

IME 2021 VIA Character Strengths Handout and Worksheet

VIA Character Strengths, Optimal Usage Versus Overuse

1. List your top five strengths

- 1:
- 2:
- 3:
- 4:
- 5:

Research on the VIA Character Strengths has also shown what it looks like when strengths are used appropriately and intentionally (optimally), versus when they are underused or overused

Directions: Use your top five strengths to complete the VIA Character Strengths table below.

Simply make a mark next to the rows that contains your top five signature strengths.

VIA Strength	With optimal use we could be seen as	With Overuse we could be seen as
Virtue: Wisdom		
Creativity	Uniqueness that is practical; original, clever, imaginative	Eccentric; odd; scattered
Curiosity	“Explorer,” intrigued, open, novelty-seeker	Nosy; intrusive, self-serving
Judgment	Seeing 360 degrees of details; analytical, detail oriented, open-minded, rational, logical	Narrow-minded; cynical; rigid; indecisive; lost in one’s head
Love of Learning	Going deep with knowledge; information-seeking; lifelong learner	Know-it-all; elitist; overwhelming
Perspective	Sees and offers the wider review; wise; integrating viewpoints beyond one’s own	Overbearing; arrogant; disconnected
Virtue: Courage		
Bravery	Facing fears; confronting adversity; valor	Risk-taking; foolish; overconfident; unconcerned of others’ reactions
Honesty	True to ourselves, authentic to others; truth-sharer and seeker; sincere; without pretense	Self-righteous; rude; inconsiderate
Perseverance	Task completer; persistent and gritty; overcoming all obstacles	Stubborn; struggles to let go; fixated
Zest	Enthusiasm for life; happy; active; energized	Hyper; overactive; annoying
Virtue: Humanity		
Love	Genuine, reciprocal warmth; connected; relational, fulfillment	Misaligned with others’ needs; sugary sweet/touchy-feely; providing emotional overkill
Kindness	Doing for others; caring; compassionate; generous; nice, and friendly	Intrusive; overly focused on others; having Compassion-fatigue;
Social Intelligence	Tuned in, savvy; knowing what makes others tick; empathic; emotionally intelligent	Over-analytical; self-deceptive; overly sensitive
Virtue: Justice		
Fairness	Champions of equal opportunity for all; care- and justice-based; displaying moral concern	Detached; indecisive on justice issues; displaying uncaring justice

Leadership	Positively influencing others; organizing groups; leading around a vision	Bossy; controlling; authoritarian
Teamwork	Participative; contributing to group efforts; loyal; socially responsible; collaborative	Dependent; lost in groupthink; blind obedience; loss of individuality
Virtue: Temperance		
Forgiveness	Letting go of hurt when wronged; giver of second chances; accepting shortcomings	Permissive; doormat; too lenient or soft
Humility	Clear view of oneself; focuses attention on others; sees own limitations; modest	Self-deprecation; limited self-image; subservient; withholding about oneself
Prudence	Wisely cautious; planful; known to think before speaking; goal-oriented; a risk-manager	Stuffy; prudish; rigid; passive
Self-Regulation	Self-manager of vices; mindful; disciplined	Constricted; inhibited; tightly wound; obsessive
VIA Strength	With optimal use we could be seen as	With Overuse we could be seen as
Virtue: Transcendence		
Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence	Seeing the life behind things; awe/wonder in the presence of beauty; admiration for excellence; elevation for the goodness of others	perfectionistic; intolerant; promoting unrelenting standards or demonstrating snobbery
Gratitude	Attitude of thankfulness; connected; appreciating positives	Ingratiation; contrived; profuse; repetitive
Hope	Positive expectations; optimistic; confidence in goals and future	Unrealistic; Pollyanna-ish; head in the clouds, blind optimism
Humor	Sharing laughter/joy with others; seeing the lighter side; being playful	Tasteless/offensive; giddy; socially inappropriate
Spirituality	Connecting with the sacred; pursuing life meaning; finding purpose; expressing virtues	Preachy/proselytizing; fanatical; rigid values; holier than thou

Source for Data: Niemiec RM. Finding the golden mean: the overuse, underuse, and optimal use of character strengths. *Counseling Psychology Quarterly*, 2019, DOI: 10.1080/09515070.2019.1617674
 To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09515070.2019.1617674>

Reflection:

VIA Signature Strength	The extent of optimal usage and how you could be more intentional in usage	Discuss any overuse and how you could be more mindful
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

The VIA Classification of Character Strengths Descriptions of Each Virtue and Strength

1. **Wisdom and Knowledge** – Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge
 - **Creativity** [originality, ingenuity]: Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
 - **Curiosity** [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]: Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering
 - **Judgment & Open-mindedness** [critical thinking]: Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly
 - **Love of Learning**: Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows
 - **Perspective** [wisdom]: Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people
2. **Courage** – Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal
 - **Bravery** [valor]: Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it
 - **Perseverance** [persistence, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks
 - **Honesty** [authenticity, integrity]: Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions
 - **Zest** [vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]: Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated
3. **Humanity** - Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others
 - **Love [Capacity to Love and Be Loved]**: Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people
 - **Kindness** [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]: Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
 - **Social Intelligence** [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]: Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick
4. **Justice** - Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life
 - **Teamwork** [citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty]: Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
 - **Fairness**: Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.
 - **Leadership**: Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the time maintain time good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.
5. **Temperance** – Strengths that protect against excess
 - **Forgiveness**: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
 - **Humility**: Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
 - **Prudence**: Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
 - **Self-Regulation** [self-control]: Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions
6. **Transcendence** - Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning
 - **Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence** [awe, wonder, elevation]: Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience
 - **Gratitude**: Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks
 - **Hope** [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]: Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
 - **Humor** [playfulness]: Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
 - **Spirituality** [faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

