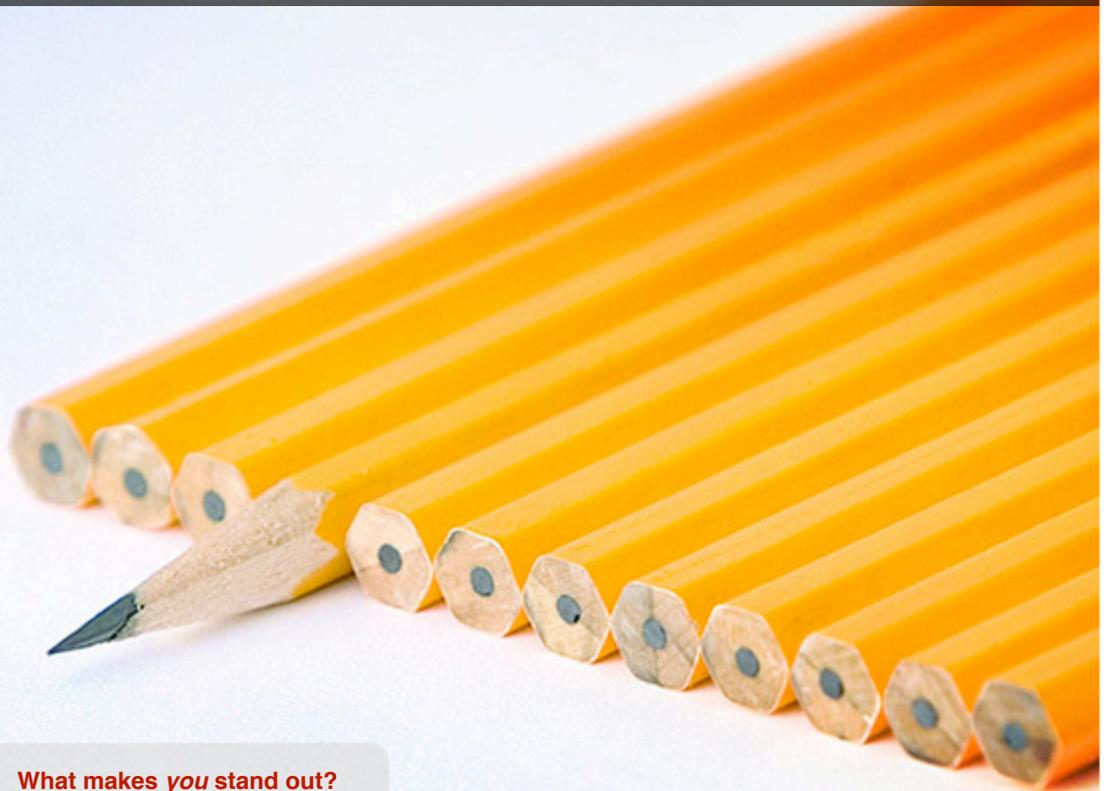


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strengthsfinder 2.0

Strengths Discovery and Action-Planning Guide



What makes *you* stand out?

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ANNE JACKSON

Your Top 5 Themes

Connectedness

Empathy

Intellection

Belief

Input

What's in This Guide?

- For each of your top five themes, you will find:
 - A brief Shared Theme Description
 - Your Personalized Strengths Insights, which describe what makes you stand out from others with the same theme in their top five
 - Some examples of what the theme "sounds like" — real quotes from people who also have the theme in their top five
 - 10 Ideas for Action
- A Strengths Discovery Activity to get you thinking about how your talents and your investment work together to build strengths that you can apply to your work and personal life
- A Strengths-Based Action Plan for review with a friend, manager, or colleague

