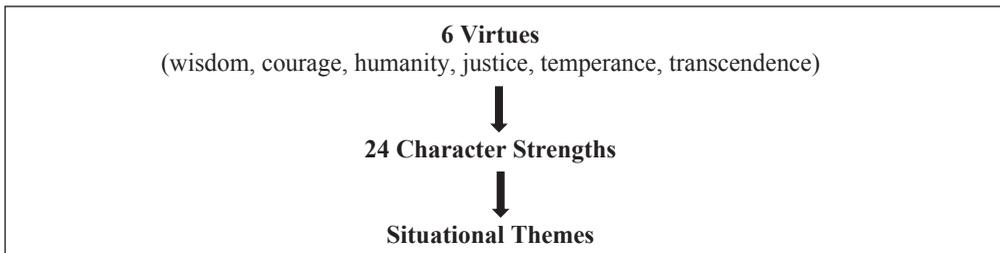


i.e., is the character strength expressed at work, school, home, community, or another context in general? There are many studies that are context specific, such as the myriad of studies of character strengths in the workplace context (e.g., Harzer & Ruch, 2012) and the school setting (e.g., Weber, Wagner, & Ruch, 2016). These studies offer the practitioner and client wisdom as to what outcomes might occur at work or school or home or community, in general, should character strengths be deployed. This is distinct from the more nuanced level of situational themes, which has not been explored as deeply. For example, in the work context, how might signature strengths be expressed differently in a situation with one’s customers or clients, a situation in which work projects and stress are piling up, a situation of interacting with one’s boss during an employee review, or the situation of the employee feeling sick but knowing he or she has to get a project done? The quantity of potential situational themes are myriad and appear endless in each context. Nevertheless, that is the work of exploration within the practitioner–client dialogue in regard to strengths use.

The other addition in Figure 1.2 is the three virtues – caring, inquisitiveness, and self-control. McGrath (2015c) studied over one million individuals across four samples and multiple measures of character strengths and found support for the 24 character strengths splitting into 3 factors. This was found to be consistent with philosophical accounts of virtues as well as with the experience of leaders in the fields of moral character and character education. While it could be argued that these three virtues might replace the six original virtues in this practical conceptualization,



**Figure 1.1.** VIA Classification hierarchy in *Character Strengths and Virtues* (2004).



**Figure 1.2.** A practitioner-friendly expansion of the VIA Classification hierarchy, hypothesized from emerging research.

2009; Park & Peterson, 2009). The character strength of gratitude has been linked with high positive emotion, optimism, life satisfaction, vitality, religiousness and spirituality, and less depression and envy than less grateful individuals (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). These studies show that some character strengths matter more for specific outcomes. Likewise, some character strengths might matter more at particular periods in life. For example, in a representative sample of adults in Switzerland, strengths that promote affiliation and commitment were among those most aligned with well-being for adults in their late 20s and early 30s; strengths that support maintenance of family and work for those in their late 30s through mid-40s; and strengths that facilitate a vital involvement with the environment for those in their late 40s through late 50s (Martinez-Marti & Ruch, 2014).

**Table 1.1.** Character Strengths Associations Noted in Peterson and Seligman (2004)

Character Strength	Positive Correlates
Creativity	Openness to new experiences; cognitive flexibility
Curiosity	Positive affect; willingness to challenge stereotypes; creativity; desire for challenge in work and play; goal perseverance; adept at making complex decisions; excitement/enjoyment/attentiveness; engagement and achievement in academic settings; sense of subjective well-being
Judgment	Adept at problem solving; increased cognitive ability; more resistant to suggestion and manipulation; more effective in dealing with stress
Love of learning	More adept at navigating obstacles/challenges; autonomy; resourcefulness; increased sense of possibility; self-efficacy; healthy, productive aging; more likely to seek/accept challenges; decreased levels of stress
Perspective	Successful aging; life satisfaction; maturity; open-mindedness; even-tempereness; sociability; social intelligence
Bravery	Prosocial orientation; internal locus of control; self-efficacy; ability to delay gratification; tolerance for ambiguity/uncertainty; capacity to assess risk; capacity for reflection; involvement in socially worthy aims; capacity to create and sustain high quality connections with others
Perseverance	Achievement/goal completion; resourcefulness; self-efficacy
Honesty	Positive mood; life satisfaction; openness to new experiences; empathy; conscientiousness; capacity for self-actualization; agreeableness; emotional stability; effort/goal attainment
Zest	Autonomy; connection with others; goal attainment
Love	Positive relationships with others; healthy balance between dependency and autonomy; positive social functioning; higher self-esteem; less susceptibility to depression; capacity to cope with stress
Kindness	Overall mental and physical health; longevity
Social intelligence	Smooth social functioning; life judgment; lower levels of aggression; lower incidence of substance abuse
Teamwork (framed as citizenship)	Social trust; positive view of human nature
Fairness	Perspective; self-reflection; cooperation; leadership; altruism; prosocial behavior
Leadership	Cognitive skills/intelligence; flexibility/adaptability; emotional stability; internal locus of control; integrity; interpersonal skills; creativity/resourcefulness
Forgiveness	Prosocial behaviors; agreeableness; emotional stability; lower levels of anger, anxiety, depression, and hostility
Humility	Perspective; forgiveness; self-regulation; capacity to attain self-improvement goals

