

## Module 6: Strengths



**Subject:** Psychological Well-being

**Duration of Unit:** 2 classes (45 min each)

**Central Message:** The happiest people are those that have discovered their unique strengths and virtues and use those gifts for a purpose that is greater than their own personal goals.



### LEARNING GOALS

#### Enduring Understandings:

- If we are to move beyond the Pleasant Life and experience the Engaged Life and the Meaningful Life, we must first discover our unique “signature” strengths.
- To boost long-term happiness, we must find ways to use our unique strengths in new ways and situations rather than focus on our weaknesses.

#### Essential Questions:

- How are strengths related to long-term happiness?
- How are strengths linked to the Engaged Life and the Meaningful Life?
- What do you think is your top strength and how did you discover it?

#### Learning Outcomes:

Students will be able to:

- Distinguish between the Pleasant Life, the Engaged Life, and the Meaningful Life, and especially the role of strengths in the Engaged and Meaningful Lives.
- Describe concrete examples from mentors or from their own experience.
- Identify their unique strengths and virtues.

## LESSON PLAN OUTLINE

### Day 1 Main Topic – Finding happiness through strengths

- **Challenge Assignment Debrief:** Break students into pairs. Give each member of the pair five minutes to talk about:
  - Their experience with the flow challenge assignment.
  - Which flow activity they picked to engage in regularly over the course of the semester, and why. (10 mins)
- **Watch the video on Strengths** (9 mins)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a discussion about the video using the following prompts:
  - What was the most memorable clip from the video, and why?
  - Why does the discovery of personal strengths impact happiness and self-esteem? How can “weakness spotting” produce toxic relationships? (10 mins)
- **Group activity:** Break into groups of two. Ask your partner to tell you about something they did, recently or a long while ago, that they feel proud or satisfied about. Give your partner a little time to think about it. It can be something very small, like completing a difficult assignment, or something long term, such as a volunteer experience. Listen carefully, and once they have told their story, see if you can point out at least two personal strengths that they revealed through the story. Switch roles. (15 mins)
- **Assignment:**
  - Take the VIA Signature Strengths questionnaire to determine their top three signature strengths.  
<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/Register>
  - Read the following page on the science of strengths:  
<https://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/science-of-happiness/strengths-and-virtues/>

### Day 2 Main Topic – What are your strengths?

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- **Group Activity:** Have students write down their “signature strengths” on a sheet of paper with their name on top and post them on the wall. Have students walk around the room (“gallery walk” style) and see the signature strengths of each of their classmates. (5 mins) If possible, keep the papers up in the classroom for the next couple of weeks or consolidate onto one board on display.
- **Written Reflection:** Have students reflect upon the results of their “signature strengths” in their portfolios. Use the following prompts:
  - What about these results surprise you and why?
  - In what kind of careers could you use your strengths most effectively?” (5 mins)
- **Lecture:** Use the slide deck to remind students about Martin Seligman’s theories of the three different lives, describing the differences between the Pleasant Life, the Engaged Life, and the Meaningful Life, and the role of strengths in the last two. (5 mins)
- **Activity:** The teacher describes a “day in the life” of a banker who leads a Pleasant Life, a farmer who leads an Engaged Life, and a bus driver who leads a Meaningful Life. Students guess who is leading which kind of life. (5 mins)
- **Video:** Show the following TED talk by Ken Robinson (20 mins):  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a discussion about the video using the following prompts:
  - What was the most memorable clip from the video, and why?
  - How do you think creativity is linked to happiness? Clue: many links exist between creativity, flow, intrinsic motivation and personal autonomy / self efficacy (5 mins)
- **Assignment:** Think of someone who has experienced the engaged life, and preferably, the meaningful life. Interview that person and find out how they discovered their strengths (was it through formal education or by accident?) and how they found ways to use them in their career or other activities. Have students write a reflection about this experience in their portfolio. Then, have students create a goal for their Weekly Happiness Habits Journal about one new way they can utilize their strengths each week for the semester.

### **ASSESSMENT**

#### **Summative Assessment:**

- Students submit their **Weekly Happiness Habits Journal** and include their Strengths goal along with all previous others.

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