

Coffee with the Coach 5/8/2024

Topic: Character Strengths Unleashed

UNC Wellness Centers

Julie McNamara, MS, CPC, CHWC

1. Start by taking the VIA Institute survey of your character strengths-
<https://www.viacharacter.org/account/register>
2. **Exploration prompt:** Tell me one of your favorite top character strengths and how it positively impacts the “world” (world = your near world and/or the world at large)?
3. Next, we reviewed the Six virtues and 24 character strengths and heard examples of how participants see these strengths show up in their life.
4. Lastly, we reviewed the research and **practical application** ideas:
 1. **Signature Strengths Use**- The intervention, “use one of your signature/character strengths in a new way each day,” was found across studies (encompassing several cultures) to increase happiness, flourishing, and strengths use, and to decrease depression.
 2. **All 24 character strengths matter**- Randomized intervention study to focus on a different strength each day for 24 days. The group focused on why the strength was important, a motto for thinking about it, and behavioral strategies to boost it had higher happiness scores on average, sustained at 1-month follow-up.
 3. **Target specific character strengths to boost happiness** -Randomized study to target the character strengths most connected with happiness compared to those strengths least connected. The character strengths of zest, hope, gratitude, curiosity, and humor were found to boost happiness most strongly.
 4. **Recognize and appreciate strengths in others**- Higher recognition and appreciation of one’s partner’s character strengths predicted greater relationship commitment, satisfaction, investment, intimacy, self-expansion, and support for goals. Findings were not explained by other personality traits or capitalization (i.e., sharing good news).
5. **Take it further** with these journaling questions:
 - Which strength is easiest for you to access?
 - How do you define that strength?
 - How do you express it in your life?
 - How do you use it to help you navigate challenging circumstances?
 - When you are able to express it, how do you feel about yourself?