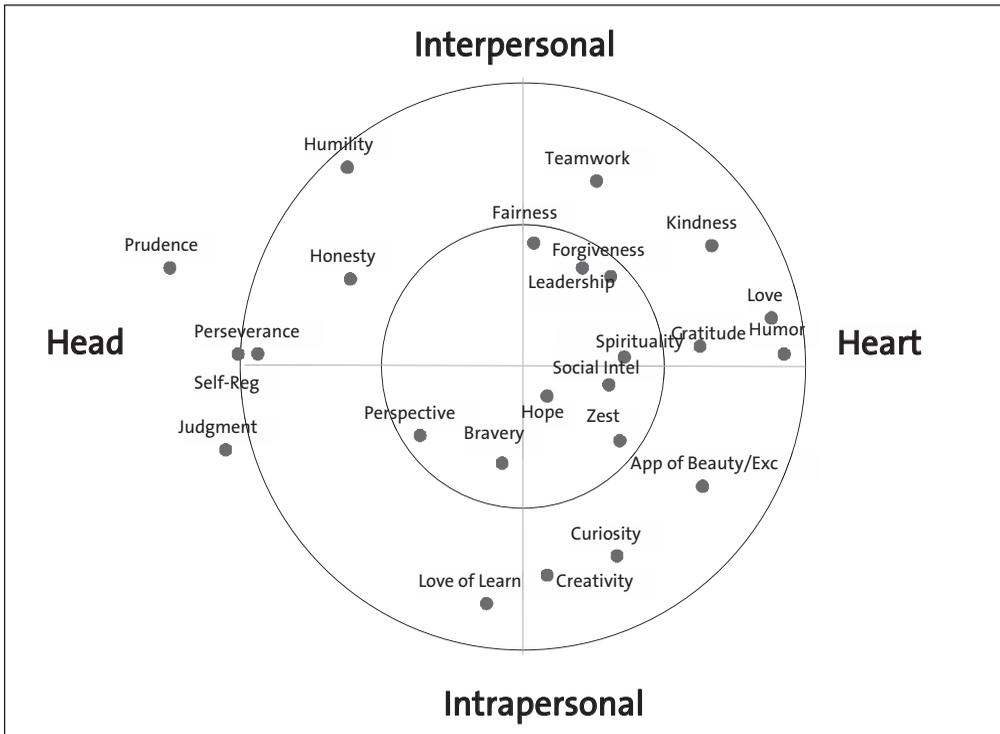
**Table 2.1.** Using Signature Strengths in New Ways

