



Strengths Academy

Strengths of Character

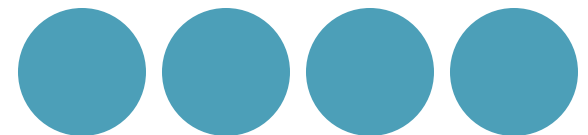
“Virtues in Action”

Azusa Pacific University



Character

- There is consensus that good character is a good thing
- Good character results in:
 - Personal well-being
 - Interpersonal well-being
 - Social well-being
- Good character does not promise the absence of difficulty, but the ability to thrive in the midst of hardship.



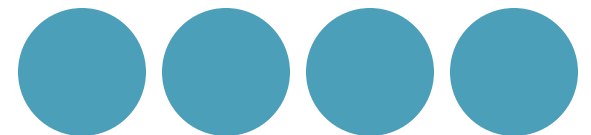


Good Character

A life of good character is a life that is:

- Fulfilling
- Satisfying
- Invigorating
- Worth the effort
- Meaningful
- Positive

morally, psychologically, relationally, and spiritually





Developing Good Character

Good character can be cultivated through a strengths-mindset.

A Deficit Mindset

Repairing problems

Healing wounds

Identifying defects

Studying what's wrong with people

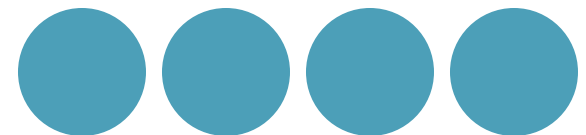
A Strengths Mindset

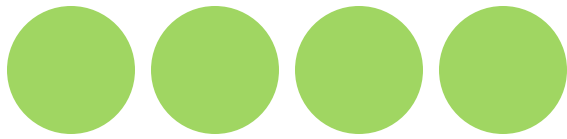
Building capacity

Releasing potential

Nurturing competence

Studying what's right with people

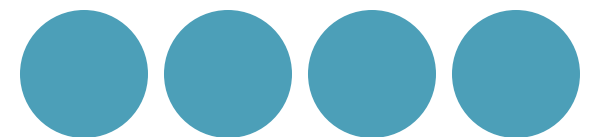




But what is a “strength”?

A “strength” is “a capacity for feeling, thinking, and behaving in a way that allows optimal functioning in the pursuit of valued outcomes” (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

- The Clifton StrengthsFinder measures situational themes of talent, or strengths of competence.
- The VIA-IS (Virtues in Action-Inventory of Strengths) measures positive psychological traits, or strengths of character.





So what's the difference?

Clifton StrengthsFinder

Human Talents

Discovered within us,
identified

Innate

Probabilities / Natural
tendencies

Can be developed through
effort

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VIA (Virtues in Action)

Character Traits

Identified as important,
appreciated

Not innate

Potentialities / Need
nurturing

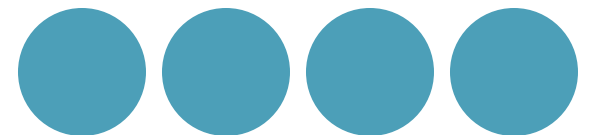
Can be developed through
effort





Virtues In Action (VIA)

- The VIA is a classification that offers the positive flipside of the traditional classification of disorders found in the DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders).
- The VIA list provides a common language for a strengths-based approach to character development (as well as psychological diagnosis and treatment).





Virtues In Action (VIA)

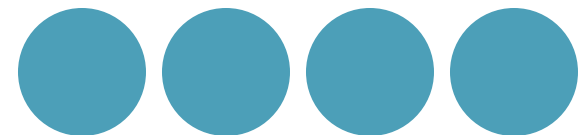
The six overarching “virtues” are based on a analysis and compilation of core human excellences found from history’s great philosophers, religions, and traditions.

- They have “emerged consensually across cultures and throughout time” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
- “We speculate that all these virtues must be present at above-threshold values for an individual to be deemed of good character” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

The twenty-four VIA “strengths” (organized under the six virtues) are the ingredients that give substance to the virtues.

