Web Exercises

# Chapter 3: Engaging Strengths

## Authentic Happiness

Ask students to visit the homepage of Martin Seligman, the founder of positive psychology: <http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/martin-seligman-psychology/>. This site includes links to several instruments designed to provide an assessment of strengths. In class, have students reflect upon the relationship between “authentic happiness” and leading founded upon one’s strengths.

## Counterpoint: Leading in Light of Weaknesses

This chapter has focused upon the principle of leadership that is based upon strengths. Paradoxically, various leaders discuss the importance of their weaknesses in becoming effective leaders. Ask students to conduct a web search for leaders who talk about the role played by their limitations and weaknesses in their development as leaders. Then ask them to write a brief summary of what weaknesses the leaders discussed and how they influenced them. In class, consider the implications of these ideas in thinking about the chapter.

## Taking the 30 Day Challenge

Focusing upon strengths may be interpreted as a justification to avoid new, untested experiences. The danger with that notion is that we may forego opportunities to make significant discoveries about ourselves, identify latent strengths, and to simply try new things. This activity provides a pathway that can be taken to ensure we do not miss those opportunities.

* Ask students to watch Matt Cutts’ brief Ted Talk entitled, “Try Something New for 30 Days” (<http://www.ted.com/talks/matt_cutts_try_something_new_for_30_days.html>).
* Have students write about this idea, identifying what they would try if they did this and why.
* Students should also consider the implications of this idea in light of the chapter. How does it connect to discovery of strengths? Might this be a creative alternative to one of the surveys discussed in the chapter? What would be different about this approach?
* As a class project, consider asking students to try something new for 30 days and then reflect upon the experience.

## Tweets about Strengths

If you’ve asked students to follow a thought leader on social media (Twitter, blog, etc.) throughout the academic term, ask them to report on what strengths this leader appears to express in an online context; open-mindedness, bravery, and so on. How are these strengths conveyed in the content or tone of the leader’s online messages? Have students share periodic updates in class over the term.

## Developing Team Strengths

Have students read the blog post by Tim Clark: <https://www.liquidplanner.com/blog/11-ways-build-strengths-team-members/> How can leaders build on the strengths of their team members? In small groups, have students choose one of the 11 steps and discuss how to implement it. For example, how might cross training work? What skills are needed to perform this step well?

## Virtue along the Life Journey

In class, watch Joshua Prager’s brief TED talk on wisdom for life found in the pages of literature: <https://www.ted.com/talks/joshua_prager_wisdom_from_great_writers_on_every_year_of_life>

Use the talk to inspire students’ own reflection on how the universal core virtues from the VIA classification develop over a lifetime. Ask students to choose one virtue – wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, or transcendence – and develop a PowerPoint presentation or Prezi showing how that virtue can grow throughout one’s life. Is the process slow? Steady or sporadic? Students can incorporate images, symbols, poetry, literature, music or other elements to create a meaningful multimedia story.