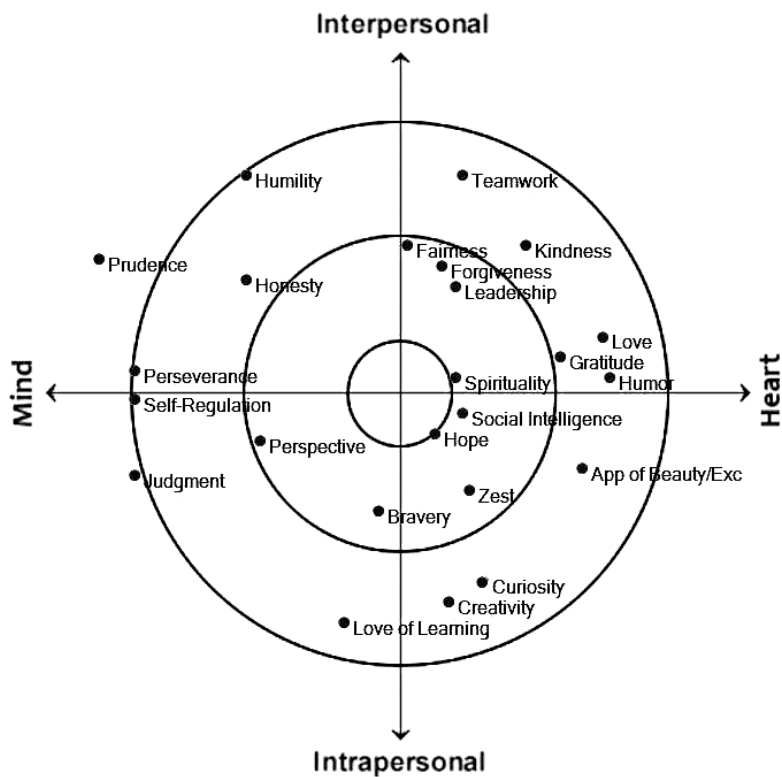
Bonus Activities to do at home

Directions: This worksheet will help you explore your VIA Character Strengths in more depth. Research into these strengths has indicated that intentional usage can help you: 1) manage and overcome problems; 2) improve your relationships; and 3) enhance wellbeing. However, like any tool, your VIA character strengths must be used skillfully. After the worksheet are two optional activities that you can complete on your own for further reflection.

The strengths have been shown to fall into two dimensions: Mind versus heart and interpersonal versus intrapersonal. Strengths in the same quadrant are more likely to be used together.

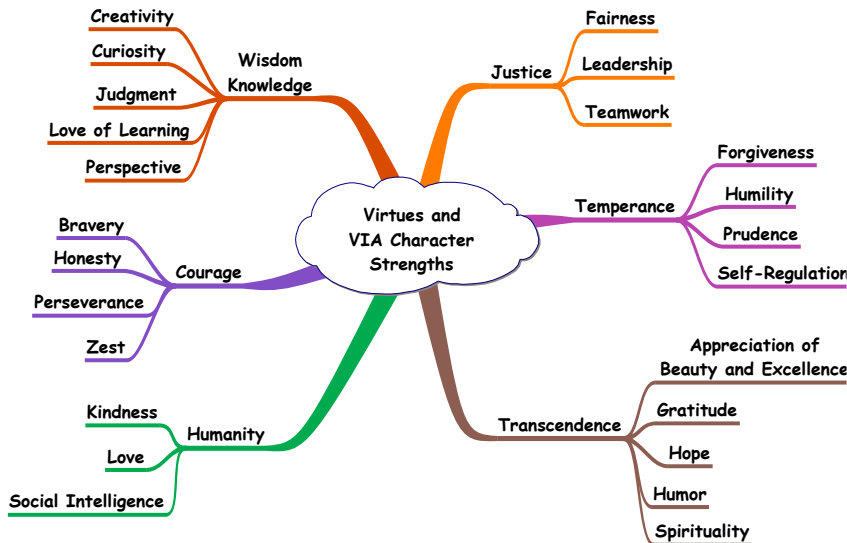
- Note which of the four quadrants have multiple strengths versus which have none.

Click and drag the boxes over your five signature strengths.



Additional Exercises

- Write the rank beside each of your top five strengths. Make a mark beside the highest ranked strength in each virtue. (use the draw tool). If you want, you can also put the rank beside each of the 24 strengths. Notice the virtues where you have signature strengths, and ones where you do not. Note these in #2 below.



- Your analysis of your VIA Character Strengths. We utilize all 24 strengths in differing amounts, with our signature strengths most likely to be used. You can utilize your signature strengths to build other strengths, and you can also draw on you next set (6-10) more optimally with practice.

From Mind Map

Virtue	Number of Signature Strengths	How I might build a strength in a virtue with no top strength
Wisdom & Knowledge		
Courage		
Humanity		
Justice		
Temperance		
Transcendence		

From Dimensions Diagram

Quadrant	Number of Signature Strengths	How I might build a strength in a quadrant with no top strength
1-Interpersonal-Mind		
2-Interpersonal-Heart		
3-Intrapersonal-Mind		
4-Intrapersonal-Heart		