

## VIA Survey of Character Strengths

*"As coaches, the authors have found the Strengths Survey to be quietly radical. Many clients have never had their strengths assessed and find that just reading the survey results helps them label or understand themselves in new ways." Carol Kaufmman, Ph.D. Harvard Medical School Department of Psychiatry.*

The **VIA Survey of Character Strengths** (created by Martin Seligman) will help you identify your values. Martin Seligman, in his book [Authentic Happiness](#), states that he has found in his research that if a person uses their Signature Strengths in their work they will find it more meaningful and will, therefore, be happier.

It should take about 30-40 minutes to complete the survey.

1. You will need to register to take the inventory. There is no cost.
2. Once you register, click on show questionnaire under **VIA Survey of Character Strengths**. It should be the first item on the list. Call me if you have any problems getting in.
3. Once you fill out the survey, it will show you your scores. Click on the button at the bottom that says: **Show All 24 Strengths**.
4. Copy the page by highlighting it, pasting it into a Word document, saving the file, and e-mail it to your Career Coach.
5. [Click here](#) to begin the survey.

**NOTE:** If you need to get out of the inventory and get back into it, your answers to that point will be saved and you can return to the survey by [clicking here](#).

## Character Strengths

In **Authentic Happiness**, Martin Seligman identifies twenty-four character strengths that fall into six categories. He calls these strengths Values in Action (VIA). They are:

### Wisdom and Knowledge:

- Curiosity & Interest in the World
- Love of learning
- Judgment, Critical Thinking & Open-mindedness
- Creativity, Ingenuity & Originality
- Social intelligence
- Perspective Wisdom

**Courage:**

- Bravery & Valor
- Perseverance (Industry, Diligence & Perseverance)
- Honesty, Authenticity & Genuineness (Integrity)

**Humanity and Love:**

- Kindness & Generosity
- Capacity to Love & Be Loved

**Justice:**

- Citizenship, Teamwork & Loyalty
- Fairness
- Leadership

**Temperance:**

- Self-control & Self-regulation
- Caution, Prudence & Discretion
- Modesty & Humility

**Transcendence:**

- Appreciation of beauty
- Gratitude\*\*\*
- Hope, Optimism & Future-Mindedness
- Spirituality, Sense of Purpose & Faith
- Forgiveness & Mercy
- Humor & Playfulness
- Zest, Enthusiasm & Energy

**Finding Work that is Meaningful - Using Your Signature Strengths**

Your top 5 strengths on your VIA Survey of Character Strengths are your Signature Strengths. It is important to validate the results of the survey. Ask yourself:

- Do the top 5 strengths listed in your results seem like they are your authentically you?
- When you utilize these strengths do you experience a sense of flow (time passing without awareness that it has passed, being completely engrossed in an activity)?

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- If the strengths listed in your top 5 does not seem like it induces a sense of flow or does not seem to represent you, take a look at number 6 and 7 to see if one of them aligns more closely with you.

Once you have validated your Signature Strengths (top 5 strengths), they will become part of your Career Criteria that will support you in selecting your career or job.

You and your Coach can also use your Signature Strengths to brainstorm Career Possibilities. Look at each of your Signature Strengths and brainstorm a list of careers you believe would utilize that strength. Then determine if you want to add it to your Career Possibilities List.

Below is a link to a list of Career, Jobs & Activities that use each of the character strengths. Look for each of your Signature Strengths in the list and see if there are any jobs or careers you would like to add to your Career Possibilities List or if they help you think of other possibilities. You can also note hobbies to explore that will utilize your Signature Strengths.

### **[Examples of Career, Jobs & Activities that Utilize Signature Strengths](#)**

## **Increasing Your Happiness**

The results of the VIA Survey of Character Strengths can help you increase your happiness by helping you find new ways to use your Signature Strengths (your top five strengths) in your current work or hobbies. Using your Signature Strengths in your work and personal life will increase your sense of meaning and purpose.

Increasing happiness is not just an end in itself; it also correlates with, and may even help create greater:

- Competence
- Resilience
- Access to personal as well as social resources
- Physical health
- Deeper connection to society
- A sense of personal mission

In addition to helping you increase your happiness through increased use of your Signature Strengths, the VIA Survey of Character Strengths can help you increase your happiness because it can help you increase your use of certain strengths that are more closely associated with happiness.

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Of the 24 character strengths, the five that are most strongly correlated to happiness are:

- Gratitude
- Curiosity & Interest in the World
- Zest, Enthusiasm & Energy
- Hope, Optimism & Future-Mindedness
- Capacity to Love and be Loved

You can increase your happiness by increasing your use of and alignment with these 5 strengths. (This is an inventory that changes over time, it is not static.)

You can increase these by being aware and setting the intention to use them more and by doing activities and exercises that increase them. Martin Seligman has created many exercises that he has proven increase gratitude and optimism. Here two links to exercises to increase happiness and your use of your Signature Strengths:

- [Exercises to Increase Happiness](#)
- [More Exercises to Increase Happiness](#)

Also, Martin Seligman writes about increasing happiness and increasing your use of your Signature Strengths in his books: [Authentic Happiness](#) and [Learned Optimism](#).

For other articles on the VIA Character Strengths [click here](#).

### **VIA Strengths Inventory Questions to Increase Sense of Purpose & Happiness**

- How can you utilize your Signature Strengths more in your work, avocations, and/or volunteer work?
- How can you utilize your Signature Strengths more in your hobbies and home life?
- How do you currently utilize your Signatures Strengths?
- How could you use them even more?
- If you are exploring careers, which jobs and/or business seem to utilize your Signature Strengths?

