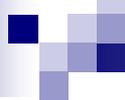


Using Strengths to Enhance Motivation and Well-being in the Curriculum

Gina Frieden

Heather Smith

Vanderbilt University



Universal Virtues: Lessons From History

- Do universal virtues exist?
- If they exist, what are they?
- How can we measure them in human behavior?

Classification of Character Strengths

Peterson and Seligman

Wisdom

- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Judgment
- Love of Learning
- Perspective

Courage

- Bravery
- Industry
- Authenticity
- Zest

Love

- Intimacy
- Kindness
- Social Intelligence

Justice

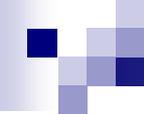
- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Leadership

Temperance

- Forgiveness
- Humility
- Prudence
- Self-Control

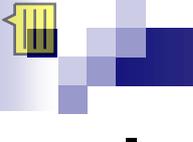
Transcendence

- Awe
- Gratitude
- Hope
- Humor
- Spirituality



Positive Psychology

- Positive Psychology
 - Identification and cultivation of mental strengths
- Positive Psychology is the science of:
 - Positive subjective experience
 - Positive individual traits
 - Positive institutions



Individual Talents: Lessons from Current Performance

Interviews with two million people about strengths focused on excellence in practice

What strengths are used to achieve mastery in your professional roles?

- Over 80,000 managers in hundreds of organizations
- How often do you get to do what you do best?
- 34 Themes of Talent



Defining Talent

Buckingham and Clifton

- Talents are value neutral
- Talents require both conceptual and experiential knowledge
- Talents are the products of normal healthy development



Building your Strengths

- Talents naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior
- Knowledge facts and lessons learned
- Skills steps in an activity

Building a strength requires drawing on innate talent, gathering knowledge, honing one's skills



Obstacles encountered in conversations about strengths

- Strengths may be viewed as cultural or familial expectations rather than originating from unique talents
- Activities designed to promote strengths conflict with values of modesty and humility
- A focus on strengths runs counter to the prevailing focus on deficits, remediation and social comparison



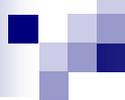
Characteristics of a Strengths Fostering Classroom Environment

Fostering Trust

- Establish norms that incorporate safety and confidentiality
- Model respect for pace, awareness and current views of individual and system
- Provide structure that support indiv/team learning as primary catalyst for facilitating individual/system development
- Offer encouragement and validation

Encouraging Self Efficacy

- Identify individual strengths and strengths of system
- Model ways to incorporate individual strengths in a variety of contexts with a focus on outcomes
- Provide personal control and incentive in assignments to maximize investment



Characteristics of a Strength Based Environment

Team based Learning

- Connect strengths to individual and system goals
- Create opportunities for shared narratives and shared meanings
- Encourage new networks of understanding to emerge

Promoting Critical Thinking

- Encourage testing of beliefs and assumptions
- Provide experiences that help learner consider other points of view
- Identify difference not viewed as pathology
- Generalize learning to multiple settings

Creating a Strength Based Environment

Small Group

- Creating shared conversation around strengths
- Acknowledge group members of sources of support & accountability
- Identify differences and learn constructive feedback to enhance performance

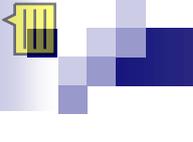
Individual

- Awareness
Identifying and defining strengths
- Integration
Increasing investment through incentives and personal control and benefits
- Action
Putting strengths to work and generalizing



Norms for Small Group Learning

- Confidentiality
- Structure conversations that support constructive feedback on behaviors that limit the development of strengths
- Value each person's contributions
- Construct a shared experience that allows for the empowerment of each individual member



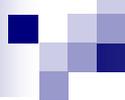
Constructing Conversations

- Strength *Based*
- *Moving away from strength viewed as weakness*

What makes me strong and how do I accomplish near perfect performance?

- Strength *Developing*
- *Moving toward weakness with strength*

How do I use my strength to address my weakness?



Small Group Design in the Classroom

- Assign Groups
- Strengths Check In Each Week
- Weekly activities that focus on strengths
- Coaching others: Asking strength based questions
- Report to other groups on how strengths are being used and status on individual goal development



Fostering strength based thinking in individuals

- Identify strengths or virtues from what feels natural and is enjoyable to do
- Maximize individual strengths by finding creative ways to practice and use frequently
- Reframe vulnerabilities as opportunities to hone your strengths in a new way