

SHOW UP,

Shine
& SUCCEED

HOW TO PUT YOUR
VIA STRENGTHS
T O W O R K



© Michelle McQuaid & Erin Lawn

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WHY DO STRENGTHS MATTER?

*Can you name
your top five
strengths?*

You know – those things you like doing and are good at? Give it a try.

If you're like most people you're probably struggling to name all five.¹ You see while your brain has a built-in negativity bias that makes it easy for you to spot your weaknesses, it generally isn't as well equipped when it comes to identifying your strengths. And yet it's your strengths that offer the greatest opportunity for growth and development when it comes to your work.

You see a strength is a strength because your brain is hard-wired to perform these behaviors well. Over time you've practiced these thoughts, feelings and actions so often that they've become well-developed neural pathways in your brain, making their use enjoyable, engaging, and energizing. This is why your strengths are things you look forward to doing, feel absorbed in whilst doing, and feel invigorated and fulfilled by after you've done them.²

You can put this to the test right now. Grab a pen and paper and in your dominant hand write down your first and last name. If you're right-handed, use your right hand. If you're left-handed, use your left hand. Then swap the pen into your other hand - your non-dominant hand - and write your first and last name again.

Looking at them objectively, do you think anyone could guess which one is which?

For most of us it's pretty clear when our strengths are and aren't engaged.

You might have noticed when you wrote your name in your dominant hand, you didn't need to concentrate too hard on what you were doing, it didn't require a lot of effort, and you were probably reasonably happy with the outcome. But if you think back to when you first started learning to write your name at school, it probably wasn't this easy.

This is because when you're performing a behavior, cells in your brain called 'neurons' are lighting up and talking to each other. And at first, they struggle to co-ordinate the message to get your hand to create the shapes of the letters that form your name. Over time however, as you practiced writing your name again and again, those cells started to wire together into neural pathways. If you've heard the phrase "Neurons that fire together, wire together", this is what it means. The more those neurons light up and talk to each other, the stronger the pathways and the easier the behavior starts to become.³

Now compare this to how you found writing your name in your non-dominant hand. You might have noticed it required more concentration, took more effort, and you probably weren't as happy with the results. This is because your brain isn't yet wired to perform this behavior well.

Consequently a growing body of evidence is finding that developing your strengths leaves you feeling up to six times more engaged in your job, helping to boost your confidence, lower your stress, and find more meaning and satisfaction in your

work. When you have the opportunity to do what you do best each day, it's likely you'll feel happier, healthier, and enjoy more success at work.⁴ But in case you're worried that developing your strengths might be a selfish endeavor at work, be reassured that in teams where most people use their strengths regularly, studies have found that employee turnover goes down, productivity goes up, and so does customer satisfaction.⁵

This is why millions of people over the last decade have turned to assessment tools to discover exactly what strengths they have. Having helped thousands of people around the world develop their

strengths at work through workshops, seminars, and one-on-one coaching, Michelle recommends completing the **VIA Survey** as the best place to start. It's free, independently researched and validated, relevant across cultures, and the strengths it identifies are easy to understand and remember.

But once you have your survey results in hand, what should you do next when it comes to showing up, shining and succeeding in your work?

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HOW CAN YOU PUT YOUR STRENGTHS TO WORK?

When you first look at your VIA Survey results, it helps to understand what you're seeing. Created by Professors Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson, the tool was designed to classify what is "good" about a person.

For three years, 53 social scientists from around the world gathered examples of humanity at its best – and the means to measure and build it – across ancient history, philosophy, religion, psychology, and modern culture. After leaving no stone unturned in assembling an exhaustive list of **character strengths**, the final list was narrowed-down by combining redundancies and applying criteria like:

UNIVERSAL – the strengths highlighted in your results are valued across time and cultures.

MEASURABLE – your strengths have been identified based on patterns of how you think, feel and act.

MORALLY VALUED – you'll use these strengths whether anyone pays you or recognizes you for them because you value this way of being in the world.

FULFILLING – developing these strengths will leave you feeling more fulfilled, satisfied and happy.

TRAIT LIKE – your strengths are what make you consistently unique.⁶

Your character strengths are also shaped by context and don't operate in isolation from the settings you find yourself in.⁷ This means it's worth retaking the survey annually, or whenever big shifts are going on in your life such as changing jobs, moving city, or welcoming a new arrival

into your family. When you do this year after year you'll find many of your strengths remain fairly consistent, but several move around depending on your current context and the strengths you're drawing on most in these situations.

This is why we think that far more interesting than your actual results, is how you feel about your results. Chances are when you first looked at your VIA Survey results you had one of three responses:

"YES, THAT'S ME"

– For many people seeing their list of strengths feels like looking in a mirror. Although we may never have had the words to articulate how we are at our best so clearly, there are no real surprises in the results and we feel quietly happy that this is who we are. If this was your response, then the challenge becomes finding ways to spend more time at work doing what you do best.

"WHY'S THAT STRENGTH DOWN THERE?"

– Some people are surprised to find particular strengths are not where they would expect them to appear. Remember your character strengths are moveable and buildable. If a strength is not as high as you'd hoped, then the challenge becomes finding ways to spend more time developing this particular element of yourself.

"THIS DOESN'T SOUND ANYTHING LIKE ME"

– A few people feel their results could have been written about another person entirely. If this is the case, share your results with colleagues, friends, or family

who know you well and ask them how they would rate your strengths. Then trust their guidance and your own experiences of where you feel the most engaged, energized and enjoyment in your work to find the strengths you want to focus on developing.

If you're unclear on exactly what some of the character strengths like "Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence", "Spirituality", or "Zest" might look like at work, you'll find detailed definitions and examples of each of the strengths throughout this e-book. Knowing more about the strength will often help you find ways you're already developing it at work.

Now you have some insight into how you might like to put your strengths to work, what exactly should you be doing each day to develop them and unleash your true potential when it comes to your job?

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WHAT CAN YOU DO TO DEVELOP YOUR STRENGTHS?

Before you rush off and start using your strengths more, it helps to be aware that you can have too little and too much of a good thing. After all, you don't want to apply a strength like "Love" at work in the wrong way or you could be fired for it.

Underplaying your strengths at work generally appears as a lack of confidence. This is often due to blindness about particular strengths we have to offer or uncertainty about how to apply them in ways that will be valued at the office.⁸ As a result you might have noticed at times you're holding yourself back, dimming yourself down, or disengaging from certain situations and people for fear of ridicule or failure.

For example, people often say they don't feel like they can use the character strength of "Love" at work for fear they'll be seen as "too nice" or "too soft". Yet thriving at work is less about how we perform the assigned tasks and more about being able to express who we are through the work we do so it feels engaging and meaningful.

But has overplaying your strengths at work ever gotten you into trouble or led you to the point of burn out? You should be nodding your head right now because every one of our strengths has what researchers call a "shadow side".⁹

For example, people with the strength of honesty often have examples of being too blunt with others. People with the strength of humor will have a story about how they've made a joke at the wrong time. And people with the strengths of kindness or love tell us they tend to give and give and give to everybody else until there is nothing left for themselves and they're

completely run down. You may find many of the "weaknesses" your boss has asked you to improve are actually strengths you're overplaying and just need to be dialing down.

The good news is, when you get your strengths just right for the situation you're in and the results you want to achieve, you hit the "golden mean" of your strengths.¹⁰ It's at this moment you enter the state psychologists call "flow".¹¹ This is the feeling of being "in the zone" or "one with the music" when you're completely absorbed in what you're doing, often losing all track of time but afterwards having a real sense of satisfaction about what you've accomplished.

