



## The VIA Classification of Character Strengths

*(Updated Oct. 23, 2008; copyright VIA Institute on Character 2004)*

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/others
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's right even if there's opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it
  - Perseverance [persistence, industriousness]: Finishing what one starts; persevering 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 & 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/feelings of others 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 & justice; not letting 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 same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.
5. **Temperance** – strengths that protect against excess
- Forgiveness & Mercy: Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting others' shortcomings; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
  - Modesty & 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 universe & 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
  - Religiousness & Spirituality [faith, purpose]: Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose & 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