<b>Creativity</b>	<p>Think of one of your problems and two possible solutions. Present the solutions nonverbally as an act or mime to someone.</p> <p>Turn an inanimate object (e.g., like paperclips, toothpicks) into something meaningful.</p>
<b>Curiosity</b>	<p>Try a new food for the first time, preferably from a culture different than your own.</p> <p>Take a different route home and explore a new area or neighborhood.</p>
<b>Judgment (critical thinking)</b>	<p>Watch a political program from the opposite point of view of your own, and keep an open mind.</p> <p>Ask one or two clarifying questions of someone who has a different approach to life or different beliefs than you (e.g., a vegetarian).</p>
<b>Love of learning</b>	<p>Read some of the original works of Gandhi online.</p> <p>Consider your favorite subject matter. Do an Internet search and surprise yourself by discovering something new about the topic.</p>
<b>Perspective</b>	<p>For one of your interactions today: First, listen closely. Second, share your ideas and thoughts.</p> <p>Consider the wisest quotation you have come across. Think of one way you can live more true to that quote.</p>
<b>Bravery</b>	<p>Take on a new adventure or hobby that fits with one of your areas of interest.</p> <p>Consider one of your personal fears. Take one small, healthy action toward facing it right now.</p>
<b>Perseverance</b>	<p>Complete a small project that you have been putting off.</p> <p>Set a new goal today, list two potential obstacles that may come up, and ways that you will overcome them.</p>
<b>Honesty</b>	<p>Write a poem that expresses an inner truth.</p> <p>Contact a family member or friend whom you have told a “partial” truth and give them the complete details.</p>
<b>Zest</b>	<p>Exert your energy in a unique way – jump on a bed, run in place, practice yoga or body stretching, or chase around a child or pet.</p> <p>Express your energy through an outfit, pair of shoes, and/or accessories that are striking and colorful.</p>
<b>Love</b>	<p>Surprise somebody with a small gift that shows you care (e.g., flowers, a Starbucks coffee).</p> <p>Tell someone about a strength you saw them use and how much you value it. Words of affirmation are a powerful, verbal force for the expression of love.</p>
<b>Kindness</b>	<p>Put coins in someone’s parking meter that has run out of money.</p> <p>Stop by a hospital or nursing home and offer to visit someone who is lonely.</p>
<b>Social intelligence</b>	<p>Start up a conversation with someone whom you normally would not say much more to than typical pleasantries. This person might be the woman at the checkout counter, a telemarketer, or a new employee.</p> <p>Express a feeling of frustration, disappointment, or nervousness in a healthy, direct way that someone can easily understand.</p>

**Table 2.1.** Continued

<b>Teamwork</b>	Spot and express appreciation for the strengths shown by your team members.  Savor a positive team interaction from the past by replaying it in your mind; share it at a team meeting.
<b>Fairness</b>	Look for beings (e.g., people, animals) that are cast aside or typically held in disgust and go out of your way to treat them right.  Include someone in a conversation who is typically excluded from groups or is a newcomer.
<b>Leadership</b>	Discuss with someone who reports to you about how they can align their top character strength more in their work.  Gather and lead a group to help support a cause you believe in.
<b>Forgiveness</b>	Let go of a minor irritant or a grudge.  Give yourself permission to make a mistake.
<b>Humility</b>	Consider an interaction that typically involves you doing more talking/sharing and flip it to where the other person talks/shares more.  Ask someone you trust to give you feedback on your struggles and growth areas.
<b>Prudence</b>	Before you make a decision that is typically very easy, take one full minute to think about it before you take action.  Write down your plans for each hour of the remainder of the day, no matter how trivial.
<b>Self-regulation</b>	The next time you feel irritated or nervous today, pause and breathe with the experience for a count of 10 breathes.  Monitor all the food and drinks you put in your body. Write it down on a tracking sheet.
<b>Appreciation of beauty &amp; excellence</b>	Go outside and stand still in a beautiful environment for 20 minutes.  Listen to a song or piece of music that is viewed as extraordinary; allow yourself to marvel at the talent that went into producing it.
<b>Gratitude</b>	Tell someone “thanks” who deserves it and is typically not recognized.  Share your appreciation on a post-it note that you put on someone’s desk as a surprise or send it in a spontaneous e-mail.
<b>Hope</b>	Consider a problem or struggle you are having. Write down two optimistic, realistic thoughts that bring comfort.  Watch a movie that promotes a message of hope and think about how the message applies to your life.
<b>Humor</b>	Do something spontaneous and playful around another person (e.g., saying something silly, contorting your body in a weird way, or telling a funny story or joke).  Watch a classic comedy show you haven’t seen before and laugh as much as possible.
<b>Spirituality</b>	Read about a religion/spirituality different from your own and look for ways in which the core messages parallel one another.  Contemplate the “sacredness” of this present moment. Allow yourself to find meaning in the moment.