The art of developing your strengths lies in finding this golden mean more frequently at work. To help you, each of the strength overviews throughout this e-book provides examples of how you can avoid underplaying and overplaying them at work.

One of the easiest and most effective ways Michelle has found to develop strengths is to create small – busy-proof – strength-development habits you can use each day. You see, researchers estimate that up to 40 per cent of our day is spent in mere habits – that's a little more than six hours we spend in unconscious routines.¹² We're guessing that like most people Michelle has met, you might want to use some of that time to further the positive changes you want to create in your life.

Luckily, researchers at MIT have found that there's a simple neurological loop at the core of every habit; a loop that consists

of three paths: a cue, a routine, and a reward. Over time, this loop — cue, routine, reward, cue, routine, reward — becomes more and more automatic until a habit is born. By breaking a habit into these three components, it becomes possible to fiddle with the gears to make your strengths habits easier, more enjoyable and lasting.¹³

Given how busy your days at work may already be, we recommend starting small. Don't wait for the "right time" to start showing up and doing what you do best — the moment to begin is now. Here's how you can play with the loop to create a strengths-development habit in just eleven minutes so you'll be able to fit it into even your busiest days:

IDENTIFY THE STRENGTHS YOU WANT TO DEVELOP

Name the strength or cluster of strengths you want to develop. This may mean your focus is on dialing up an underplayed strength, dialing down an overplayed strength, or simply being more consistent and frequent in a strength you've been using well. Each approach has its benefits, just be clear on the strength, the situation you'll use it in, and the result you're trying to achieve.

CUE THE HABIT IN 30 SECONDS

Make it easy to get your strengths-development habit started each day by finding a way to cue your behavior. You can try anchoring it to a habit you already have — like turning on your computer at work, getting your morning coffee, or packing up to go home at the end of the day — so you flow seamlessly into using the strength. You could embed it into your environment — like putting your alarm clock on top of your running gear for the morning, or leaving the article you want to read across your computer keyboard ready to be

picked up next time you start your work — so you almost fall right into using the strength. Or you could use a when/then statement to prime your brain for using the strength in the desired situation; like "when I go to the restaurant, then I will order the healthy salad" or "when I get to work, then I will spend ten minutes checking in with a colleague".¹⁴ Use one or more of these strategies to trigger the desired behavior and take a moment to conjure up the reward waiting at the end of your routine to kick in the cravings that drive your habit loop.¹⁵

PRACTICE YOUR STRENGTHS-DEVELOPMENT ROUTINE FOR 10 MINUTES

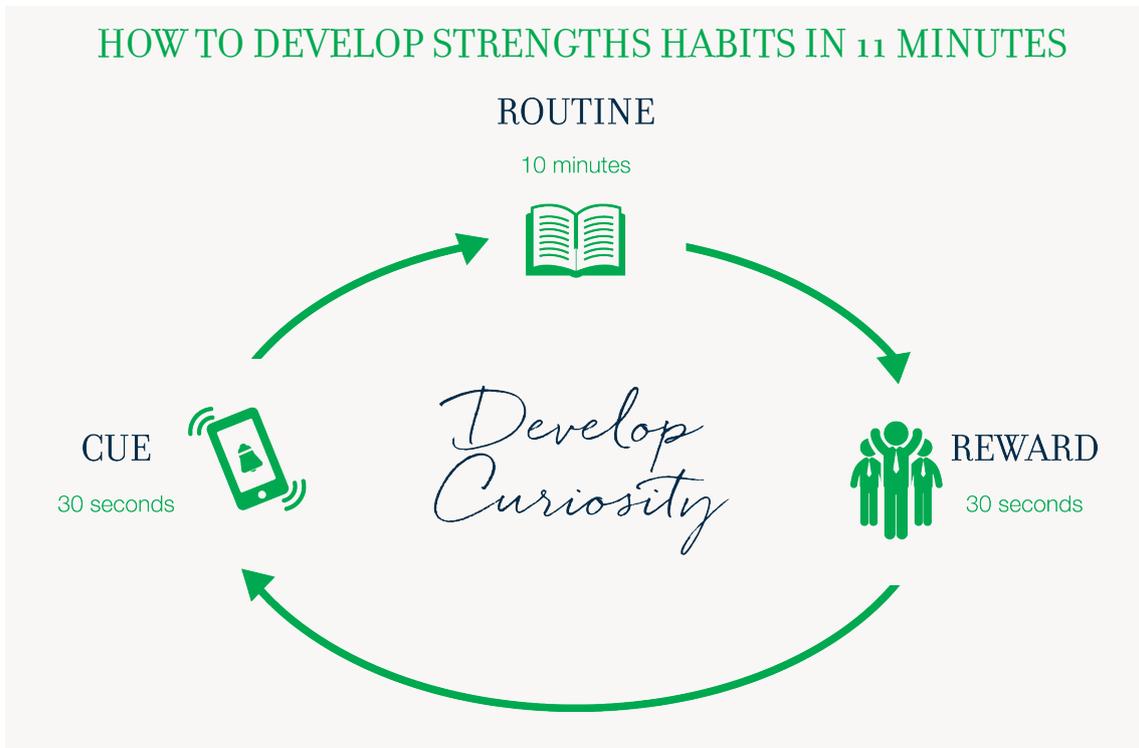
Then immerse yourself in developing your strengths. Find that state of flow where the strengths you're using and the tasks you're undertaking are just right, and savor the feeling of being in the zone and doing what you do best. If you're not in flow, notice how you might be underplaying or overplaying your strengths, and explore ways you can dial it up or down a little more to get the outcome you want. Based on the findings and suggestions of leading researchers and experts, as well as Michelle's own experience of helping people all over the world to create strength-development habits, the rest of this e-book is full of ideas for developing your strengths. Use these suggestions to spark your own ideas of strength-development routines that you can try.

REWARD YOUR BEHAVIOR FOR 30 SECONDS

Take the time to celebrate your commitment and efforts to developing your strengths. A reward can be any physical or emotional experience that sparks the natural flow of dopamine through your brain. It might be ticking it off a list, sharing what you've done

with a colleague, or just savoring the good feeling you've created. It doesn't matter what the reward is – although it's better if the reward improves rather than hinders your wellbeing – as long as you take your time to truly enjoy it so your brain begins craving more of this behavior.¹⁶

For example, to develop your strength of curiosity as a leader to bring out the best in your team, you might create the following habit: when the alarm on my phone goes off, then I will spend ten minutes reading a positive psychology book and note down one idea I can try later with my team.



You'll find it easier to follow through on your strengths development habit if you implement it around the same time each day. Also, because your self-regulation muscles wear down over the course of the day as you have to regulate your choices, your emotions and your behaviors, you'll find it easier to stick with your habit if you start it earlier rather than later.¹⁷ It will also unleash a host of positive emotions to create an upward spiral of confidence and happiness to propel you into the rest of your day.

If you have problems getting your habit to stick, try a different cue to help get you started. You might want to stack more cues together to really trigger the routine. Alternatively, try a different reward. Up the stakes by thinking about the kind of things you'd really crave at the end of the routine so your brain begins to look forward to the behavior.¹⁸ To make it easy, the back of this

e-book contains a strength-development habit template to help you get started.

The trick here is to put the development of your strengths on autopilot by successfully building habits the right way. Good habits shouldn't constrain you, they shouldn't constrict you, and they shouldn't be a burden in your life. Rather, the kind of strength-development habits we want you to create should guide you in a way that liberates your energy to do more of the things you love. Think of it as a gift you're giving yourself of eleven minutes each day to simply do what you do best. As you master one strength-development habit, add the next and the next and the next so you can truly show up, shine and succeed each day at work.

Ready to start?

APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE

LOOKS LIKE...