- These strengths are the means by which the virtues are lived out
“We are comfortable saying that someone is of good character if he or she displays but 1 or 2 strengths within a virtue group”

(Peterson & Seligman, 2004)





VIA The 6 Virtues

Wisdom and Knowledge: cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge

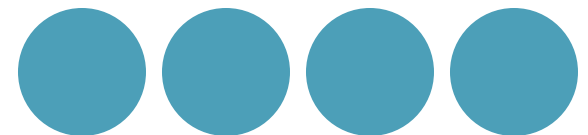
Courage: emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal

Humanity: interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others

Justice: civic strengths that underlie healthy community life

Temperance: strengths that protect against excess

Transcendence: strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning





VIA The 24 Strengths

Wisdom and Knowledge: Creativity, Curiosity, Open-mindedness,
Love of learning; Perspective

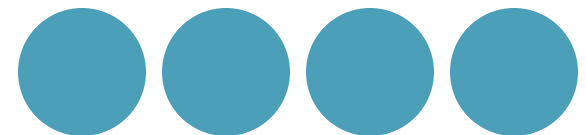
Courage: Bravery, Persistence, Integrity, Vitality

Humanity: Love, Kindness, Social intelligence

Justice: Citizenship, Fairness, Leadership

Temperance: Forgiveness and Mercy, Humility/Modesty, Prudence,
Self-regulation

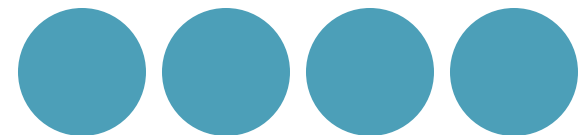
Transcendence: Appreciation for beauty and excellence, Gratitude,
Hope, Humor, Spirituality





Creativity

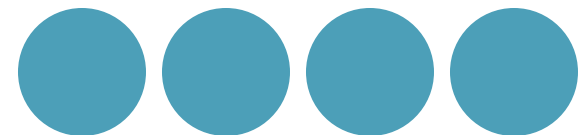
- A creative person is someone who comes up with ideas that are (1) original and (2) useful
- Creativity includes artistic achievement, but is not limited to it
- People who are creative enjoy thinking of novel and productive ways to describe and do things
- There is “BIG C” Creativity / “little c” creativity
 - “little c” creativity refers to day-to-day creativity
 - “Big C” creativity is reserved for those who accomplish once-in-lifetime, creative acts
 - “Big C” creators understand that truly original and useful creativity requires hard work
 - “Big C” creators are usually (eventually) completers
- Sparks of ingenuity





Curiosity

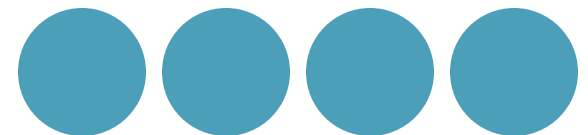
- Curious people have an ongoing, intrinsic interest in their inner experience and the world around them
- They are attracted to new things, people, and experiences
- They are rarely bored.
- Good listeners and conversationalists
- Able to focus their attention
- They ask questions from a new perspective
- Curious people are resilient learners and good problem solvers
- They often want to know, just for the sake of knowing





Open-Mindedness

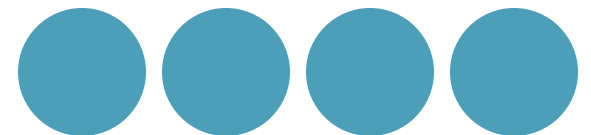
- Open-Minded people are inclined to examine things from all sides
- Critical thinkers
- They don't typically stay stuck in one opinion or jump to conclusions
- Likely to change their mind in light of evidence
- Tend to pursue additional information and to weigh all the evidence fairly
- Can integrate previous knowledge and experience with new knowledge and experience





Love of Learning

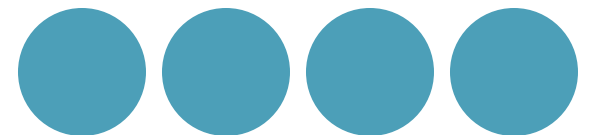
- Love of Learning is indicated by the frequent mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
- Learning on one's own or through a formal process of instruction
- Related to the strength of curiosity, but goes further to describe the tendency to systematically add to what one knows
- In touch with one's best time, place, and way of learning
- Eager to share what is being learned with others





Perspective

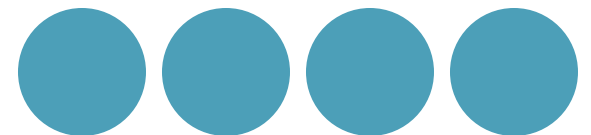
- A person with perspective is perceived as being wise
- Able to get inside someone else's point of view
- Insightful beyond the facts
- Able to give sound guidance
- Can explain the reasons **why** in a way that makes sense to oneself and other people