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**Figure 2.1.** Two Factor Balance Graph of the 24 Character Strengths.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Intrapersonal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can express thanks to my body for its healing capacities.</li> <li>• I am grateful for my connectedness with the universe and want to give back to the environment.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Heart (feelings, body)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warmth in the chest.</li> <li>• Relaxing heaviness in the shoulders.</li> <li>• Tingling in the fingers and hands.</li> <li>• Sense of opening up to others and the world.</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Interpersonal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbally expressing thanks to a friend.</li> <li>• Showing appreciation by offering kindness in return.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Mind (thoughts and beliefs)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My family means the world to me.</li> <li>• I am appreciative of this person's gift.</li> <li>• I am connected to this person.</li> </ul>

**Figure 2.2.** Holistic mapping of the strength of gratitude.

# Virtue: Wisdom

## Spotlight on Curiosity

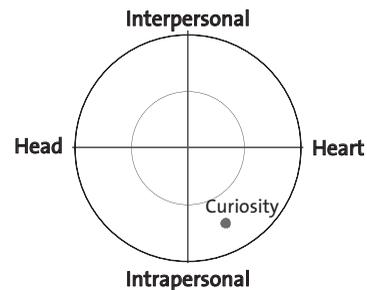


### Core Features

**Definition:** Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating.

**Essence:** Exploration.

**Dimensions:** Interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience.



### Highest Correlations With Curiosity

1. Zest
2. Love of learning
3. Creativity
4. Hope
5. Perspective

### Questions for Strength Building

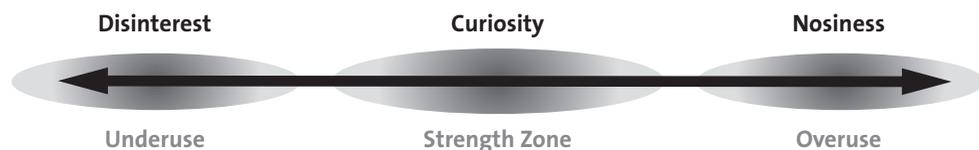
- How does your curiosity present across the different domains of life?
- Where do you feel most comfortable being curious?
- In what situations does your curiosity get you in trouble?
- What blocks or interferes with your curiosity?

### Research Highlights

- One of the five strengths most connected with happiness/life satisfaction.
- One of the five most frequently endorsed strengths around the world.
- One of the strengths most aligned with a life of engagement.
- Connected with intelligence, life longevity, meaning, and good relationships.

### Curiosity Interventions

- Consider an activity that you dislike. Pay attention to three novel features of this activity while you do it (Langer, 2006).
- Practice active curiosity, in which you actively explore your environment, rather than passive curiosity, in which you are only curious when something new pops up in your environment (Kashdan, 2009).



# Virtue: Humanity

## Spotlight on Love

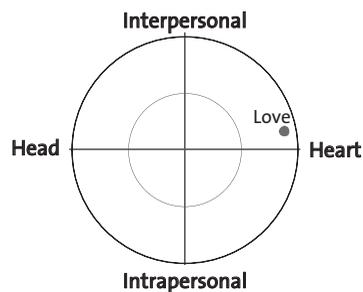


### Core Features

**Definition:** Valuing close relations with others, in particular those in which sharing and caring are reciprocated; being close to people.

**Essence:** Genuine, reciprocal warmth.

**Dimensions:** Loving others, being loved by others.



### Highest Correlations With Love

1. Gratitude
2. Kindness
3. Zest
4. Hope
5. Social Intelligence

### Questions for Strength Building

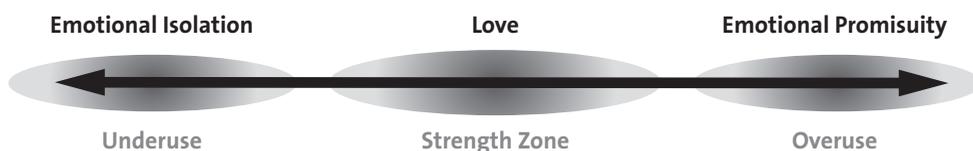
- How do you express love in a healthy way at work, at home, and with friends?
- Do you feel you have a balance in that you equally give *and* receive love from others?
- How do you combine this strength with each of your top strengths?

### Research Highlights

- One of the top five character strengths most associated with life satisfaction.
- One of the most prevalent character strengths in very young children.
- Facilitates empathy, tolerance, and forgiveness in relationships, which contributes to the health and longevity of those relationships.

### Love Interventions

- Practice spontaneous, in-the-moment loving acts that don't require extensive planning, memory, or forethought as a way of expressing and boosting this strength (Kamrath & Peetz, 2011).
- Develop a loving-kindness meditation practice in which you consciously tap into your inner resources of love through mental focus, imaging, and statements that focus on feeling and expressing love. This boosts love and is associated with a host of mental and physical benefits (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010).



