

LESSON PLANS!

UNDERSTANDING YOUR STRENGTHS: A KEY FOR BUILDING OPTIMISM AND RESILIENCE

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

To help young people learn more about their strengths so that they can better overcome the challenges they may face.

Why should you do this workshop with your students?

- To help them better understand their strengths when facing challenges, improve their self-esteem and be more optimistic and resilient.

SKILL

Mindfulness

RECOMMENDED LEVEL

All secondary levels

DURATION

30-40 minutes

2nd online questionnaire:
Optional : add 30 minutes

BROAD AREAS OF LEARNING

- Health and well-being
- Career planning and entrepreneurship

CROSS-CURRICULAR COMPETENCIES

Personal and social competencies:

- Achieves his/her potential

Communication-related competency:

- Communicates appropriately

Methodological competencies:

- Uses information and communications technologies

SUBJECT AREAS AND COMPETENCIES

English, language arts

- Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn

Personal orientation project

- Carries out a process of career exploration

Integrative project

- Makes connections between elements of his/her learning

MATÉRIEL



- Scrap paper for all students.
- “My Personal Strengths” worksheet for all students.
- A copy of the worksheet already completed by the teacher to use as an example.
- IWB or blackboard with chalk.

Optional:

Access to the <https://www.viacharacter.org/surveys/takesurvey> website on IWB. Computers with Internet access for all students (in class or at home).

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INFO

Basic theoretical concepts about mindfulness

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PREPARATION PHASE: 10 minutes

- **STEP 1:** Encourage students to freely express their personal strengths
- **STEP 2:** Thinking about the usefulness of knowing your strengths

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IMPLEMENTATION PHASE: 10–15 minutes

- **STEP 1:** Introduce and complete the “My Personal Strengths” worksheet
- **STEP 2 (OPTIONAL):** Introduce the online questionnaire on 24 strengths

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EXIT TICKET TASK: 5–10 minutes

Each student compares their starting sheet to their completed worksheet

08

INFO

Adolescence is a key stage when personality is being established but doubts can also appear. In this activity, the idea is to allow your students to realize which parts of their identity they are proud of, and which could potentially help them in more difficult times.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness meditation (or attentive presence) comes from Buddhism, but in its current form, it is totally secular and does not involve any religious or spiritual practice. Its aim is to centre the person on the present moment (the here and now) so that they can pay special attention to their physical sensations, emotions and thoughts. This is observation, without any judgement of the experience.

- WHAT PHYSICAL SENSATIONS DO I FEEL RIGHT NOW?
- WHAT EMOTIONS AM I EXPERIENCING RIGHT NOW?
- WHAT IDEAS ARE GOING THROUGH MY MIND?

VARIOUS MINDFULNESS PRACTICES

FORMAL PRACTICE



This is the best-known form, associated with meditation.

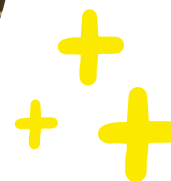
PRACTICE "IN ACTION"



This is the practice that we invite you to explore in this activity. It is based on **using mindfulness in everyday life**: while walking, eating, listening, breathing, etc.

WHY IS MINDFULNESS HELPFUL IN BECOMING AWARE OF ONE'S STRENGTHS?

By giving your students time to assess their strengths, you encourage them to engage in a process of introspection and to get to know themselves better. By better understanding who they are, your students will be able to make better decisions, make better choices and cope better with life's challenges.



PREPARATION:
10 min

IMPLEMENTATION:
10–15 minutes

EXIT:
5–10 minutes

OBJECTIVE : to get students thinking about their personal strengths

PREPARATION PHASE: 10 minutes



PART 1: Encourage students to freely express their personal strengths.

WHAT TO DO Begin by encouraging students to think about their personal strengths.

WHAT TO SAY “Do you know your personal strengths (or positive qualities)? I’ll give you 2 minutes to write down as much as you can in a notebook or on scrap paper. Je vous demande de conserver vos réponses, nous allons y revenir à la fin.”

WHAT TO DO I’d like you to hold on to your answers; we’ll come back to them at the end.

WHAT TO SAY “What did you think of this exercise? Was it difficult at times? It isn’t always easy to identify your strengths. We often doubt ourselves and are more aware of our weaknesses.”

PART 2: Thinking about the usefulness of knowing your strengths

WHAT TO SAY “In your opinion, why is it important to know your strengths?”

WHAT TO DO Encourage students to raise their hands to share their answers.

WHAT TO SAY **Finish using the information below:**

“Knowing your strengths can help you overcome challenges you may face by understanding what your strengths are to deal with them.

It also helps increase self-esteem and self-confidence, and helps you be more optimistic and resilient.”

INFO

Self-esteem is a person’s perception of his or her own worth. It is the overall judgment that he or she makes about himself or herself.

Resilience is the ability to overcome difficult life events and recover from shock or trauma.

PREPARATION:
10 min

IMPLEMENTATION:
10–15 minutes

EXIT:
5–10 minutes

OBJECTIVE : to help your students identify new personal strengths

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE: 10–15 minutes



PART 1: Introduce and complete the “My Personal Strengths” worksheet.

WHAT TO SAY “You’ve started thinking about some of your strengths, but there are probably others that you don’t think about right away. With this exercise, you will be able to identify more.”

WHAT TO DO Give each student a “My Personal Strengths” worksheet. Display the worksheet on the IWB to explain the rating system and show your answers as an example.

