



USE YOUR STRENGTHS

"With the new day comes new strength and new thoughts."

—Eleanor Roosevelt

OVERVIEW

Choose a personal strength, write how you're going to use the strength today, and then carry out your plan.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year, but especially during a stressful time

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 15 minutes, every day for a week

LEVEL

- Adult

MATERIALS

- Writing materials
- Optional: [VIA Character Strengths Survey for Adults](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

You will:

- Daily for a week, write and carry out a plan for using a character strength throughout the day
- Reflect on the experience at the end of the week

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

- Set aside 5-10 minutes of uninterrupted time in a quiet space to make your plan.
- Take a few deep breaths to center yourself.
- Enjoy the process!

INSTRUCTIONS

- Prior to beginning this practice, consider taking the [VIA Character Strengths for Adults survey](#) that uses a list of 26 character strengths to help you figure out your top ones.
- Take a moment to think about one of your personal strengths—for instance, creativity, perseverance, kindness, modesty, or curiosity.
- Consider how you could use this strength today in a new and different way. For example, if you choose the personal strength of perseverance, you might make a list of tasks that you have found challenging recently, then try to tackle each one of them. Or if you choose curiosity, you might attempt an activity that you've never tried before.
- Describe in writing the personal strength you plan to use today and how you are going to use it. Then, go ahead and do it—act on your strength as frequently as possible throughout the day.
- Repeat the steps above every day for a week. You may use the same personal strength across multiple days, or try using a new personal strength each day.
- At the end of the week, write about the personal strengths that you focused on during the week and how you used them. Write in detail about what you did, how you felt, and what you learned from the experience.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- Was this practice helpful? How do you feel after completing it? Are there other strengths that you'd like to work on next?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In a [study](#), participants tried using a personal strength each day for one week. Compared with those who didn't try to use a strength—instead they wrote about early memories every day for a week—those who identified and used their strengths reported an increase in happiness and a decrease in symptoms of depression immediately after the one-week experiment, and those changes persisted six months later.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The teaching profession often involves a great deal of self-criticism that can stem from a bombed lesson, a hard-to-reach student, an angry parent or colleague, or one of the other many challenges faced by educators on a daily basis. Thus, we often give our weaknesses and limitations more attention than our strengths. But research suggests that thinking about personal strengths can increase our happiness and reduce depression.

While we shouldn't ignore our shortcomings, reflecting on our strengths can help remind us that we do have important positive qualities, and this reminder can build our confidence and self-esteem—and, in turn, increase happiness.

SOURCE

[Sonja Lyubomirsky, Ph.D.](#), University of California, Riverside

[Kristin Layous, Ph.D.](#), California State University, East Bay