Appreciation is your capacity to notice and enjoy the beautiful and/or excellent things you find in the world around you. You appreciate a wide variety of things – such as the physical environment, a demonstration of someone’s abilities or virtues, or even an interesting piece of knowledge.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You’re at your best when your workplace values excellence – where you and those around you can openly express admiration² and where you’re exposed to a variety of beautiful and excellent experiences. For example, you like it when the exceptional work of your colleagues is recognized and displayed.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you thrive on noticing the good, you find it challenging to work in environments where the people around you prefer a critical or negative attitude.³ For example, you might feel frustrated when people pick out what you’ve done wrong on a project and don’t also acknowledge what you’ve done exceptionally well.

SHADOW SIDE...

The shadow side of appreciation is perfectionism, where only the best is accepted. Imagine, for example, someone who can’t work at their desk unless everything is in its proper place or hesitates to share their work because it’s not yet “good enough”. To avoid this shadow side, it is important to appreciate the good without being intolerant to the less-than-perfect.

DEVELOP BY...

◇ **Creating a workspace you love**

This might include a nice set of stationary, photos of loved-ones or favorite places, a comfortable chair, or a decorative pot-plant. Make your work area a place of sanctuary.

◇ **Making time to reconnect with nature**

Once a day take a few minutes and head outside. Sit under a tree, or walk through a park or along a river. Things that are green or blue are great for your wellbeing.

◇ **Hunting for greatness**

Look for the uplifting moments of excellence in your day that inspire you to be better. You might observe a great example of teamwork between colleagues, or notice someone who is making great progress on a challenging task.

◇ **Keeping an inspiration file**

Keep a folder to record the various sources of excellence you come across, and use it to inspire you when you feel like you need a boost. Your file might include photos, articles and your own notes.

BRAVERY

LOOKS LIKE...

Bravery describes your willingness to rise up and confront difficult or threatening situations.¹ You take the time to acknowledge and evaluate the risks involved in facing up to a challenge, and endeavor to derive the best outcome from tough conditions² whilst remaining in charge of any feelings of fear that you experience.³

AT YOUR BEST...

Beyond your ability to demonstrate courage in the face of a physical threat, you can use your strength of bravery at work to confront psychological and moral challenges.⁴ For example, your bravery may enable you to persevere through a tough deadline, own up to a mistake you've made, or stick-up for a colleague who's not being supported by their team members.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you like to face up to challenges, you struggle in circumstances where you're not given the freedom to stand up and take action in a courageous way.⁵ This might occur, for example, if you're deterred from standing up for a colleague because you're under the impression you'll be fired for it.

SHADOW SIDE...

When overplayed, your bravery can turn into recklessness.⁶ This means that you will take unnecessary risks in circumstances where the safer option is more sensible. To dial-down this shadow side, always weigh-up the situation to determine whether it's more beneficial to push for the risky-option or stick to the more cautious and steady pathway. Rather than diving in feet-first every time, it's often wise to pilot novel ideas to minimize any associated risks.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ **Stretching outside your comfort-zone**

Try to start each day by stepping outside of your comfort zone, whether it's in a big or small way. Endeavor to take action on one thing that you would normally put-off for a later time.

◆ **Cultivating unexpected partnerships**

Each week, make time to meet with someone you wouldn't normally interact with but whom you think will have a positive impact on your day-to-day work.⁷

◆ **Finding your heroes**

Each day, note down one person at work who you notice is courageously showing-up or stepping-forward in a way that is unexpected. This will help you reinforce the narrative that courageous behavior is respected, making you more likely to be brave yourself when necessary.

CREATIVITY

LOOKS LIKE...

Creativity describes your preference for producing new ideas and executing behaviors that are original. You're good at generating novelty, and are able to apply this strength in ways that are useful and beneficial to yourself and others.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You're at your best when working in a flexible environment;² where you're given the room and the support to think outside the box and be innovative in order to solve problems and make things work. You thrive on novelty.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you prefer to explore new ways of doing things, you can be challenged when working in heavily constricted environments; such as those that run on strict deadlines or that rely on procedures that are set-in-stone.³

SHADOW SIDE...

The shadow side of creativity emerges when you become more interested in creating than delivering. This can cause you to become so enamored with your ideas that you lose sight of the commercial value of what your organization requires. It can also result in you constantly tinkering with ideas so they're never quite finished, or becoming bored with an idea once it moves into delivery. To overcome this shadow side, try to concentrate on channeling your creativity into ideas and innovations that will deliver the goals and requirements of the organization you work for.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Making time for creative exploration

Keep creative tools such as marker pens and a sketchpad readily at hand. Spend at least ten minutes each day using these tools to explore a project you're currently working on by drawing or mind mapping ideas and approaches. You can do this yourself when you arrive at work, or with your team during your meetings.

◆ Finding seven solutions

Push your brain to think more creatively by coming up with at least seven different solutions to problems you may be trying to solve at work. Most of us stop at one or two, but the unexpected and unimagined possibilities usually emerge when we're pushed to go beyond the obvious.

◆ Play with your creativity

Download an app on your smart-phone or tablet that promotes more creative, free thinking. Allow yourself ten minutes each day to explore your creativity through this outlet.

CURIOSITY

LOOKS LIKE...

Curiosity refers to your appetite for knowledge. You constantly want to learn more by delving into the information you come across and engaging in new experiences. When you observe an opportunity to learn or participate in something new, you take action in order to feed your desire to keep growing.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You thrive when you're able to put the new knowledge or practices that you have acquired to work in order to solve challenging problems or meet particular goals.² You love to explore the best practices to adopt, test new approaches, research market opportunities, understand customer drivers, and figure out ways to get a handle on your competitors.

CHALLENGED BY...

You love having the permission to explore dynamically, and as a result you find it particularly challenging to work in situations where your performance is heavily monitored or measured,³ or you're given strict boundaries to adhere to. Under such circumstances, your intrinsic motivation to explore is depleted as you become more focused on the task at hand rather than the freedom to learn.

SHADOW SIDE...

Curiosity can be problematic when it leads you to become too fascinated with exploring ideas without taking any action. This leaves you paralyzed in the search, where the learning you undertake is wasted in terms of the value of application. It is important to make an effort to translate your curiosity from knowledge to practice in order to help generate real-world outcomes.

DEVELOP BY...

- ◆ **Learning one new thing each day**
Make a note of something you learned through conversing with a colleague, reading an article, or listening during a meeting. In your note, include a brief explanation of why what you learned matters, as well as how this knowledge can be applied.
- ◆ **Thinking in questions**
Every action we take is preceded by a question. See if you can find the questions that need to be asked to create the outcomes you want. For example, create agenda questions for your meetings, rather than agenda items.
- ◆ **Looking for alternative explanations**
Avoid jumping to conclusions by challenging your beliefs and assumptions. Ask yourself: "Is this the only explanation for what's unfolding?" and note how these different stories make you want to feel and act.

FAIRNESS

LOOKS LIKE...

Fairness refers to your strong sense of what you believe to be right, and your desire to act in accordance with these beliefs. You care deeply about others, and are good at understanding other people's perspectives.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You're at your best in environments where the people around you support your need to act in congruence with your beliefs about right and wrong, and where your desire to act fairly is shared by your colleagues.² In such an environment you would expect, for example, that you'd have the autonomy to freely speak up when you believe something is wrong.

CHALLENGED BY...

You particularly struggle to work in environments where your beliefs are not supported.³ For example, your desire to do what you think is right will be undermined in circumstances where you feel your work is having a negative impact on an individual or group of people.

SHADOW SIDE...

