



Tool 14

Awareness of Strengths and Gifts

Mentor-coaching builds on the mentee's gifts and strengths. This strengths-based approach "creates conditions that enable people to identify, value and mobilize their strengths and capacities in the process of change" (McCashen, *The Strengths Approach: A Strengths-Based Resource for Sharing Power and Creating Change*, 2005, p. v).

It is important to find ways to support the mentee in identifying their core strengths. Thus, we offer the following two approaches, a series of questions and a free online survey, the *VIA Institute on Character survey*, designed to provide the mentee with a character strengths profile.

How do we identify our strengths?

Provide the following questions to support the mentee in identifying their strengths.

- What strengths do I know that I have?
- What yearnings show up consistently in my life?
- What do I love to do? What strengths lie within?
- What strengths drive or sit underneath my passions and aptitudes?
- What do people consistently come to me for?
- What strengths do others acknowledge in me? (e.g., mentor-coach, colleagues, teaching partners, family)



Strengths Survey: Self-Reflection

Complete the *VIA Institute on Character survey* at the website www.viacharacter.org. This is a free, scientifically validated survey that identifies character strengths and gifts. Completing it takes about 15 minutes and the results—a report of your strengths in top-down order—are emailed to you immediately. Participating in this survey contributes to ongoing global research regarding character strengths and their role in supporting resilience, happiness, and growth.

“Building strengths...and using them in daily life [is] very much a matter of making choices. [It] is not about learning, training or conditioning, but about discovery, creation, and ownership. My favourite positive ‘intervention’ is merely to ask you to take the survey.... Quite astonishingly, your own ingenuity and your desire to lead the good life often take over from there...”

—Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*, 2002, pp. 136–137

After the mentee completes the *VIA survey*, invite her or him to share the results with you as mentor-coach. Together, explore the resonance, impact, and implications of the top strengths identified.

You may wish to invite further reflection by having the mentee consider some of the following questions:

- What surprised me?
- Which strengths am I calling on most consistently?
- Which strengths do I want to call on more consistently?
- How will my life and work be enhanced by living more intentionally into my strengths?