

# CHARACTER STRENGTHS

## PRESENTATION SHEET

### BRIEF

Behind energy engagement is allowing people to connect with their character strengths - with who they really are. Studies have found that connecting and relating to people according to their strengths significantly strengthens relationships. Studies have also found that workers who apply four or more of their signature strengths experience more positive experiences at work and are more likely to experience work as a calling, compared with those who use less than four of their signature strengths at work. In the VIA framework there are 24 character strengths that loosely fit into 6 broad categories: wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. In this session, you will discover your own character strengths by completing the free VIA online survey. This session requires you to bring a device that can connect to the WI-FI. After discovering your character strengths, you will learn ways to apply character strengths in the workplace

NOTE: PLEASE REMEMBER TO BRING A DEVICE THAT CAN CONNECT TO WI-FI.

Overview of today's session:

1. Why look at character strengths
2. Discover and reflect on your character strengths
3. Think of new ways you can express your character strengths in all areas of your life
4. Ways you can implement character strengths in your work place
5. Looking at current research of character strengths.

### CHARACTER STRENGTHS (5 mins)

People want to talk about what's going strong, not what's going wrong.

David Cooperrider's work on the appreciative inquiry process saw the leveraging of human capabilities for organisational outcomes. Through the appreciative inquiry process, it has been demonstrated that human energy resources become more sustainable when work environments provide employees with positive relationships, engagement, meaning and a sense of purpose. Organisations that do so have been found that their employees outperform those that don't.

In Dr. Neal Mayerson "Characterizing" the Workplace: Using Character Strengths to Create Sustained Success (2015) – Dr Mayerson states: "People are motivated not only to do what they can do well, but what they care to do well. People are motivated to do things that matter to them in terms of their values and in terms of self-expression. Heightening levels of engagement by activating newly discovered sources of intrinsic motivation, namely character strengths, holds the hope of optimising organisational performance in a sustainable way."

## VIA

Character is now considered a key construct in Positive Psychology (specifically, the characteristics that define what's best about people). In 2001, the VIA Institute on Character was established as a non-profit organisation to advance the science and practice of character as character. Through the leadership of Dr. Seligman and Dr. Chris Peterson (the leading psychologists in the Positive Psychology field) the VIA Classification of Character Strengths was devised and the Character Strengths and Virtues (VIA's handbook), was written. The test and handbook have been hailed as the "backbone of Positive Psychology".

The VIA Institute state that it keeps this test free so that every individual in the world can "know their 24" and use this information to lead happier, thriving lives.

### **DISCOVER YOUR CHARACTER STRENGTHS (15 mins)**

Using the free online survey, discover your character strengths. The survey is available in multiple languages.

<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>

Going to go straight into the survey before we talk too much about the strengths so that you don't overthink your answers. Go with first impressions – choose the answer that comes to you first. You just want to go on what feels right, don't think too much about the answer.

Character strengths don't stay fixed for life. They change order in the time of your life but you can usually see that the top ten strengths stay in your top ten, it's just a matter of the order.

SECTION 1 (5 mins)

### **RESULTS: YOUR CHARACTER STRENGTHS (10 mins)**

#### **\*\*SECTION 1: Top character strengths (5 mins)**

Write down your top 10 character strengths in order:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\* Pair share with the person next to you –**

**SECTION 2: Discussion questions (5 mins)**

1. Are you surprised?
2. If you were to choose just one character strength from your top 10 – which do you feel you utilise most when engaging in work activities?
3. If you were to choose just one character strength from your top 10 – which do you feel you utilise most in relationships?
4. If you were to choose just one character strength from your top 10 – which do you feel you utilise most in your community?

**NAME THE CHARACTER STRENGTH ACTIVITY (10 mins)**

**\*\***NAME THE CHARACTER STRENGTHS ACTIVITY (5 mins)

Working out the names of the 24 Character strengths by using the CS descriptions and the main group description.