If overplayed, fairness can lead you to become detached from your work.⁴ That is, if you feel your workplace or team are not behaving equitably, you may try to protect yourself by detaching from the choices and actions that happen both around and within you. You may at times also find yourself getting too worked up or upset when you believe something is unfair. To manage this shadow side, consider whether what you're fighting for is worth holding onto in the given context, or whether it might be more appropriate to let go.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Being fair to others

Each week, invest in one action you believe will make your workplace that little bit fairer for one of your colleagues. You might, for example, acknowledge when someone has been unfairly treated and talk to them about it, or even offer some positive feedback to someone who deserves it.

◆ Owning your mistakes

When you make mistakes, don't be afraid to take ownership and admit to yourself that you've done wrong.⁵

◆ Being willing to forgive

Monitor the internal conversation you have with yourself when you or someone around you makes a mistake. Give yourself the space to recognize that we are all allowed to get things wrong sometimes, and that equally we can be forgiven. Be willing to forgive yourself, as you would be willing to forgive others.

FORGIVENESS

LOOKS LIKE...

Forgiveness describes your preference for moving on after a transgression, and your desire to mend fences with the person who has done you wrong.¹ When you show forgiveness, your motivation to respond negatively following an incident of wrongdoing transforms into the desire to cultivate and preserve a harmonious relationship with the transgressor.²

AT YOUR BEST...

You excel in environments where the people around you seek your forgiveness when they've done you wrong,³ because you prefer to preserve your relationships following a transgression. Your ability to avoid excessive negative responses to conflict by forgiving your colleagues enables you to maintain a peaceful workspace when mistakes are made.

CHALLENGED BY...

Though you're good at mending fences when others have done you wrong, you falter in situations where the people you work with continually commit the same mistakes.⁴ This impedes your ability to move forward in the same way that you'd normally be able to. For example, a colleague who repeatedly forgets to check their emails or who regularly runs late to meetings, and consequently always misses important information, would test you.

SHADOW SIDE...

When overplayed, your strength of forgiveness can lead you to become permissive.⁵ This means that you can be inclined to allow anyone – including yourself – to get away with anything. You can let people walk all over you, and you may find it difficult to hold yourself accountable for your own actions. To avoid this shadow side, it's important to consider what it is that you respect, and what you don't. Know where your boundaries are, and be willing to recognize and communicate when they've been crossed.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Practicing empathy

When you're feeling annoyed or frustrated at someone, build a bridge of empathy that allows you to understand and respect where they might be coming from,⁶ even if you don't entirely agree with their perspective.

◆ Showing yourself a little mercy

Each week, try to find one thing to forgive yourself for. It might be for a mistake you made at work, for not being able to deliver on something you promised, or for saying something without fully appreciating the consequences. Instead of beating yourself up, offer yourself the mercy that you would willingly give to others.

◆ Disempowering shame

When you notice that a colleague is feeling a sense of shame about their work, help them to unwind this negativity. Reach out and ask them how they're feeling, and create a safe space where they can talk about what's happening. Try to normalize their shameful behavior by helping them to bring it back to earth and put it into perspective.

GRATITUDE

LOOKS LIKE...

Gratitude is your capacity to experience gratefulness for the good things in your life. You're able to take a moment to notice and appreciate the things that happen to you, or are given to you, which positively influence your life. Furthermore, you're aware that these things are made possible by something or someone beyond yourself, and so it's to this source that you readily express your thanks.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You're able to thrive in environments where there are regular chances to express gratitude.² You appreciate being thanked by others, and relish the opportunity to offer your own expressions of gratefulness to your colleagues. By noticing and appreciating the good things in your life, you're able to experience more positive emotions, and less negative emotions like jealousy and resentment.³

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you prefer to be thankful for the good things in life, you struggle to work in environments where people focus more on their rights.⁴ You feel frustrated when people take good things for granted, rather than recognizing that someone has gone to the effort to do something helpful or kind for them.

SHADOW SIDE...

When gratitude is used as a means of winning someone's favor or persuading someone to do something you want, it becomes ingratiation⁵ and is therefore not true gratitude. This shadow side can be avoided by only offering someone your gratitude if it genuinely reflects how you feel, rather than as a means to get something in return.

DEVELOP BY...

- ◆ **Celebrating what's working well**
Begin meetings at work by discussing what's been going well recently and expressing appreciation for the efforts people are making.
- ◆ **Creating a daily gratitude habit**
Genuinely thank one person each day before you leave work for making your day a little better or easier. Be specific in identifying what you're thanking them for, what strengths they were using, and how it positively impacted you.
- ◆ **Keeping a gratitude checklist**
Throughout your workday, note down all the things that unfold for which you are grateful. Try to find at least 3 – 5 things each day. This will be especially helpful on those days when things don't seem to be going the way you'd like.

HONESTY

LOOKS LIKE...

Your **honesty** describes your ability to be authentic when presenting to both yourself and others, leading you to act and speak in ways that reflect what you really think and feel. You know what your values are and you live by them, preferring not to compromise who you are and what you believe in for the sake of popularity.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You're at your best when you're involved in a task or activity that aligns with your values and strengths.² Under such circumstances, you feel you can act in an authentic way – you're confident that by being yourself you'll get the job done well and without compromising what you believe in.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you value authenticity, you struggle to work under circumstances where you're obliged to be deceitful³ or be unfaithful to your idea of what's right. For example, you might feel very uncomfortable working in a team that tries to boost sales by not being entirely open with its clients.

SHADOW SIDE...

The shadow side of honesty can emerge in the form of over-righteousness.⁴ This is problematic in that it may leave you feeling you're above the people around you, and can render you blind to the shades of grey that exist between honesty and dishonesty. It's important to understand that different people will value directness in different ways, and that sometimes being blunt is not the best course of action. When you feel that someone is being dishonest, take the time to ask them what's happening – avoid leaping to conclusions and making assumptions about their intentions.

DEVELOP BY...

◇ Saying it like it is

Each morning, give one person constructive and authentic feedback. It could be about their performance on a current project, or an idea they've recently shared. Be sure that you leave them feeling respected, valued and appreciated.

◇ Walking your talk

Show up at work in the same way that you'd expect the people around you to. Be a living example of the kinds of behaviors you want to see from others.

◇ Delivering on your promises

Only make commitments that you can keep, and ensure you're timely in your responses to others. If circumstances change in a way that affects your ability to fulfill your end of a promise, go back and reset the expectations by having an open and transparent conversation about what you can deliver and when.

HOPE

LOOKS LIKE...

Hope is your capacity to devote consideration to what lies beyond the 'here-and-now'. You have goals for the future, you believe they'll be achieved, and you behave in such a way that promotes the realization of this belief.¹ Closely related to optimism, you typically see the glass as half full, enabling you to envision positive outcomes and change plans whenever setbacks get in the way.²

AT YOUR BEST...

Your hope enables you to form visions for your future that are desirable, but not irrational. It's a realistic form of optimism that allows you to create clear, plausible and flexible plans to help you achieve these goals. Guided by this planning, you're able to take action to attain your goals – adapting to any challenges that arise and maintaining the energy needed to get the job done.³

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you have an optimistic outlook, you can be thwarted when working with people who tend to be pessimistic.⁴ These people can drain your will-power and interfere with your ability to plan for a positive future.

SHADOW SIDE...