WHAT TO SAY “Using the worksheet I just handed out, I would like you to check off your strengths.”

As an example, here is the worksheet I filled out to assess my strengths.

- **The “++” symbol** represents **a significant strength**. For example, I think that I’m very persistent, so I checked “++.”
- **The “+” symbol** represents **a strength that is less pronounced**. For example, I’m generous, but not to the point that I’d give the person next to me my whole dessert! Nevertheless, I’d probably give them a bite. 😊
- **The “-” symbol** means that **it needs work**. For example, I would like to learn to express my emotions more quickly, before I get frustrated or angry.”

INFO

Using the rating system can encourage your students to be aware of the intensity of their strengths and to work on some of them to build on them, even though they still need work.



MY PERSONAL STRENGTHS

Check the strengths that apply to you, indicating for each one whether it is very prominent in you (++) circle), less prominent (+ circle) or needs work (+ - circle). You can update this list regularly to track your progress.

	++	+	+ -
I'm a humble person	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm brave	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm creative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have common sense	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm curious	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can feel gratitude	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a good sense of humour	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm generous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can lead a group	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can be humane	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm persistent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	++	+	+ -
I like to learn new things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm careful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I work well in groups	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can forgive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can be responsible	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm open-minded	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I listen to others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm patient	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know how to express my emotions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I take initiative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm energetic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm positive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm affectionate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

THINK OF SOME OF YOUR OTHER STRENGTHS.

When you experience difficulties, don't hesitate to reread this list to remind yourself of your strengths. It will help you find the solutions that work best for you.

PREPARATION:
10 min

IMPLEMENTATION:
10–15 minutes

EXIT:
5–10 minutes

OBJECTIVE : to help your students identify new personal strengths

PART 2 (optional): Introduce the online questionnaire on 24 strengths

(Allow 15 additional minutes for demonstration and 15 minutes to complete the quiz as homework or in class).

To go further in **the process of introspection** and help your students better understand their strengths, you can suggest that they complete a second questionnaire that is available online. You can suggest doing it in class or as homework. Every student needs access to a computer that is connected to the Internet.

WHAT TO DO On the IWB, **go to** the website <https://www.viacharacter.org/surveys/takesurvey> and show them how to register.

INFO

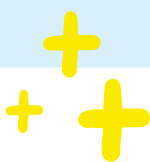
- **This questionnaire is a resource that is validated by psychologists.**
- **It is free and available to children aged 13 and older. An adult (parent or teacher) must create an account for a child under the age of 13.**
- **The site is displayed in English by default, but you can select the language of your choice.**
- **Creating an account requires a valid email (which must be available for each student).**
- **The site has paid features that you do not need to subscribe to in order to get student results.**
- **It takes about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.**

WHAT TO SAY

“To learn even more about your strengths, I have an activity that will help you go further. I’m going to show you on the IWB.”

This is the *Institute of Character* website, where you will find a questionnaire on 24 strengths or personality traits. **To complete the questionnaire and get a list of your greatest strengths:**

1. Click on the yellow tab at the top right that says, “Take the free survey.”
2. Complete the “Register to take a VIA Survey” form.
3. Select the “VIA Youth Survey” that was created for young people aged 8 to 17 and complete the short form, including your age.
4. You can expect 103 questions. For each one, select “very much like me, mostly like me, somewhat like me, a little like me, or not like me at all.”
For example: I am generally full of energy.”



PREPARATION:
10 min

IMPLEMENTATION:
10–15 minutes

EXIT:
5–10 minutes

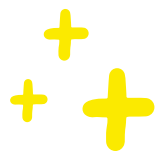
OBJECTIVE : to help your students identify new personal strengths

INFO

The 24 character strengths according to the *Institute of Character*

In the early 2000s, scientists discovered 24 character strengths that encapsulate the best in our personalities. Everyone has these 24 character strengths to varying degrees, so each person has a truly unique profile.

The free survey provides a list of character strengths, specifying your greatest strengths.



PREPARATION:
10 min

IMPLEMENTATION:
10–15 minutes

EXIT:
5–10 minutes

OBJECTIVE : to get your students to track their progress

EXIT TICKET TASK: 5–10 minutes



WHAT TO DO Go back to the paper where students wrote down their strengths at the beginning of the activity and compare it with their completed worksheet to identify any new strengths they became aware of during the activity.

WHAT TO SAY “Look at the paper where you listed your strengths at the beginning of the activity and compare it with your worksheet. On the worksheet, underline new strengths that you found that you hadn’t thought of at the beginning.

Are there many strengths that you hadn’t thought of?

What did you think of this exercise?

Now that you’re aware of your strengths, don’t hesitate to rely on them to get through difficult times.”

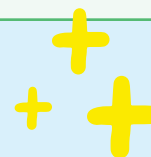
Optional:

- To expand on this, you may want to encourage your students to keep this worksheet as their personal strengths may evolve.
- You can redo this activity at the end of the year so that they can compare their responses over time and see if there has been a change.

INFO

Application in daily life

When a student is having a difficult time in class, you can remind them of their personal strengths and see how these might help them at that moment.



LEARN MORE

DISCOVER OUR COMPLETE GUIDE

to practicing mindfulness with your students.



WEBCAST

with psychologist and professor Catherine Malboeuf-Hurtubise, PhD.



LEARN ABOUT TWO TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES

with mindfulness meditation in class and a 5-step tutorial for leading your first meditation with your students.



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