CONNECTEDNESS

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

By nature, you hold tightly to your core values. They form the foundation of your day-to-day existence. Your internal moral compass always points in the direction of what is right, proper, and true. You trust your strong convictions to direct you to the right path, regardless of the obstacles you face. It's very likely that you may bring a more optimistic perspective to life than some people do. Why? You somehow feel linked to other members of the human family. Perhaps knowing you are not alone in your suffering or joy encourages you. Driven by your talents, you sometimes sense a special bond with certain individuals regardless of whether you have met them. Perhaps time or distance does not prevent you from feeling closely linked to specific people or the lives they lead. Because of your strengths, you usually welcome a wide array of people into your life. From the first moment you meet them, you are likely to sense that an unspoken bond exists between you. You are curious, so you probably search for explanations about why you linked up with each other at this particular moment. Even when it remains a mystery, you contend there is a reason. Chances are good that you sense every event is somehow the consequence of a series of actions, reactions, or lack of actions. You can accept that which cannot be fully explained using logic. You say there are no accidents. You are confident that things are linked together for a purpose that may or may not be revealed to you.

Connectedness sounds like this:

Mandy M., homemaker: "Humility is the essence of Connectedness. You have to know who you are and who you aren't. I have a piece of the wisdom. I don't have much of it, but what I do have is real. This isn't grandiosity. This is real humility. You have confidence in your gifts, real confidence, but you know you don't have all the answers. You start to feel connected to others because you know they have wisdom that you don't. You can't feel connected if you think you have everything."

Rose T., psychologist: "Sometimes I look at my bowl of cereal in the morning and think about those hundreds of people who were involved in bringing me my bowl of cereal: the farmers in the field, the biochemists who made the pesticides, the warehouse workers at the food preparation plants, even the marketers who somehow persuaded me to buy this box of cereal and not a different one sitting next to it on the shelf. I know it sounds strange, but I give thanks to these people, and just doing that makes me feel more involved with life, more connected to things, less alone."

Chuck M., teacher: "I tend to be very black and white about things, but when it comes to understanding the mysteries of life, for some reason, I am much more open. I have a big interest in learning about all different religions. I am reading a book right now that talks about Judaism versus Christianity versus the religion of the Canaanites. Buddhism, Greek mythology -- it's really interesting how all of these tie together in some way."

Ideas for Action:

- Consider roles in which you listen and counsel. You can become adept at helping other people see connection and purpose in everyday occurrences.

- Explore specific ways to expand your sense of connection, such as starting a book club, attending a retreat, or joining an organization that puts Connectedness into practice.
- Within your organization, help your colleagues understand how their efforts fit in the larger picture. You can be a leader in building teams and helping people feel important.
- You are aware of the boundaries and borders created within organizations and communities, but you treat these as seamless and fluid. Use your Connectedness talents to break down silos that prevent shared knowledge.
- Help people see the connections among their talents, their actions, their mission, and their successes. When people believe in what they are doing and feel like they are part of something bigger, commitment to achievement is enhanced.
- Partner with someone with strong Communication talents. This person can help you with the words you need to describe vivid examples of connection in the real world.
- Don't spend too much time attempting to persuade others to see the world as a linked web. Be aware that your sense of connection is intuitive. If others don't share your intuition, rational argument will not persuade them.
- Your philosophy of life compels you to move beyond your own self-interests and the interests of your immediate constituency and sphere of influence. As such, you see the broader implications for your community and the world. Explore ways to communicate these insights to others.
- Seek out global or cross-cultural responsibilities that capitalize on your understanding of the commonalities inherent in humanity. Build universal capability, and change the mindset of those who think in terms of "us" and "them."
- Connectedness talents can help you look past the outer shell of a person to embrace his or her humanity. Be particularly aware of this when you work with someone whose background is very different from yours. You can naturally look past the labels and focus on his or her essential needs.