# **Mindfulness**

## ***Introduction***

Character strengths and mindfulness are strong well-being boosters and their integration offers insight and depth to understanding and influencing human motivation and behavior (see Chapter 5 for a discussion). This section offers positive interventions that bring these areas together. These are some of the most popular activities found in the evidence-based, manualized, 8-week program mindfulness-based strengths practice (MBSP).

## ***Contents***

CSI 65: The Mindful Pause

CSI 66: Strong Mindfulness

CSI 67: Fresh Look Meditation

CSI 68: From Mindless to Mindful

CSI 69: Meditation Targeting a Character Strength

CSI 70: Strengths Gatha

## The Mindful Pause

### Overview

It is commonplace to hear phrases such as “Live in the moment,” “Take it one moment at a time,” “Just stop and breathe,” “Look within,” “Be in the here-and-now,” and “Face your problems head-on.” This activity offers a recipe for getting to these adages quickly and, at the same time, activating your best internal resources.

### Purpose

Short-circuit worry, stress, and autopilot thinking; take advantage of present moment awareness; activate character strengths in the moment; shift your mindset to mindfulness and character strengths.

### Steps

1. Pause and feel your inbreath and outbreath for 10–15 seconds. Let everything go except for your breath. Give your breath your full attention.
2. Conclude with a question: Which of my character strengths might I bring forward right now?

### Tip

This exercise is about allowing whatever character strength is going to emerge to come forth. It's not about controlling for a particular strength or planting or hoping a certain strength will arise. Instead, trust yourself, remember you have 24 character strength capacities, and see which strength emerges. Whatever it is, go with it! Remember, you can express the strength in your thinking (e.g., labeling and generating “fairness” thoughts), in your feelings (e.g., noticing where you feel gratitude in your body and savoring it), or in your behavior/actions (e.g., an action directed toward others or an action for yourself). This means that any moment, literally, is a potential moment for your character strength expression.

### Troubleshooting

If you have difficulty applying the mindful pause, try one of these 5 variations: (1) pause and review one of your signature strengths you might bring forth; (2) pause and remind yourself of your current role (parent, employee, friend) and take action consistent with the role; (3) decide on a strength you want to build up, pause, and see what action comes to mind to use the strength; (4) pause and consider how you might bring forth more goodness into the next moment; (5) pause and just be (nothing else, just breathe and be present).

### Research

This exercise is based on my research and practice integrating and teaching mindfulness and character strengths (Niemiec, 2014a). The application of this activity has been discussed across different populations, such as parents and teachers (Lottman et al., 2017), gifted students (Sharp et al., 2016), the workplace (Niemiec & Lissing, 2016), and across a myriad of contexts that helping professionals engage in (Niemiec, 2016).

### Examples

I use the mindful pause frequently during moments of transition during my day, especially as I transition from work to family. These are important moments for me to embrace, and I try to let go of the tension and positives of a full day at work and then become present for my family-time. The most common character strength to emerge for me (Step 2) is love, which is one of my signature strengths. I then take action by immediately and consciously bringing my full attention in a warm and interactive way to my young children as they play. One day, another strength came up for me during this activity – teamwork (a lower strength for me). I then used teamwork by helping my wife cook dinner (a task she typically loves to do independently). This led to the discovery of a new interest area for me and added a fun relationship connection point for the two of us.

## Strong Mindfulness

### Overview

Three of the most common obstacles that prevent people from engaging in meditation is they report their mind is wandering too much, they don't have time to practice, or they forget to practice. This leads people to feel disconnected from their practice and, as a result, their mindfulness practice wanes, and they conclude that meditation or mindfulness is not for them. What most meditation teachers forget to teach people is that the individual already has all the resources within them to succeed – they are called character strengths! Why not turn to our most energizing, innermost qualities during mindfulness practice to help invigorate and sustain our practice?

### Purpose

Become more consistent with your meditation or self-regulation practice; energize your meditation and mindful living; bring more of “you” into your mindfulness practice; enhance motivation and meaning with your practice.

### Steps

1. Name the primary obstacle that gets in your way of practicing mindfulness on a regular basis
2. Brainstorm how each of your Top 5 signature strengths could help you overcome, face, or better manage this obstacle.
3. Take action with one or more of these strength strategies at your next practice session.