**\*\***Get each group or an individual to share answers for each main group. After they share ask if others got the same answers or did anyone else get anything different?

**\*\***Going back to Section 1 write down what main group each of your top 10 character strengths sits in. Do you see any pattern??

**EXPRESSING AND UTILISING MY CHARACTER STRENGTHS (10 mins)**

**\*\***SECTION 3: Conscious expression of character strengths

1 a). If you could express more of one character strength in your relationships what would it be? e.g Love

\_\_\_\_\_

b). How would that look like? e.g building closeness with my partner by spending more quality time with each other. No phones for 1 hour a day!

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2. a). If you could express more of one character strength in your work what would it be?

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b). How would that look like?

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3. a). If you could express more of one character strength in your community, what would it be? \_\_\_\_\_

b). How would that look like?

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### **RECENT RESEARCH - CHARACTER STRENGTHS AT WORK (5 MINS)**

- Employees who used four or more of their signature strengths had more positive work experiences and were more likely to consider their work-as-a-calling than those who expressed less than four (Harzer & Ruch, 2012a).
- In a study of 442 employees across 39 departments in 8 organisations, a strengths-based psychological climate was linked with positive affect and work performance (van Woerkom & Meyers, 2014).
- Among volunteer and paid workers, endorsing strengths is related to meaning, but both endorsing AND deploying strengths is connected to well-being (Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010).
- In a three-year thematic analysis of drivers of employee engagement, focusing on character strengths was among the three most crucial drivers (along with managing emotions and aligning purpose). Specifically, employees are encouraged to identify, use, and alert others of their signature strengths as well as converse with managers about strengths use opportunities in the organisation (Crabb, 2011).

- Life satisfaction strengths, spiritual strengths, and community-building strengths do not appear to be overtly encouraged in the workplace; instead it is the temperance and hardworking strengths that are emphasised (Money et al., 2008).
- Character strengths use was connected with personal well-being and job satisfaction (Littman-Ovadia & Davidovitch, 2010).
- Regardless of which character strengths are used, the congruent use of strengths in the situational circumstances at work is important for fostering job satisfaction, pleasure, engagement, and meaning in one's job (i.e., the alignment of one's signature strengths with work activities is what matters; Harzer & Ruch, 2012b).
- In a qualitative case study of a management development program, a key finding was to help managers develop new "tools" and behaviors and core to these tools was signature strengths use (Berg & Karlsen, 2012).

### **IMPLEMENTING CHARACTER STRENGTHS IN ALL AREAS OF YOUR LIFE (5 mins)**

- Get to know the strengths of those you work with, you can get people to take the free online survey or if that's not available or appropriate for the setting (YOU MAY ONLY WORK WITH THIS PERSON FOR A week) you can ask the person what they believe their character strengths are and use your own observations
- Communication -  
In daily communication, recognise strengths of those you work with and ask for them to offer their perspectives based on their top character strengths.
- Allocation of tasks based on strengths
- Practising the character strength – Gratitude.

When gratitude is practised regularly – it can significantly improve one's well-being. One study undertaken by the University of Melbourne shows that using a gratitude journal for 28 consecutive days significantly increased feelings of happiness that lasted up to 6 months.

Personally: keep a gratitude journal and everyday write down 3 things that you are grateful for. You can also download an app called the 5 minute journal where you write down 3 things that you are grateful for and a daily affirmation. I use this personally and I highly recommend it.

In your daily meetings at work: Gratitude circle – in daily meetings, go around a circle and everyone expresses 3 things that they are grateful for that day. At first you may have awkward silences but with some practise it will become a lot more fluid.

### **REFLECTION (10 mins)**

With the person next to you – share 3 things or moments that you found interesting, made you curious, or you enjoyed in the session. Pick three things about this session that you think you may remember next week!

In your groups, starting with the person with the longest hair and going clockwise – share 3 things that you are grateful for in your life.

## **REFERENCES**

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VIA CHARACTER STRENGTHS WEBSITE

[www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)