Hope can turn into 'false hope' or 'Pollyannaism', where your expectations become unrealistic.⁵ You might ignore genuine limitations to attaining your goals, or chase goals that are too large. If exercised in its ideal form, hope itself is the remedy to false hope.⁶ For example; you would use this strength to establish a rational goal that takes constraints into account, and formulate a plausible plan around these constraints.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Having a passion project

Even if it's not directly related to your job, spend at least ten minutes each day working on a "want to" project that you're passionate about.⁷

◆ Spending time with hopeful colleagues

Hope is contagious, so prioritize your time with hopeful colleagues and notice how they're overcoming the challenges they encounter.⁸

◆ Building a hope-map

Take a sheet of paper, and on the far right-hand side note down a "want to" goal you're trying to achieve. On the far left-hand side, identify at least three pathways that will move you towards this goal. In the middle, note down the obstacles you may encounter for each pathway. Around the edges of the page, note down what you can do to maintain your willpower and motivation.⁹

HUMILITY

LOOKS LIKE...

Humility refers to your ability to accurately perceive and evaluate yourself – including your strengths, achievements, weaknesses, and mistakes. You locate this concept of yourself within the ‘bigger-picture’ of the world,¹ and present yourself to others in accordance with who you genuinely are.² You’re good at seeing the worth in all good things, even if they lay outside of you.³

AT YOUR BEST...

You’re at your best when working in an environment where you aren’t compelled to regularly advocate your performance and achievements.⁴ Whilst you recognize your strengths and successes, you prefer not to publicize these; instead you’d rather go about your work authentically and let this speak for itself.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you’re good at keeping your strengths and weaknesses in perspective, you struggle to work with people who feel the need to regularly brag about their achievements. For example, you don’t like working in roles where people keep score or are publically ranked on their performance.

SHADOW SIDE...

In its excessive form, your humility can lead you to engage in self-deprecation.⁵ You can speak and think disparagingly about yourself, and may often use humor to put yourself down. To overcome this shadow side, make an active effort to focus on your strengths and understand what you respect and value about yourself. Think about yourself through the lens of your team by asking, “What is it that I have to offer them?” Recognize that by stepping outside of your comfort zone in this way, you’re not beating your own drum. Rather, you’re helping your team get the most value out of your strengths.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ **Owning your stuff**

When you’ve done wrong, be willing to hold yourself accountable and apologize readily.⁶ Always be willing to learn something from the experience.

◆ **Letting others shine**

When having discussions with people, ask them questions to allow them the opportunity to have the floor and present themselves in the best possible light.

◆ **Celebrating success**

Create a daily habit of celebrating success with at least one other person by recognizing the efforts and accomplishments of yourself and others. Use the language of ‘we’ and ‘us’ rather than ‘me’ and ‘I’ so the celebration feels authentic.

HUMOR

LOOKS LIKE...

Humor describes your ability to generate and appreciate the 'lighter side' of the moment, whether confronted with a more difficult circumstance or a regular day-to-day situation. You like to experience laughter yourself, and you enjoy and are good at igniting laughter in those around you.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You excel when you're able to use your humor to encourage your colleagues and bring them cheer, especially during excessively stressful times.² When facing hardships, your humor can work to your advantage by enabling you to remain in a positive mood,³ rather than becoming overwhelmed by negativity.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you often prefer to appreciate the lighter-side of life, you find it challenging to work in environments that value seriousness at all times,⁴ and that prefer to dwell only on the heavy-side of situations.

SHADOW SIDE...

Sometimes humor can be used as a means of deflection. Whether it is used to shield against criticism or to avoid having a difficult conversation, deflection prevents others from really understanding what you're truly experiencing inside.

DEVELOP BY...

◇ Starting your day laughing

As you start work, watch a funny video, read a favorite cartoon, or talk to someone who always makes you smile.

◇ Prioritizing play

Play helps you to connect with others, explore ideas, and create new possibilities. Start meetings with a funny quiz, create a games-area in the office, or just explore an idea with no intentional outcome.

◇ Giving yourself permission to have fun at work

Levity is a valuable and positive business practice found to improve engagement, efficiency and productivity.⁵ What can you do to create a little more fun in your culture?

JUDGMENT

LOOKS LIKE...

Judgment is your capacity to challenge your own personal assumptions and consider alternative explanations before coming to a conclusion. You're able to consider things from different angles and evaluate the various options that are available. As a result, you're very flexible in your beliefs and opinions whenever new evidence presents itself.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You're at your best when working in an environment that offers opportunities for openness;² where you're provided with the time and space to explore decisions thoroughly through examining different options and available evidence.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you like to consider things carefully before making final decisions, you struggle in situations where decisions must be made with limited opportunity for prior examination. Furthermore, if you like to 'maximize' decisions by always searching for the 'best' choice, you may find yourself constantly wondering whether there's a better option available than the option you chose.³

SHADOW SIDE...

When you exercise too much judgment, you may render yourself ineffective because you're constantly searching for the perfect answer or overwhelming yourself by asking too many questions. To avoid this shadow side, set decision milestones. Plan where you'd like to be along your decision-making pathway at given times, and use this as a guide to reach conclusions that can be acted upon.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Seeking out opposites

Once a day try to find people or sources of information that take diametrically opposing points of view on a topic you're weighing up. Explore and really hear both sides of the argument before deciding how to act.

◆ Weighing up your options

Before reaching a final decision, explore the potential outcomes of each option by listing the pros and cons.

◆ Playing devil's advocate

Have the courage to ask the tough questions when others are in agreement, especially when you think there could be more to the story than has been explored.⁴

◆ Making judgments

Set clear milestones for when decisions have to be made and communicate the judgment you've reached to somebody to avoid procrastination.

KINDNESS

LOOKS LIKE...

Kindness refers to the readiness and enthusiasm you exhibit towards doing things for other people, whether they're close to you or more distant acquaintances.¹ You're generous to others for their sake, rather than your own. You believe that people are deserving of kindness, and don't seek any personal benefit when you invest in others.²

AT YOUR BEST...

You thrive at work when there are plenty of opportunities to do kind things for other people, especially when you know that your actions are having a positive impact on their wellbeing or performance.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because of your belief that people deserve kind deeds and consideration, you find it difficult to work in an organization that regards the personal needs and wellbeing of its workers to be a low priority.³

SHADOW SIDE...

The shadow side of kindness emerges when you neglect to show kindness to yourself, which can have a detrimental impact on your own wellbeing and performance. To avoid overplaying your kindness in this way, set limits on whom you give to, as well as what and when you give. For example, if people are continually asking to "pick your brain for ideas" to the point where you can't get your own work done, try setting aside one time each week for an open coffee date; where anyone seeking this kind of support can meet with you and ask their questions. It's also important to realize you're worth helping just as much as others, so don't be afraid to ask for other people's kindness when required.⁴

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Being compassionate

When a colleague is being open about a difficult or challenging experience, try to listen without analyzing or judging what they're telling you. Be there for them and make them feel comfortable and safe.⁵

◆ Performing an act of kindness for someone

Do one kind thing for another person each day without being asked or expecting a reward.⁶

◆ Speaking kindly to others

Whether it's face-to-face, over the phone, or through emails, use kind words when communicating with other people.⁷

LEADERSHIP

LOOKS LIKE...

Leadership describes your ability to both organize and encourage others in order to help them accomplish group goals.¹ You help the group to find the best pathways to take, and you're able to maintain team unity and cohesion along the way.² You can inspire others to step-up, and you connect to each member of the team.³

AT YOUR BEST...

You thrive when you're given the chance to independently manage a team, especially if you're able to play a large role in articulating the group's ambitions and objectives.⁴

CHALLENGED BY...

You find it especially challenging to work in situations where you're not solely in charge of managing the group, or when you're put in a role that under-utilizes your leadership skills.

SHADOW SIDE...