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## Signature Strengths

In Authentic Happiness, Martin Seligman identifies twenty-four signature strengths that fall into six categories. These strengths are values in action.

❖ **Wisdom and Knowledge:**

- Curiosity
- Love of learning
- Judgment
- Ingenuity
- Social intelligence
- Perspective

❖ **Courage:**

- Valor
- Perseverance
- Integrity

❖ **Humanity and love:**

- Kindness and loving

❖ **Justice:**

- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Leadership

❖ **Temperance:**

- Self-control
- Prudence
- Humility

❖ **Transcendence:**

- Appreciation of beauty
- Gratitude
- Hope
- Spirituality
- Forgiveness
- Humor
- Zest

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## Understanding and Using Your VIA Character Strengths Results

*"As coaches, the authors have found the strengths survey to be quietly radical. Many clients have never had their strengths assessed and find that just reading the survey results helps them label or understand themselves in new ways." Carol Kaufmman, Ph.D. Harvard Medical School Department of Psychiatry.*

### Increasing Your Happiness

Of all the 24 strengths, the five most strongly correlated to happiness are: **gratitude, curiosity, vitality, hope, and the capacity to love and be loved.**

One way to use your VIA Signature Strength Scores is to look at where these five values are in the order of your values, and identify which ones you want to strengthen. There are very specific steps you can take to increase any of these strengths. When you increase these strengths or focus on them, you will find that you are happier.

In addition, another way to increase your happiness is to find new ways to use your Signature Strengths (your top five strengths). Using your Signature Strengths in your work and personal life will increase your sense of meaning, purpose, and happiness.

You may not fully understand why happiness is important: "increasing happiness is not only an end unto itself; it also correlates with and may even help create greater:

- Competence
- Resilience
- Access to personal as well as social resources
- Physical health
- Deeper connection to society
- A sense of personal mission

### Finding Work that Is Meaningful

Martin Seligman, in his book Authentic Happiness, states that if a person uses their Signature Strengths in their work, they will find it more meaningful. The following is a list of the strengths, and jobs that utilize these strengths. You can also brainstorm your own list of jobs that will utilize your signatures strengths.

## **Examples of Jobs or Activities that Utilize Signature Strengths**

### **Creativity, Ingenuity, and Originality**

- Create music
- Decorate houses
- Paint

### **Judgment, critical thinking, & open-mindedness**

- Lawyer or judge
- Teach cultural diversity
- Actuary

### **Curiosity and Interest in the World**

- Investigate crimes
- Research
- Archeology
- Educational travel

### **Love of Learning**

- Take classes
- Pursue a degree
- Be a professor
- Coach

### **Perspective**

- Write
- Coach women-owned businesses

### **Bravery and Valor**

- Fire fighter or policeman
- Public speaker

### **Industry, Diligence, and Perseverance**

- Private investigator
- Genealogy
- Run a marathon
- Construction worker

**Honesty, Authenticity, and Genuineness**

- Teach ethics
- Quality assurance

**Zest, Enthusiasm, Energy**

- Personal trainer
- Run a health club
- Activity director for a cruise ship

**Capacity to Love & Be Loved**

- Volunteer at a children's summer camp
- Teacher
- Help battered wives

**Kindness**

- Write notes of encouragement
- Volunteer at a hospital
- Nurse

**Social Intelligence**

- Be a conflict mediator
- Leader
- Facilitator
- Customer service
- Be a Greeter for your city

**Forgiveness and Mercy**

- Teach people how to forgive
- Write a book on forgiveness
- Teach anger management

**Modesty and Humility**

- Administrative assistant
- Support staff



**Caution, Prudence, and Discretion**

- Safety inspector
- Counselor
- Quality Assurance

**Self Control and Self Regulation**

- Teach karate
- Teach people how to manage their finances

**Appreciation of Beauty**

- Art historian
- Museum curator
- Docent
- Garden

**Gratitude**

- Write gratitude letters
- Teach people how to be grateful

**Hope, Optimism, and Future-mindedness**

- Lead grief support or cancer support groups
- Social work

**Humor and Playfulness**

- Comedian
- Comedy writer
- Make patients at a hospital laugh

**Spirituality, Sense of Purpose, Faith**

- Pastor/priest/rabbi/nun
- Healer
- Lead meditation
- Teach bible study
- Write
- Yoga instructor

**Citizenship, Teamwork, and Loyalty**

- Volunteer in your community
- School board

**Fairness, Equity, and Justice**

- Judge
- Ombudsman
- Conflict Mediator

**Leadership**

- Any level of management or executive
- Elected Office
- Activist
- Sports Coach
- Team Leader
- Start a non-profit organization
- Business owner

**Donna Schilder's Signature Strengths**

- Creativity, Ingenuity, and Originality
- Love of Learning
- Social Intelligence
- Capacity to Love and Be Loved
- Caution, Prudence, and Discretion

**VIA Strengths Inventory Questions to Increase Sense of Purpose & Happiness**

Your top 5 Strengths are your Signature Strengths.

- Do your top 5 strengths seem like they are your Signature Strengths (authentically you)? When you utilize them do you experience a sense of flow (time passing without awareness that it has passed, being completely engrossed in an activity)? If one of the strengths listed as you top 5 strengths does not seem like it induces a sense of flow, take a look at the 6 strengths and see if it is a Signature Strength instead.

- How can you utilize your Signature Strengths more in your work, avocations, and/or volunteer work?
- How can you utilize your Signature Strengths more in your hobbies and home life?
- How do you currently utilize your Signatures Strengths?
- How could you use them even more?
- If you are exploring careers, which jobs and/or business seem to utilize your Signature Strengths?