### Research

The concept of “strong mindfulness” is one of two main types of integration of mindfulness and character strengths (Niemiec, 2014a) and involves finding ways to take any of the 24 character strengths and weaving them into meditation, mindfulness practices, and mindful living (see Niemiec, Rashid, & Spinella, 2012).

### Examples

In my *Psychology Today* blog, I've discussed examples for infusing all 24 character strengths into a mindfulness practice. Here are a few of those examples.

- **Humility.** At the onset of your practice, remind yourself of the impermanence of life as you reflect on your mortality and the mortality of those you love.
- **Self-regulation.** Follow a disciplined daily structure – same day, same time, same length, same practice – for a week.
- **Appreciation of beauty & excellence.** Engage in your mindful sitting or mindful walking practice outside, with your eyes open.
- **Gratitude.** Infuse a blessing component at the beginning and end of your meditation practice.

## Fresh Look Meditation

### Overview

The practice of reframing allows us to see a problem in a new way, with fresh eyes. With this kind of cleansed seeing, problems can, at best, be transformed or cured, or at least, managed better with a higher degree of empowerment. Reframing with character strengths is facilitated by considering each of the following:

1. Character strengths already present within the problem (that we have overlooked or underappreciated);
2. Character strengths that are being overused or underused contributing to the problem; and/or
3. Character strengths that are not strong enough alone and therefore need additional strengths to combine synergistically with them.

### Purpose

Practice a new way to manage problems and stressors; enhance your ability to reframe challenges; improve your ability to spot character strengths overuse, underuse, and opportunities for strengths use.

### Steps

These are the five steps outlined in Niemiec (2014a), which comes with an audio recording of this meditation.

1. Anchor your attention to your breathing. Spend a few minutes getting focused and grounded into the present moment.
2. Picture a *minor* life challenge or issue you are facing. See the details play out like a short movie.
3. Attend to your thoughts and feelings as they arise in the moment. Notice in your “movie” where you are overusing or underusing your character strengths.
4. Start your movie again but this time view yourself successfully using your character strengths to manage, balance, or resolve your life challenge/problem.
5. Return your attention to your breath anchor.

### Research

This meditation activity is considered a centerpiece activity in mindfulness-based strengths practice (MBSP; Niemiec, 2014a), and is based on substantial research on the benefits of reframing from the science and practice of clinical hypnosis (for practical examples, see Hammond, 1990; Yapko, 2011), and from the research on positive reappraisal, which has found that mindfulness facilitates positive reappraisal (Garland, Gaylord, & Park, 2009), and these two phenomena are linked with an upward, positive spiral process (Garland, Gaylord, & Fredrickson, 2011).

## From Mindless to Mindful

### Overview

Habits, by definition, have a mindless component and can operate on their own, outside our conscious awareness. We can understand this with the metaphor of “autopilot”: When an airline pilot has the plane at a nice cruising speed, he or she can turn on autopilot so the plane can fly itself. Our habits and vices work the same way. We mindlessly eat snacks out of the cupboard (a habit of behavior), watch hours of television at the same time every day (a habit of behavior), and replay the same worry-prone scenarios (a habit of mind) as tension arises. Our autopilot mind has taken over and flies our habits wherever our mind wishes to go. We can learn to catch our autopilot mind in the moment, learn from it, and create new habits of mind and behavior that are strengths-based.

### Purpose

Shift toward cultivating strength; making strengths use more routine; use mindfulness to support new habits.

### Steps

1. Select one of your “bad” habits or vices. Choose something you are struggling with or bothered by and that you do each day or nearly every day, such as tense discussions with a colleague or family member, overeating at lunch, overdrinking at night, staying up late, etc.
2. Consider your autopilot mind the next time you engage in this habit or vice. How much of your habit is done on autopilot? When does your mind wander off?
3. Using your autopilot mind as the target, the next time you engage in the activity, practice bringing mindful attention to what happens before, during, and after your activity. In addition, deliberately bring one of your character strengths to help you with your mindfulness.

### Tip

When selecting a vice or habit, consider situations in which you typically display mindless behavior, where you are quick to react with anger or frustration, or behaviors you wish you could stop but feel you somehow cannot. Perhaps you notice that you seem to have a lot of arguments with your spouse? Numerous tense discussions with a colleague? A habit of overeating or overdrinking in the evening? Stress every time you drive to work?

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### Research

This activity is part of the mindfulness-based strengths practice (MBSP) program (Niemiec, 2014a) and builds from the various mindfulness exercises devoted to helping people shift from habitual reacting to skillful responding (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Segal et al., 2013).