EMPATHY

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others' lives or others' situations.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

By nature, you may be emotionally attuned to what is going on in your own or others' lives. Perhaps you concentrate on what is good. Sometimes you search for the best in people, experiences, assignments, or situations. Maybe you strive to fill certain individuals with joy. Occasionally you find ways to unburden them of their anxieties, frustrations, sadness, disappointments, fears, or anger. Because of your strengths, you encourage people express their innermost thoughts and feelings, and you refrain from judging them. You like knowing that others depend on you to listen. Moreover, you have noticed that individuals come to you for advice. Driven by your talents, you trust your intuition. Often it allows you to resolve difficult issues and unravel perplexing puzzles. It probably enables you to overcome obstacles that block others. Chances are good that you might have a fondness for most individuals, and as a result they may be attracted to you. Maybe they sense you understand what they are feeling, thinking, or experiencing at the moment. Perhaps particular people appreciate your ability to sense their emotions or your willingness to listen to their ideas. Instinctively, you welcome diverse people in your life. Numerous individuals trust you. As a result, they often share with you their most confidential thoughts and feelings.

Empathy sounds like this:

Alyce J., administrator: "Recently, I was in a meeting of trustees where one of the individuals was presenting a new idea that was critical to her and to the life of this group. When she was finished, no one heard her opinion, no one really heard her. It was a powerfully demoralizing moment for her. I could see it in her face, and she wasn't herself for a day or two afterward. I finally raised the issue with her and used words that helped describe how she was feeling. I said, 'Something's wrong,' and she started to talk. I said, 'I really understand. I know how important this was for you, and you don't seem like yourself,' and so on. And she finally gave words to what was going on inside her. She said, 'You're the only one who heard me and who has said one word to me about it.'"

Brian H., administrator: "When my team is making decisions, what I like to do is say, 'Okay, what will this person say about this? What will that person say about it?' In other words, put yourself in their position. Let's think about the arguments from their perspective so that we can all be more persuasive."

Janet P., schoolteacher: "I never played basketball because they didn't have it for women when I was a kid, but I believe I can tell at a basketball game when the momentum is changing, and I want to go to the coach and say, 'Get them revved up. You are losing them.' Empathy also works in large groups; you can feel the crowd."

Ideas for Action:

- Help your friends and colleagues be more aware when one of your peers is having a difficult time. Remember, most people do not have your ability to pick up on sensitive situations.
- Act quickly and firmly when others behave in a way that is unhealthy for themselves or others. Understanding someone's emotional state does not mean that you must excuse this behavior. Be aware that when your empathy turns to sympathy, others might see you as a "bleeding heart."
- Partner with someone with strong Command or Activator talents. This person will help you take needed action, even though people's feelings might suffer as a result.
- Consider serving others as a confidante or mentor. Because trust is paramount to you, people are likely to feel comfortable approaching you with any need. Your discretion and desire to be genuinely helpful will be greatly valued.
- At times, your empathy for others may overwhelm you. Create some rituals that you can use at the end of your day to signal that work is over. This will help buffer your emotions and prevent burnout.
- Identify a friend who has strong Empathy talents, and check your observations with him or her.
- Sensitive to the feelings of others, you readily gauge the emotional tone of a room. Use your talents to forge a bridge of understanding and mutual support. Your empathy will be especially important during trying times because it will demonstrate your concern, thereby building loyalty.
- Witnessing the happiness of others brings you pleasure. Consequently, you are likely to be attuned to opportunities to underscore others' successes and positively reinforce their achievements. At each opportunity, deliver a kind word of appreciation or recognition. In doing so, you are likely to make a profound and engaging impression.
- Because you are observant of how others are feeling, you are likely to intuit what is about to happen before it becomes common knowledge. Although your intuitions may at times seem nothing more than 'hunches', take conscious note of them. They may turn out to be valuable assets.
- Sometimes empathy does not require words at all. A kind gesture may be all someone needs to be reassured. Use your Empathy talents to nonverbally comfort others with a glance, a smile, or a pat on the arm.

