuals and groups. The founder of positive psychology, Dr. Martin Seligman, calls it the "GO-TO book for building character."



Ryan M. Niemiec

Character Strengths Interventions

A Field Guide for Practitioners

"The GO-TO book for building character"
Martin E. P. Seligman, The founder of positive psychology



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VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

Virtue of Wisdom



Creativity

Original, adaptive, ingenuity, seeing and doing things in different ways



Curiosity

Interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience



Judgment

Critical thinking, thinking through all sides, not jumping to conclusions



Love of Learning

Mastering new skills & topics, systematically adding to knowledge



Perspective

Wisdom, providing wise counsel, taking the big picture view

Virtue of Courage



Bravery

Valor, not shrinking from threat or challenge, facing fears, speaking up for what's right



Perseverance

Persistence, industry, finishing what one starts, overcoming obstacles



Honesty

Authenticity, being true to oneself, sincerity without pretense, integrity



Zest

Vitality, enthusiasm for life, vigor, energy, not doing things half-heartedly

Virtue of Humanity



Love

Both loving and being loved, valuing close relations with others, genuine warmth



Kindness

Generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruism, doing for others



Social Intelligence

Aware of the motives and feelings of oneself and others, knows what makes others tick



Teamwork

Citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty, contributing to a group effort



Fairness

Adhering to principles of justice, not allowing feelings to bias decisions about others



Leadership

Organizing group activities to get things done, positively influencing others

Virtue of Justice

Virtue of Temperance



Forgiveness

Mercy, accepting others' shortcomings, giving people a second chance, letting go of hurt



Humility

Modesty, letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves



Prudence

Careful about one's choices, cautious, not taking undue risks



Self-Regulation

Self-control, disciplined, managing impulses, emotions, and vices

Virtue of Transcendence



Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence

Awe and wonder for beauty, admiration for skill and moral greatness



Gratitude

Thankful for the good, expressing thanks, feeling blessed



Hope

Optimism, positive future-mindedness, expecting the best & working to achieve it



Humor

Playfulness, bringing smiles to others, lighthearted – seeing the lighter side



Spirituality

Connecting with the sacred, purpose, meaning, faith, religiousness