The shadow side of leadership can be observed in circumstances where you rule with an iron fist.⁵ In such cases, the wishes and ideas of the people you lead can become manipulated or overruled in favor of your own. Preferring the view from the front seat, you may find it difficult to take on the role of 'follower' by allowing others to have the opportunity to be in charge. It's important to remember that leadership is about bringing out the best in others, not just yourself. Try to model the behaviors of a servant leader by being willing to be a follower on some projects in your organization.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Stepping up

In either a formal or informal capacity, offer to be the leader of a project. Keeping in mind that a leader needs a team, seek out people you would like to invite to join you on the project.

◆ Facilitating conversations

When people are finding it difficult to gather their thoughts or develop their ideas during meetings, offer to help guide the discussion. To avoid facing resentment, remember to offer but not force your leadership upon the group.

◆ Getting inspired

Each day savor one great example of leadership that you observe both inside and outside of your organization. Focusing on what you'd like to emulate yourself, take notes that'll help you to channel these leaders through your own work. Your notes might include points such as how the leader carries themselves, how they handle difficult situations, and how they get people on board.

LOVE

LOOKS LIKE...

Love is your capacity to foster and value the relationships you have with others.¹ Depending upon the nature of the relationship – whether it be a family member, friend, romantic partner, boss, or colleague – love takes on different forms of expression.² You place the highest value on those relationships that involve mutuality and closeness, where you feel like you're able to both give and receive love.³

AT YOUR BEST...

When working in environments where there's a range of circumstances in which you can develop and foster strong relationships with others, you will excel.⁴ You care about the people that you lead, and you can use your strength of love to foster better relationships with them.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you place great value on close relationships, you find it most challenging to be in a workplace where the people around you show little interest in caring for the wellbeing and emotional welfare of themselves and the people around them.⁵

SHADOW SIDE...

In its full form, this strength involves both the capacity to give and receive love. However, sometimes you may find yourself giving so much love to others that you leave nothing left for yourself. It is important to negotiate this balance when exercising love, so you can take care of your own needs as much as the needs of those around you.

DEVELOP BY...

◇ Loving others

Perform one act of love each day by checking in with a colleague to show them they are respected, valued, and appreciated. You might thank them for something, make them a cup of coffee, or just have a conversation with them about how they're going.

◇ Loving yourself

Find one thing each day that you can do to care for and nurture yourself. This might include some light exercise, a healthy snack, meditation, or listening to your favorite music.

◇ Positively resonating with others

Share an experience of positive emotion with someone, and take the time to invest in the feelings of warmth and trust that naturally arise from this.

LOVE OF LEARNING

LOOKS LIKE...

Your **love of learning** refers to the willingness you have to acquire knowledge or skills; the joy you experience whilst doing it; and the confidence you feel in your ability to reach particular learning outcomes. You learn for the sake of learning, enabling you to persevere with your quest to find out more whenever the task proves difficult or you experience failure.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You thrive when you find yourself in situations where you're given the opportunity to utilize a new skill or further develop your knowledge.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you relish the chance to grow your knowledge and skills, you struggle to work in an environment where there is limited possibility to learn new things.² For example, you may find it challenging to perform roles that involve business-as-usual situations; where strategies, processes and approaches are set-in-stone and there's limited appetite for improvement.

SHADOW SIDE...

A love of learning can negatively manifest itself in the form of a 'know-it-all' demeanor,³ where you come across as believing you already know all there is to know about everything. This can be intimidating for others to encounter, and as a result can distance you from them. To avoid this shadow side, it's important to be open to new ideas, and allow others to express their knowledge without trying to show them up with what you know.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Growing your experiences

Sign up and get involved in new experiences that will enable you to learn something tomorrow that you don't know today.

◆ Savoring knowledge

Experience the joy of learning for the sake of learning itself. Take the time to learn one new thing each day that is relevant to your work. It could be relevant to the organization you work for, or to the industry in a broader sense.

◆ Learning about people

Try to meet one new colleague or client each week. Have a conversation with them about what they do, focusing on which aspects they really enjoy as well as what they are most challenged by. Attend networking events, such as conferences, to learn from others who work in your field.

PERSEVERANCE

LOOKS LIKE...

Perseverance describes your ability to keep at the tasks you set yourself. Even though you confront challenges along the way, you make a choice to keep working towards your goals without letting these discouragements or barriers impede you.¹ Not only are you good at getting things done, you also take pleasure in the accomplishment of your goals.²

AT YOUR BEST...

You flourish when you're confronted with a task that entails that you stay engaged and work hard.³ It might be that you're given a long-term project to work on that requires an enduring commitment; or perhaps you have to push through several challenges and mishaps in order to execute a project.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you make a concerted effort to get the job done – even in the face of hardships and mishaps – you feel that your efforts are devalued when your competence is not recognized.⁴ You feel particularly frustrated when people ignore your hard work or fail to acknowledge the difficulties you had to push through to finish a project or task.

SHADOW SIDE...

Your perseverance becomes overplayed when it leads you to pursue goals and tasks obsessively.⁵ Such obsession leaves you feeling like you're unable to stop pushing yourself to reach your target, even when you're exhausted and on the brink of burnout. As such, you'll resist putting on the breaks even when it's actually more beneficial to do so, and avoid taking the time to rest and revitalize when necessary. To manage this shadow side, always remember that relentless perseverance works to the detriment of the outcomes you're trying to achieve, and that taking a break is beneficial to your goal pursuit.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Delivering what matters most

Each morning, set yourself a few small goals that you will accomplish before the end of your workday. Consider how you'll manage your time to ensure you prioritize the delivery of these goals.

◆ Finding your rhythm

Due to your natural ultradian rhythm, throughout the day you'll experience 90 - 100 minute bursts of alertness. At the end of each cycle, it's important to take a short break in order to maximize your performance and avoid burnout.

◆ Setting yourself a clear plan

Determine what you want to achieve over the next six to twelve months, and create a week-by-week plan that will enable you to move from where you are now to where you want to be. Commit to implementing your plan, and monitor your progress as you move from one week to the next.

PERSPECTIVE

LOOKS LIKE...

Perspective describes your capacity to view situations in a way that resonates meaningfully for both yourself and the people you share your views with. You're good at looking at a situation from different angles, and as such others appreciate your insights and will often seek your counsel.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You thrive when you're engaged in work projects or tasks that require you to draw on your experience and expertise.² You feel like you're at your best when you can use what you know to inform the way you go about your own work, and communicate your insights with your team members to help them fulfill their role on a project.

CHALLENGED BY...

Your appetite to acquire wisdom leaves you feeling frustrated when there's limited opportunity to learn new things, engage in new experiences, and have personal growth.³ You feel like you're not getting any wiser when you're performing roles that require you to get things done according to a strict formula or manual. When your role is heavily documented and systematized in this way, you feel there is a lack of opportunity to share your views and offer advice to others.

SHADOW SIDE...

Because you have a strong sense of perspective, you may at times look for too many opportunities to impart your wisdom to others and give them advice when it's not welcome. It's important that you recognize that, whilst your perspective might be insightful, there is a right time and place to share your views with others. To help you manage this, ask yourself whether your advice will genuinely be of value to those you share it with.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Learning from others

Take the time each day to read biographies about other business people who inspire you or work in your field. Take note of the key lessons that they present to help guide you on your own career journey.⁴

◆ Considering 'in what context, for what outcome?'

To find the best action to take to achieve the outcome you desire, ask yourself this question before deciding which pathway to choose.

◆ Making the complex simple

Look for ways to translate theories to real-world practice. Think of simple ways to explain complex ideas so that they would make sense to others.

PRUDENCE

LOOKS LIKE...

