



Strengths Spotting: Observing Strengths in Others

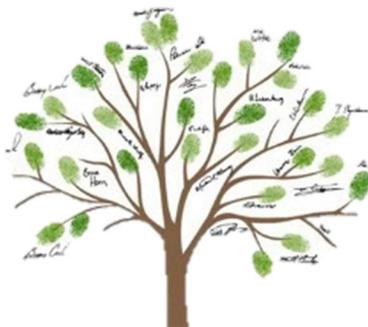
Background

Noticing strengths in others can help us to appreciate the wide variety of human strengths and the diverse ways and contexts in which these strengths are displayed. We may identify role models, including famous people, friends, family members, and others who embody the strengths we most value and wish to infuse into our lives.

As we learn about strengths, it is often easiest to begin by identifying strengths in others, especially our loved ones, before we turn the lens inward to discover our strengths.

Noticing and appreciating others' strengths helps us to understand others' goals and actions, to be more empathic, and to develop positive and caring relationships.

Activities

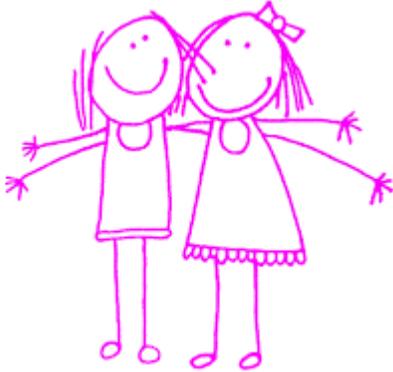


Strengths Family Tree. Create a family tree that shows key strengths in members of your family. This activity can be completed as an individual assignment or in collaboration with other family members. To identify strengths in others: Reflect on the top strengths you've observed in family members and/or interview family members about their strengths and the strengths they observe or remember in others. As you create your family tree, think about the following questions:

- What are the strengths that run through your family? (that many family members possess). What strengths are unique to certain family members?
- What are some of the best things about your family's

particular constellation of strengths? How does your family's constellation of strengths shape your experiences?

- How can you use your knowledge of others' strengths to create positive experiences in your family?



Signature Strengths in Others. Think about a close friend, family member, or colleague. What are the top 3-5 strengths you notice most in this person? Write down these strengths along with specific concrete examples of times that this person displayed this strength (what did they do that showed the strength?). You can complete this activity on your own. You can also complete the activity with a close friend or family member and share the strengths you observed in each other.



Strengths Glasses. Go through your day with strengths glasses. Try to notice all others' behaviors that are related to strengths. Be sure to observe people you regularly interact with as well as more distant acquaintances and even strangers. As a variation, you can go through your day with glasses that focus on a specific strength (e.g., creativity) and then try on different sets of strength glasses (e.g., "persistence", "love") on other days. What do you notice that inspires you? What do you notice that you might otherwise have missed or taken for granted?

References and Further Reading

Linkins, M., Niemiec, R., Gillham, J., & Mayerson, D. (2015). Through the lens of strengths: A framework for educating the heart. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 10*, 64-68.

Seligman, M.E.P., Ernst, R., Gillham, J., Reivich, K., & Linkins, M. (2009). Positive Education: Positive psychology and classroom interventions. *Oxford Review of Education, 35*, 293-311.

Web Resources

Newark Boys Chorus School and the VIA Survey

This video includes interviews with teachers and students at a school that incorporated activities designed to increase students' awareness of strengths in themselves and in others.

- Video available on the VIA Institute channel on YouTube
- Search for "Newark Boys Chorus VIA survey"