Bravery

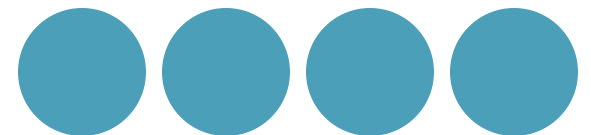
- Bravery is the strength of not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain
- To speak up for what is right ... even in the face of opposition
- Acting on convictions, even if unpopular
- Has a “come-what-may” attitude
- Includes physical bravery but is not limited to it

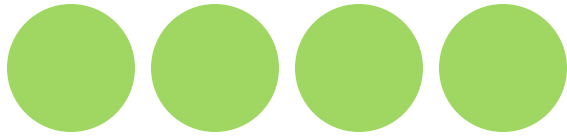




Persistence

- Persistent people are “finishers”
- They push through obstacles
- They are resilient and hopeful
- To be persistent is to persevere and to be industriousness





Integrity

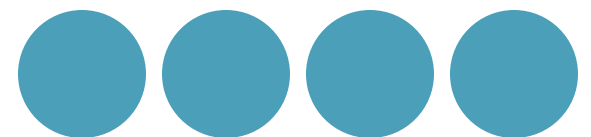
- The person of integrity presents him/herself in a genuine way
- “What you see is what you get.”
- Honest and ethical
- People with integrity expect honest straight talk from others
- They are aware of their own inauthenticity and where their values don’t match their life





Zest

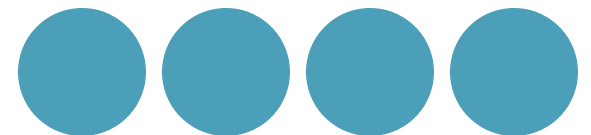
- Those who have zest approach life with excitement and energy
- A refusal to do things halfway or halfheartedly
- Vigorous
- To have the strength of zest is to live life as an adventure
- Zest is about feeling alive and activated





Love

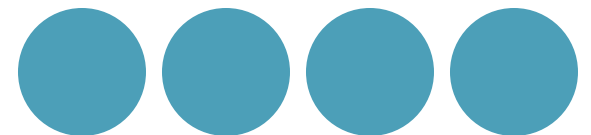
- Includes the capacity to love
- Also includes the capacity to receive love
- Values close relationships with others
- Especially appreciates when others are reciprocal in sharing and caring
- Comfortable expressing affection in words, deeds, and touch

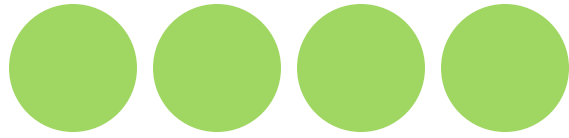




Kindness

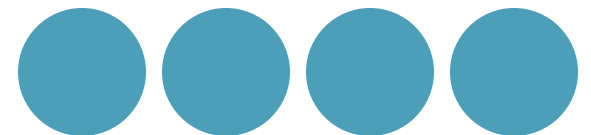
- Intentional in doing favors and good deeds for others
- Likes being helpful
- Appreciates being able to offer tangible care
- Generous
- Acts of compassion for those in need
- A pleasure to be around
- Nurturing





Social Intelligence

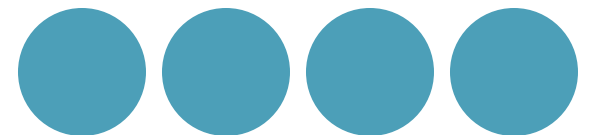
- In touch with their own values, motivations, and limitations
- They are emotionally intelligent
 - They are aware of their own feelings and the feelings of others
- Discerning; Can “read” people accurately; they pick up on motives
- Adaptable in various social settings
- Able to make a connection with others





Citizenship

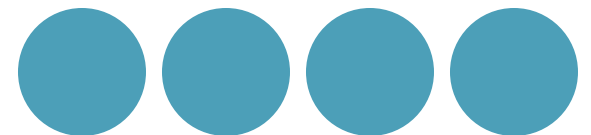
- Those activating the strengths of citizenship value “doing their part”
- They have a sense of social responsibility
- Faithful members of their team, group, or community
- Loyal
- Acknowledge the need for others: everyone has a contribution to make





Fairness

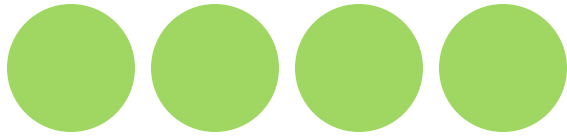
- To function with fairness is to have a deep sense of, and commitment to, justice
- A commitment to treat all people equitably
- “Disinterested” >> Fairness is careful to not let personal feelings lead to biased decisions
- Everyone should have the same opportunities