Prudence can be defined as your ability to think and act in ways that are conducive to the attainment of your future aspirations and long-term goals. You think about and place value on the future, and like to plan for what lies ahead. You readily consider how your decisions will affect certain outcomes, and are good at regulating your behaviors in the present in line with your goals.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You thrive when you're given the space and time to think about what your aspirations are,² to devise a plan around these goals, and to take the necessary steps to execute your plan.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you like to act in accordance with long-term goals, you can be thwarted when forced to make a spontaneous decision due to the arising of unexpected circumstances.³ This might occur when you're involved in an ambiguous project, or given a tight deadline to complete an important task.

SHADOW SIDE...

Prudence can at times manifest itself as over-cautiousness. This means you can be afraid to take risks or be spontaneous and can appear like a 'stick in the mud'. To help you dial down this strength, always keep in mind that your plan is but one path towards your goal.

DEVELOP BY...

- ◆ **Planning ahead**
Before taking action, make time to consider and picture the potential outcomes of a choice you have to make. Think of what the consequences might look like within a one-year timeframe, as well as in the longer-term of 5 – 10 years.⁴
- ◆ **Sticking to the plan**
Whenever you have a goal in mind, set clear milestones that need to be achieved along the way. Create a daily habit to use tools such as project plans – try new online offerings like asana.com – to ensure what you promise is delivered on time and on budget.
- ◆ **Thinking before you speak**
When you're in a meeting, give yourself the time and space to pause and reflect on what you'll say next.⁵ Once you've taken this moment and feel comfortable, offer up your idea. Don't be afraid to ask for extra time for reflection if you feel that it's needed.
- ◆ **Making room for spontaneity**
To help you remain flexible on the journey towards your goal, create a daily habit to step back from your plan and look at the bigger picture. Are there new opportunities emerging you should seize upon? Are there obstacles on the horizon you need to be ready for? Should you slow down any deliverables to ensure better quality?

SELF-REGULATION

LOOKS LIKE...

Self-regulation describes your ability to remain in charge of what you think, which feelings you experience, and what actions you engage in. You live in a disciplined way in order to meet the various goals you've set for yourself. Depending on what the situation calls for, you have the ability to overrule your maladaptive impulses, as well as to generate adaptive actions that lie counter to your first inclinations.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

Because you thrive on being disciplined, you excel when you're working in an environment with well-defined rules and boundaries² that are stringently implemented. For example, you're good at working on projects that have a well-articulated deadline, and engaging with tasks that can't be completed by taking short cuts.

CHALLENGED BY...

You can struggle during those times where you're exposed to high levels of stress³ or when you're physically exhausted. When the workload becomes unbearable, or the hours become too long, this can impede your ability to stay in control of your responses with the same level of discipline you normally exhibit.

SHADOW SIDE...

Self-regulation can be overplayed when it causes inhibition.⁴ This means you can at times find it difficult to respond spontaneously or act in a way that feels natural to you. To overcome this shadow side, try to consciously play around with some of your routines. By introducing some openness and flexibility to your habits, you'll enable yourself to be in charge of your choices rather than letting your routines control you.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Starting early

Identify the most important tasks you have to do each day, and do these first-thing in the morning when your self-regulation levels are at their highest.

◆ Managing your emotions

Throughout your day, try to be mindful of how you're feeling and how this is causing you to act. Identify the things that trigger off your worst behaviors, and think of ways you can manage these situations more effectively to get the results you want.

◆ Setting small goals

Start each day by completing one small goal. Whether it involves writing or responding to an email, finishing a presentation, or booking a meeting; the most important thing is that you commit to getting it done. To give you confidence and satisfaction, tick or cross the goal off your list once you've completed it.

◆ Mixing up your habits

Try once a day to break up your habits and routines by taking a different approach. For example, walk a different way to work, eat something unexpected, or perform a task with your non-dominant hand.

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

LOOKS LIKE...

Your **social intelligence** refers to your ability to readily notice and understand the emotions and intentions of both yourself and others. In addition, you're able to use this information to navigate your social world more effectively, and regulate your own emotions and behaviors.¹

AT YOUR BEST...

You excel at work when your intelligence can be applied in useful and beneficial ways during group encounters.² For example, you enjoy helping colleagues to build or mend relationships, as well as talking to colleagues to help them feel more comfortable when confronting challenges.³

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you enjoy figuring people out, you get bored in environments where you feel you're surrounded by people who lack complexity in their expressions and relationships,⁴ or who are highly similar to each other in these respects.

SHADOW SIDE...

It's important not to use your social intelligence to act as an 'armchair psychologist', where you overanalyze the emotions and motivations of others to prove your own value rather than to form a genuine connection with them.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Helping others feel safe

Notice when people around you are experiencing stress or uncertainty. Consider the emotions they might be feeling and why they're experiencing them. Slow down to help them express and work through their uncertainty more comfortably and productively.

◆ Tuning into positive emotion

Pay attention to when you or those around you are experiencing high levels of engagement and energy. Savor and appreciate these moments, and think about what you can do to build upon and recreate these positive experiences in the future.

◆ Noticing what motivates your team to act

Each day make a note of what motivates at least one of your colleagues. Tap into these motivators and use them to frame your desired business outcomes in a way that is meaningful to your team members.

SPIRITUALITY

LOOKS LIKE...

Your **spirituality** refers to the strong beliefs you hold about the universe's greater purpose, and your personal understanding of your own place in the world.¹ It's these beliefs that influence your sense of meaning and purpose at work.²

AT YOUR BEST...

You thrive at work when you're able to participate in projects and tasks that connect with your sense of meaning.³ This connection might be fostered when you feel there is an alignment between your own values and the values promoted by your workplace; when you're able to use the things you believe in to inform your work; or when you feel your work is having a widespread impact.⁴

CHALLENGED BY...

You find it difficult to work in situations where you struggle to uncover the meaning in what you're doing; or when you must work on a project which conflicts with your values and sense of purpose.⁵ For example, if you have a strong concern for the environment, you might feel frustrated when a project wastes natural resources like paper or energy.

SHADOW SIDE...

If you become too fanatical about your sense of purpose, you may find it difficult to know when to slow down, leading you and your teammates to burnout.⁶ You can become so motivated by your sense of meaning and the ambition to execute your desired reality that you lose your sense of perspective. This can lead you to make unwise decisions by taking risks without weighing up the options, and to pursue visions that are unfeasible or not a priority within your organization.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Finding your 'why'

Be clear on what gets you out of bed each morning by completing this sentence; '*everything I do is to _____ so that _____*.'⁷ For example, 'everything I do is to bring out the best in myself and others, so that the world will be a better place'.

◆ Crafting your job

Re-design your job description so it has more meaning. Focus more of your time on the tasks and people that align with your values and purpose. More at jobcrafting.org.

◆ Searching for meaning in small tasks

Each day find meaning in the mundane by looking at a task you're dreading or delaying, and spend a few minutes asking: "*What is the purpose of this task; What will I accomplish?; Who does it help?*". Keep repeating these questions for each answer you write down until you arrive at one that makes it feel like you're engaging in something worthwhile.⁸

TEAMWORK

LOOKS LIKE...

Teamwork refers to your sense of belonging and commitment to a team or a greater good. You exhibit strong allegiance to the teams that you're a part of, and always endeavor to make a fair contribution when working in group contexts.¹ You orient yourself towards helping your team to achieve the best outcomes.²

AT YOUR BEST...

You excel when you're working towards a well-defined group cause, especially when this means you have to work alongside others to get the job done.³ For example, you might enjoy putting together a group presentation, or advocating for an idea that you think could make a positive difference in your workplace.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you thrive on being collaborative, you find it challenging to work with people who show more concern for themselves than the group.⁴ For example, you get frustrated by people who don't pull their own weight and rely on the rest of the team to do all of the work for them.

SHADOW SIDE...