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

By nature, you usually are quiet during conversations, taking in everything that is said. You are particularly attentive when intelligent people toss about their ideas, theories, or concepts. Often you acquire more information and gain more insights than the speakers do. When you choose to expound on a topic that interests you or pose pertinent questions, many individuals listen carefully to every word you utter. Driven by your talents, you often find yourself contemplating your obligations. Your promises to others are of paramount importance to you. Thorough by nature, you carefully consider what you need to do. As a result, you can be relied upon to explore many angles before acting. It's very likely that you may feel good about life when you can sit down and read. Perhaps for you the acquisition of information is a basic need. Perhaps for you following the twists and turns of a well-crafted plot populated with interesting characters is a form of relaxation. Because of your strengths, you frequently challenge your own thinking. You enjoy having time to yourself to process ideas and identify areas where you can make things better. Often you consider upgrading your environment and the people with whom you associate. You are just as likely to consider things you need to perfect. These may include, but not be limited to, your talents, personal characteristics, studies, career, productivity, progress, or projects. Instinctively, you may peruse -- that is, studiously examine -- specific types of books, publications, documents, or Internet sites to gather information and collect insights. This knowledge sometimes gives you the edge you need to produce better outcomes or scores than anybody else can. Perhaps your drive to be the very best motivates you to read a lot about certain subjects.

Intellection sounds like this:

Lauren H., project manager: "I suppose that most people who meet me in passing presume that I am a flaming extrovert. I do not deny the fact that I love people, but they would be amazed to know how much time alone, how much solitude, I need in order to function in public. I really love my own company. I love solitude because it gives me a chance to allow my diffused focus to simmer with something else. That's where my best ideas come from. My ideas need to simmer and 'perk.' I used this phrase even when I was younger: 'I have put my ideas in, and now I have to wait for them to perk.'"

Michael P., marketing executive: "It's strange, but I find that I need to have noise around me or I can't concentrate. I need to have parts of my brain occupied; otherwise, it goes so fast in so many directions that I don't get anything done. If I can occupy my brain with the TV or my kids running around, then I find I concentrate even better."

Jorge H., factory manager and former political prisoner: "We used to get put into solitary confinement as a punishment, but I never hated it as much as the others did. You might think that you would get lonely, but I never did. I used the time to reflect on my life and sort out the kind of man I was and what was really important to me: my family, my values. In a weird way, solitary actually calmed me down and made me stronger."

Ideas for Action:

- Consider beginning or continuing your studies in philosophy, literature, or psychology. You will always enjoy subjects that stimulate your thinking.
- List your ideas in a log or diary. These ideas will serve as grist for your mental mill, and they might yield valuable insights.

- Deliberately build relationships with people you consider to be "big thinkers." Their example will inspire you to focus your own thinking.
- People may think you are aloof or disengaged when you close your door or spend time alone. Help them understand that this is simply a reflection of your thinking style, and that it results not from a disregard for relationships, but from a desire to bring the most you can to those relationships.
- You are at your best when you have the time to follow an intellectual trail and see where it leads. Get involved on the front end of projects and initiatives, rather than jumping in at the execution stage. If you join in the latter stages, you may derail what has already been decided, and your insights may come too late.
- Engaging people in intellectual and philosophical debate is one way that you make sense of things. This is not the case for everyone. Be sure to channel your provocative questions to those who similarly enjoy the give and take of debate.
- Schedule time for thinking; it can be energizing for you. Use these occasions to muse and reflect.
- Take time to write. Writing might be the best way for you to crystallize and integrate your thoughts.
- Find people who like to talk about the same issues you do. Organize a discussion group that addresses your subjects of interest.
- Encourage people around you to use their full intellectual capital by reframing questions for them and by engaging them in dialogue. At the same time, realize that there will be some who find this intimidating and who need time to reflect before being put on the spot.

BELIEF

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Chances are good that you have faith in your convictions about life. You contend they are well-founded and enduring. You value your freedom and independence. This explains why you detest being ordered around by someone. You want to be the person in charge. Driven by your talents, you often argue that people should be held to the highest moral standards. You insist that those who break the law be required to accept the consequences of their deeds. You have little sympathy for people who are caught in the act of taking things that do not belong to them. It's very likely that you desire to leave behind a legacy of great value and worth. In the end, you want your life to have mattered. For this reason, you are impelled to make a meaningful and lasting impact on the planet or people's lives. Often you urge individuals to do their part in making the world, or at least their little corner of it, a better place for all living things. Instinctively, you know you are a strand in the intricate web of life. You search for ways to link with individuals who also ponder concepts, theories, or philosophies. In their company, you are apt to discover or rediscover your special place and purpose in life. Because of your strengths, you are determined to leave the world a better place than you found it. This explains why you welcome many kinds of people into your life. You realize that when individuals fail to make their unique contributions, humankind suffers an irreversible loss.

