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positive psychology  
and health

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# The Science of Health and Happiness for Young People

## LECTURE 6: Strengths and Growth Mindsets

Professor Ciaran O'Boyle

# WHICH MINDSET DO YOU HAVE?

Do you mostly agree or disagree with these statements:

## Intelligence

1. **Your intelligence is something very basic about you that you can't change very much.**
2. **You can learn new things, but you can't really change how intelligent you are.**
3. **No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change quite a bit.**
4. **You can always change substantially how intelligent you are.**

## Personal Qualities

1. **You are a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that.**
2. **No matter what kind of person you are, you can always change substantially.**
3. **You can do things differently, but the important parts of who you are can't really be changed.**
4. **You can always change basic things about the kind of person you are.**

**Fixed**

**Growth**



Developing a growth mindset

- Embrace challenges
- Persist in the face of setback
- See effort as part of the journey
- Learn from criticism
- Find lessons and inspiration in the resilience of others

Adapted from: Dweck CS. (2017). *Mindset: Changing The Way You Think To Fulfil Your Potential*. (Revised ed.) London, Robinson. Pp 12-14.



## Strengths

- You have all 24 strengths – some stronger and more used than others – but, all can be developed
- Your highest strengths are called your **signature** strengths – unique to you – like your signature – come naturally to you, are energising and best capture the real you
- You can develop or improve the use of any of your strengths
- Each strength can help you in its own way
- Your strengths can help you deal with your problems and reduce your stress

- Research shows that if you have an active awareness of your character strengths you are 9 times more likely to be flourishing
- Using strengths is a route to PERMA
- Using strengths decreases our negative bias
- Strengths have been shown to amplify and grow the positive in business, education, healthcare, education, coaching, psychotherapy and counselling
- Using strengths decreases stress, leads to less friction in the classroom, less depression, better physical health and increased well-being

### Strategies for using your strengths

1. Take the VIA survey and identify your signature strengths
2. Use one of your strengths in a new way each day
3. Connect your strengths to your happiness
4. Spot character strengths in others
5. Bring strengths into your interactions with others
6. Reflect on your role models

*Adapted from Bocci GS, Niemiec RM (2020) The Positivity Workbook for Teens. CA, New Harbinger Publications. Pp 27-29*

## Strengths in the movies

### Wisdom

*Life is Beautiful* (Creativity)  
*Alice in Wonderland* (Curiosity)  
*Sherlock Holmes* (Judgement)  
*Akeelah and the Bee* (Love of Learning)  
*Life as a House* (Perspective)

### Courage

*Hotel Rwanda* (Bravery)  
*The Pursuit of Happiness* (Perseverance)  
*Win Win* (Honesty)  
*The Artist* (Zest)

### Humanity

*Away From Her* (Love)  
*Amelie* (Kindness)  
*Another Year* (Social Intelligence)

### Justice

*The Way Back* (Teamwork)  
*12 Angry Men* (Fairness)  
*Gandhi* (Leadership)

### Temperance

*The Straight Story* (Forgiveness)  
*10 Questions for the Dalai Lama* (Humility)  
*The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo* (Prudence)  
*Twilight* (Self-Regulation)

### Transcendence

*American Beauty* (Appreciation of beauty/excellence)  
*It's a Wonderful Life* (Gratitude)  
*The Prize Winner of Defiance, Ohio* (Hope)  
*Zorba the Greek* (Humour)  
*The Wizard of Oz* (Spirituality)

Niemiec RM and Wedding D (2014)  
*Positive Psychology at the Movies 2*. Boston, Hogrefe

# Resources

## Videos:

- Carol Dweck author of “Mindset” speaking at RCSI. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EO5Yz2x0GSk>
- Neal Mayerson founder of the VIA Institute on Character speaks about the character strengths revolution. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSmbB0Ko2hM>
- Ryan Niemiec Director of Education at VIA speaks about character strengths at a 2017 Ted talk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMWck0mKGWc&t=351s>
- On September 22, 2016 over 90,000 schools, organizations and communities participated in Character Day and hosted events to discuss the importance of character development. Individuals were encouraged to complete the free VIA Survey to discover their strengths. Watch this video of students of Christchurch, New Zealand celebrating their unique character strengths! <https://www.viacharacter.org/resources/videos/character-matters>

## Books:

- Bocci GS, Niemiec RM (2020). *The Positivity Workbook for Teens*. CA, New Harbinger Publications.
- Dweck CS. (2017). *Mindset: Changing The Way You Think To Fulfil Your Potential*. (Revised ed.) London, Robinson.
- Niemiec R, McGrath RE (2019). *The Power of Character Strengths*. Cincinnati, The VIA Institute on Character

Web: [www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)