When overplayed, your strength of teamwork can manifest itself in the form of excessive patriotism.⁵ This shadow side can lead you to view your team as superior to others, and to hold the blind belief that your group can do no wrong. In this way, excessive patriotism creates a barrier that restricts you from seeing the value in people outside your team. This causes you to be dismissive of out-group members, and undermines your ability to collaborate with them effectively. To dial down this shadow side, make space to step back from the team from time-to-time. Be willing to ask the tough questions, and make sure that you're not falling into groupthink.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ Getting involved

Put your hand up to become part of a team within your organization that you respect and are inspired by. This could be a formal part of your role, or it could be something you volunteer for informally.

◆ Offering to coach others

◆ Formally or informally volunteer to help someone you work with to set a goal.⁶ Work with them to design a pathway that will move them forward, and check in with them regularly along their journey to see how they're progressing.

◆ Valuing loyalty

Each day, perform one act of service to a team that you're a member of and hold in high regard. Be a team player by deliberately engaging in behaviors that demonstrate your loyalty.

ZEST

LOOKS LIKE...

Zest describes the sense of enthusiasm and vigour¹ that you experience when engaging in any activity.² You're able to function at optimal levels, and you possess a strong sense of being alive.³ You fully invest in your experiences and embrace all of the journeys that life takes you on.⁴

AT YOUR BEST...

You're at your best when you're given full control of a task or project that you're interested in.⁵ In such circumstances, you're able to ride the wave of your own passion and energy and let it take you where you need to go to get the job done well.

CHALLENGED BY...

Because you thrive on energy, you falter when you're exhausted due to a lack of basic needs like adequate sleep, regular exercise,⁶ or a healthy diet. This might occur, for example, if your job requires you to work long or unusual hours.

SHADOW SIDE...

At times, your zest can be overwhelming to the people around you. When this happens, you'll find you're off-and-running on a new project you're passionate and excited about, whilst the rest of your team has been left behind. Others can be intimidated by your energy, as they wonder how they'll be able to keep-up with you and match your drive and enthusiasm. To manage this shadow side, be mindful that sometimes slowing-down gets you to the finish-line sooner, as it gives you a chance to bring your team along with you.

DEVELOP BY...

◆ **Being well**

Make 'you' time a priority. Spend time each day looking after yourself by eating, moving and resting throughout your day to ensure you replenish your energy and avoid burnout.

◆ **Taking a walk near nature**

Make time during your workday to take a brisk walk outside to renew your sense of vitality.

◆ **Making time to rest**

In the afternoon when you feel your energy depleting, take a short nap or engage in five-minutes of meditation to allow your body to restore itself.

CREATE YOUR STRENGTHS - DEVELOPMENT HABIT

Use this play sheet to create a daily eleven-minute strengths-development habit to help you show up, shine and succeed at work. Start with one habit and when this is working well for you and becoming an automatic part of what you do each day; add the next habit, and the next. You can keep adding strengths habits as long as they are guiding you and not governing you. Remember each one is a gift of eleven-minutes to just immerse yourself in doing what you do best.

How long it takes for a habit to stick will vary on the type of person you are and the changes you're trying to make. Despite the popular myth that it takes 21 days to build a habit, recent studies suggest this can be anywhere between 18 days to 254 days.¹ So be sure to tune in to how easy, effective and joyful you're finding the habit, until the very idea of going a day without it makes you feel like you'd be missing out. Remember if your habits aren't sticking, play with the cue and the reward to make it easy to get started and create a greater craving.

Try to start this habit within the next 24 to 28 hours so you don't lose your motivation for the change you want to experience.

Which strength will you develop?

Write down which strength or cluster of strengths you want to focus on developing your 'golden mean' around, based on one of the pathways in your hope map. You might be dialing up an underplayed strength, dialing down an overplayed strength, or simply being more consistent and frequent in a strength you've been using well.

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What will be your 30-second cue?

Make it easy to get your strengths development habit started by anchoring it to a habit you already have (like getting out of bed each morning, travelling to work, or turning on your computer), embedding it in your environment (like putting your alarm clock on top of your running gear, leaving the article you want to read across your computer keyboard, or attaching a post-it note reminder to your car keys) or using a when/then statement to prime your brain for specific situations (like when I get to work, then I will spend ten minutes checking in with a colleague). Use one or more of these strategies to trigger the desired behavior and take a moment to conjure up the reward waiting at the end of your routine to kick in the cravings that drive your habit loop.

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What will be your 10-minute (roughly) strength-development routine?

What will you do to use your strengths in a state of flow and find your 'golden mean'? To help you think of routines, look at the strength definitions again. kick in the cravings that drive your habit loop.

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What will be your 30-second reward?

A reward can be any physical (a green smoothie, a relaxing massage, or a nap) or emotional (tick your habit off the list, use social media to share your accomplishments with friends, or report what you've done to a coach) experience that sparks the natural flow of dopamine through your brain. Preferably without chocolate or alcohol if you can. Often we're not conscious of the cravings that drive our behaviors, so initially you may need to experiment with different rewards to see what works best for you.

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If you can, put your first cue in place now – or at the first opportunity you have – ready to trigger the behavior in the next 24 hours.

ABOUT MICHELLE

Michelle McQuaid is a best-selling author, workplace wellbeing teacher and playful change activator. With more than a decade of senior leadership experience in large organizations around the world, she's passionate about translating cutting-edge research from positive psychology and neuroscience, into practical strategies for health, happiness, and business success.

An honorary fellow at Melbourne University's Graduate School of Education, her work has been featured in Forbes, the Harvard Business Review, the Wall Street Journal, Huffington Post, Boss Magazine, The Age, Women's Agenda, Wellbeing Magazine and more.

She holds a Masters in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and is currently completing her PhD in Appreciative Inquiry under the supervision of David Cooperrider.

Michelle lives to help people discover their strengths, move beyond their fears, and finally discover what it truly takes to flourish with confidence.

To learn more about Michelle visit www.michellemcquaid.com.

ABOUT ERIN

Erin Lawn is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts Degree majoring in Psychology at the University of Melbourne, and was placed on the Faculty of Arts Dean's Honours List in 2013.

Erin loves embracing her strength of curiosity to learn about the brain, mental-processes and human behavior. Through her degree, she has also undertaken studies in the areas of wellbeing, performance, and positive leadership.

Erin is fascinated by the science of human flourishing, and is passionate about helping others to understand and fulfill their potential. She hopes to keep using the knowledge and skills she is acquiring from her studies to help individuals, teams, and organizations to thrive.

WANT A LITTLE EXTRA HELP?

It is my heartfelt belief that this e-book, and the resources it connects you to, provide a simple roadmap to move you from functioning to flourishing, but if you'd like a little extra help on your journey it's my pleasure to also offer you:



APPRECIATIVE COACHING

Are you ready to show up and shine? If so, I work one-on-one with a small group of extraordinary people (like you) to help them build their confidence, get clear on what success looks like, define the pathways forward and take the next steps to create powerful change in their work and in their lives.

LET'S CHAT



SEMINARS AND WORKSHOPS

Want rapid improvements in your life? I offer face-to-face, intense learning experiences that are great fun and come packed with tested, practical ways to improve your work and life based on the science of positive psychology.

GET ENGAGED



KEYNOTE SPEAKING

If you're looking to create not just an event, but an experience that will empower people to truly flourish in the workplace and in life, look no further. I speak on topics related to cultivating wellbeing, becoming an exceptional leader, reducing stress, embracing change, and living a life of confidence and strength.

START THE CONVERSATION

If I can help in any way to move you from functioning to flourishing I would love to hear from you! Please get in touch.



www.michellemcquaid.com



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