Belief sounds like this:

Michael K., salesperson: "The vast majority of my nonworking time goes to my family and to the things we do in the community. I was on the countywide Boy Scouts board of directors. And when I

was a Boy Scout, I was pack leader. When I was an Explorer, I was junior assistant leader for the Boy Scouts. I just like being with kids. I believe that's where the future is. And I think you can do a whole lot worse with your time than investing it in the future."

Lara M., college president: "My values are why I work so hard every day at my job. I put hours and hours into this job, and I don't even care what I get paid. I just found out that I am the lowest paid college president in my state, and I don't even care. I mean, I don't do this for the money."

Tracy D., airline executive: "If you are not doing something important, why bother? Getting up every day and working on ways to make flying safer seems important to me, purposeful. If I didn't find this purpose in my job, I don't know if I could work through all the challenges and frustrations that get in my way. I think I would get demoralized."

Ideas for Action:

- Clarify your values by thinking about one of your best days ever. How did your values play into the satisfaction that you received on that day? How can you organize your life to repeat that day as often as possible?
- Actively seek roles that fit your values. In particular, think about joining organizations that define their purpose by the contribution they make to society.
- The meaning and purpose of your work will often provide direction for others. Remind people why their work is important and how it makes a difference in their lives and in the lives of others.
- Your Belief talents allow you to talk to the hearts of people. Develop a "purpose statement" and communicate it to your family, friends, and coworkers. Your powerful emotional appeal can give them a motivating sense of contribution.
- Create a gallery of letters and/or pictures of the people whose lives you have substantially influenced. When you are feeling down or overwhelmed, remind yourself of your value by looking at this gallery. It will energize you and revive your commitment to helping others.
- Set aside time to ensure that you are balancing your work demands and your personal life. Your devotion to your career should not come at the expense of your strong commitment to your family.
- Don't be afraid to give voice to your values. This will help others know who you are and how to relate to you.
- Actively cultivate friends who share your basic values. Consider your best friend. Does this person share your value system?
- Partner with someone who has strong Futuristic talents. This person can energize you by painting a vivid picture of the direction in which your values will lead.
- Accept that the values of other people might differ from your own. Express your beliefs without being judgmental.

INPUT

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Chances are good that you sometimes use academic-sounding words to talk about your ideas or areas of expertise. Perhaps you have invested time in broadening your vocabulary by looking up words in the dictionary and committing their meanings to memory. By nature, you may like the companionship of adults more than the company of small children. Perhaps this is because you tend to use sophisticated words children probably won't understand. Maybe talking with or writing to adults who seem to grasp the meaning of certain messages brings you some degree of satisfaction. You might enjoy adding intricate, technical, or job-specific terms and their definitions to your vocabulary. Driven by your talents, you can simplify the most complex, convoluted, or intricate procedure. People usually rely on you to offer clear and easy-to-comprehend explanations. It's very likely that you may rely on hard-to-understand words to give you an advantage over certain individuals in debates, presentations, or correspondence. Perhaps you are restless to advance. You might refuse to remain at the lowest level of pay or status. You sometimes use complicated or theoretical terms to establish yourself as a possible contender in the minds of individuals who have clout -- that is, influence or pull -- with officials who determine promotions, control pay, or assign tasks. Instinctively, you sometimes feast on the written word. Perhaps others find you poring over -- that is, studiously reading -- a book to acquire a few simple facts or to deepen your understanding of a favorite topic. Because you are well-read, you might be able to provide people with certain kinds of information they need.

