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centre for  
positive psychology  
and health

# The Science of Health and Happiness

NOTES LECTURE 8: Your strongest self.

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# RCSI Science of Health and Happiness: Notes Lecture 8

1. The context for looking at our strengths is the PERMA model of happiness and the research that shows that the way we think about things is crucial
2. The VIA Institute on Character is a major resource for understanding and using your strengths.  
<https://www.viacharacter.org>
3. Early key research by a large team of scientists led to the publication in 2004 of Chris Petersen's and Martin Seligman's key text *Character Strengths and Virtues A Handbook and Classification*.
4. The 6 ubiquitous virtues are: Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence
5. Our character strengths are our means of achieving the virtues
6. Character strengths are: positive traits and capacities that are personally fulfilling and reflect our personal identity; influence how we think act and feel; do not diminish others but produce positive outcomes; are ubiquitous and valued across all cultures; are expressed in combination, in degrees and in context; are stable, but capable of changing
7. Research shows that focusing on our character strengths makes us 9 times more likely to be flourishing, helps achieve PERMA, attenuates our negative bias, engenders positive outcomes in business, education, healthcare, coaching, psychotherapy and counselling, decreases stress at work, leads to less friction in the classroom, increased academic achievement, less depression, better physical health and increased well-being
8. Your Signature strengths are your 4-7 strongest or most prominent strengths. They are **essential, effortless and energising**.

*"The good life consists in deriving happiness by using your signature strengths every day in the main realms of living. The meaningful life adds one more component: using these same strengths to forward knowledge, power and goodness. A life that does this is pregnant with meaning, and if God comes at the end, such a life is scared"* Professor Martin Seligman



# The Via Strengths and Virtues

<b>WISDOM</b>	Creativity	Curiosity	Judgement	Love of Learning	Perspective
<b>COURAGE</b>	Bravery	Perseverance	Honesty	Zest	
<b>HUMANITY</b>	Love	Kindness	Social intelligence		
<b>JUSTICE</b>	Teamwork	Fairness	Leadership		
<b>TEMPERANCE</b>	Forgiveness	Humility	Prudence	Self regulation	
<b>TRANSCENDENCE</b>	Appreciation of beauty	Gratitude	Hope	Humour	Spirituality

1. The most common strengths are kindness, gratitude, fairness and honesty
2. The least common strengths are self-regulation, prudence and modesty
3. The strengths most associated with happiness and well-being are love, hope, gratitude and zest

# Resources

## Videos:

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>

## Books:

### *Popular*

Niemiec R, McGrath RE (2019). *The Power of Character Strengths*. Cincinnati, The VIA Institute on Character

### *Technical*

Petersen C, Seligman MEP (2004). *Character Strengths and Virtues A Handbook and Classification*. New York, Oxford University Press