Leadership

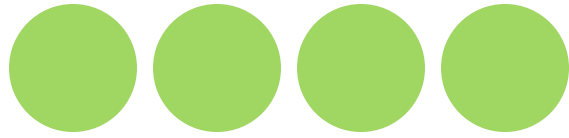
- The strength of leadership is seen in those who can
 - Encourage others to get things done
 - Maintain good relationships with those being led
- Inspirational, influential
- Can organize groups and activities
- Achieves results through others



Forgiveness/Mercy

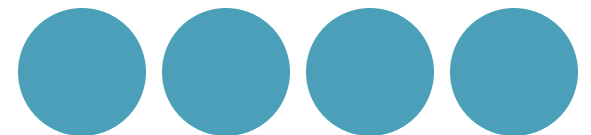
- Willing to forgive those who have done wrong
- Tolerant of others
- Grants “second chances”
- Gives grace when others come up short
- Not vengeful when wounded by others
- Avoids holding grudges





Humility/Modesty

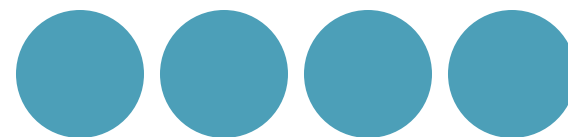
- Not braggadocios
- Lets one's accomplishments speak for themselves
- Refuses to “one-up” others in relationship
- Does not regard oneself as more special than one is
- Avoids flaunting or seeking to be the center of attention





Prudence

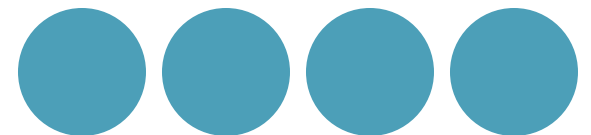
- The prudent person is thoughtful about their choices
- They avoid taking undue risks
- Careful to not say or do things that might later be regretted
- The ability to see things circumspectly
- Awareness of possible consequences





Self-Regulation

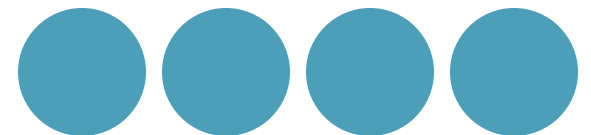
- When one is self-regulated, one is practicing self-control
- Self-regulation involves both feelings and actions
- Intentional in aligning choices with practices
- Able to discipline one's natural inclinations for what is proper for the time and place





Appreciation for Beauty and Excellence

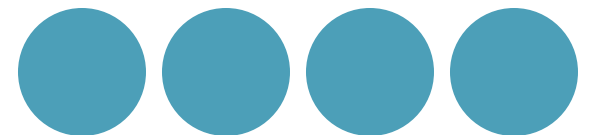
- Lives with a sense of awe
- Notices beauty wherever it may be found
- Appreciates excellence across the domains of life including the arts, math, science, etc.
- Has a sense of awareness when in nature
- Pursues wonder in everyday experience





Gratitude

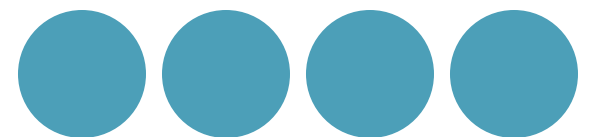
- Willing to accept acts of kindness from others, though not presumptuous
- Conscious of one's "blessings"
- Aware that others are often the source of good things
- Intentional at saying "Thank You"





Hope

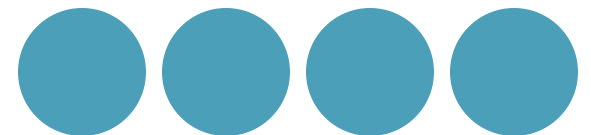
- Optimistic about life's realities
- Takes personal ownership of the good and sees it as perpetually possible
- Sees the bad as transient and short-term
- Enthusiastic about the future
- Eager to contribute to a better tomorrow
- Willing to make plans and set goals





Humor

- Those with the strengths of humor like to laugh, tease, joke but not in ways harmful to others
- Brings smiles to other people's faces
- Are able to seeing the lighter side of difficult issues
- Can laugh at themselves; don't take themselves too seriously
- Playful





Spirituality

- A sense of connection to a presence beyond this world
- Having a coherent set of beliefs that shape conduct and provide comfort
- Perceive their own higher purpose
- In pursuit of the deeper meanings of life
- Conscious of their own role in the larger scheme of things