Input sounds like this:

Ellen K., writer: "Even as a child, I found myself wanting to know everything. I would make a game of my questions. 'What is my question today?' I would think up these outrageous questions, and then I would go looking for the books that would answer them. I often got in way over my head, deep into books that I didn't have a clue about, but I read them because they had my answer someplace. My questions became my tool for leading me from one piece of information to another."

John F., human resources executive: "I'm one of those people who thinks that the Internet is the greatest thing since sliced bread. I used to feel so frustrated, but now if I want to know what the stock market is doing in a certain area or the rules of a certain game or what the GNP of Spain is or other different things, I just go to the computer, start looking, and eventually find it."

Kevin F., salesperson: "I'm amazed at some of the garbage that collects in my mind, and I love playing Jeopardy and Trivial Pursuit and anything like that. I don't mind throwing things away as long as they're material things, but I hate wasting knowledge or accumulated knowledge or not being able to read something fully if I enjoy it."

Ideas for Action:

- Look for jobs in which you are charged with acquiring new information each day, such as teaching, research, or journalism.
- Devise a system to store and easily locate information. This can be as simple as a file for all the articles you have clipped or as sophisticated as a computer database.
- Partner with someone with dominant Focus or Discipline talents. This person will help you stay on track when your inquisitiveness leads you down intriguing but distracting avenues.
- Your mind is open and absorbent. You naturally soak up information in the same way that a sponge soaks up water. But just as the primary purpose of the sponge is not to permanently contain what it absorbs, neither should your mind simply store information. Input without output can lead to stagnation. As you gather and absorb information, be aware of the individuals and groups that can most benefit from your knowledge, and be intentional about sharing with them.
- You might naturally be an exceptional repository of facts, data, and ideas. If that's the case, don't be afraid to position yourself as an expert. By simply following your Input talents, you could become known as the authority in your field.
- Remember that you must be more than just a collector of information. At some point, you'll need to leverage this knowledge and turn it into action. Make a point of identifying the facts and data that would be most valuable to others, and use this information to their advantage.

- Identify your areas of specialization, and actively seek more information about them.
- Schedule time to read books and articles that stimulate you.
- Deliberately increase your vocabulary. Collect new words, and learn the meaning of each of them.
- Identify situations in which you can share the information you have collected with other people. Also make sure to let your friends and colleagues know that you enjoy answering their questions.

Strengths Discovery Activity

As you begin to think about your talents, consider this equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Talent} \text{ (a natural way of thinking, feeling, or behaving)} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Investment} \text{ (time spent practicing, developing your skills, and building} \\ \text{your knowledge base)} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Strength} \text{ (the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance)} \end{array}$$

Here is an example:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Talent is:} \text{ Truly listening to your customers' wants and needs} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Investment is:} \text{ Researching products and keeping up-to-date on the industry} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Strength is:} \text{ Consistently providing near-perfect customer service} \end{array}$$

Now, think about what *you* naturally do best. How can you invest in that talent to build strength?

Do your own Strengths Discovery Interview:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Your Talent is:} \text{ _____} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Your Investment is:} \text{ _____} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Your Strength is:} \text{ _____} \end{array}$$

My Strengths-Based Action Plan

Now that you have discovered your top five themes and considered action items for development, choose 1-3 themes that describe you best, and list them below. Talk to people who know you well, and ask them to describe how you embody these themes. Ask them for specific examples of times when they have seen you using each theme in action or how each theme manifests itself in you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now, write down some specific actions that you could take in the next week, month, and year to build and apply your strengths. Refer to your Personalized Strengths Insights and Ideas for Action if you need help.

In the next week, I will:

-
-
-

In the next month, I will:

-
-
-

In the next year, I will:

-
-
-

Next, list the name of at least one person who you will meet with to review this plan. Be sure to choose someone who can help you to keep these goals "top of mind" and who will help you leverage your talents to build strengths.

Name: _____ Date reviewed: _____

Name: _____ Date reviewed: _____