### Example

Jodie selected her tendency to overeat and snack on high-calorie foods at night as her area of focus. In bringing attention to her autopilot mind while snacking at night, she noticed a large discrepancy between her mindlessness and mindfulness. The next evening, she engaged in mindful eating and deliberately brought her strength of curiosity to the process immediately before snacking (walking from her kids’ bedroom to the kitchen), during the snacking (standing at her counter), and after her snacking (feeling bloated and lying on the couch). She reported that her mindful eating slowed her down to notice her feelings of anxiety about the tasks of the next day as well as eating as a reward (“I deserve to eat after a hard day”). Being ready and equipped with her curiosity strength helped her to face these thoughts and feelings directly. This slowed down the quantity of food she ate and gave her the opportunity to simply breathe and savor the bites of food, using all five of her senses. She also became curious about where the food came from and the experience of each bite of food flowing in her body. This led her to be curious about alternate approaches to handling her feelings and rewarding herself in future evenings.

## Meditation Targeting a Character Strength

### Overview

Mindfulness can be used as a type of meditation to facilitate awareness, exploration, and action. Each of the 24 character strengths can be the target of a meditation practice. Some character strengths are regularly the focus of popular meditations such as love, gratitude, and forgiveness, while other character strengths are rarely the subject of a meditation such as humor, fairness, and judgment/critical thinking.

### Purpose

Boost one of your character strengths; integrate mindfulness with one of your strengths; practice a meditation that is naturally energizing for you.

### Steps

These steps will help you get started with the character strength you choose.

1. Close your eyes and bring your attention fully to the present moment and attend to your inbreath and outbreath for 2–5 minutes.
2. Call to mind one character strength you would like to focus on. Breathe with this character strength, allowing it to be present within you.
3. Bring to mind one situation in which you brought this character strength forth strongly and positively in a way that was beneficial to yourself and/or others.
4. Take notice of your feelings as you focus on this character strength. Where do you locate it in your body?
5. Continue to breathe with your strength. Notice any image that is associated with your use of this character strength. Notice any insights, phrases, or positive thoughts that are connected with your use of this strength.
6. Select a cue that will connect your character strength with your feelings/body and image/thoughts. This will be a cue you can use in the future to remind yourself of the power of this character strength within you. The cue might be verbal (e.g., a word or phrase) or physical (e.g., placing your hand on your heart, pointing your finger upward, or tapping your head). Choose something that has personal meaning to you.
7. In the future, when you wish to draw from that character strength, simply activate your cue. You can practice this so that your cue becomes stronger and triggers your character strength automatically.

### Tip

Consider moving through each of your signature strengths in a single meditation using the steps above. With each strength, sharpen your focus and allow your understanding to deepen.

### Research

Meditations on virtues and character strengths have been done in different forms since the origins of meditation and across many traditions, such as in spiritual practices, hypnosis practices, guided imagery work, and mind–body medicine. The character strength that has probably been most targeted by practitioners and researchers is love and there are several studies on loving-kindness meditation (e.g., Hutcherson et al., 2008). Meditations can also be found on gratitude (Brach, 2003), forgiveness (Kornfield, 2008), and spirituality (Brahm, 2006), to name a few.

## Strengths Gatha

### Overview

A gatha is a Sanskrit term meaning song, poem, or verse. Gathas are intended to create an awareness in the present moment *and* a connection with the immediate future based on the gatha's contents. Gathas differ from mantras, in which individuals repeat a word or sound with the intention of creating a relaxed or oneness state. Instead, gathas help to catalyze moments of mindful living as well as positive action for the immediate future.

### Purpose

Use strengths and mindfulness readily in good and challenging moments; take action with heightened awareness; deploy strengths purposefully; engage in mindful living.

### Steps

1. Choose a character strength (e.g., gratitude) or character strength concept (e.g., signature strength, strengths overuse) that you would like to focus on.
2. Create a short gatha (e.g., two to four lines) that captures the essence of the character strength – of what mindfulness of that strength really looks like.
3. Weave in elements of mindfulness practice into the gatha, as appropriate, such as breathing, walking, slowing down, deepening awareness, clear seeing, widening perspective, using your senses, facing challenges in the now, and so on.

### Research

Thich Nhat Hanh has written extensively about gathas (see Nhat Hanh, 1979, 2001). He has developed them for driving, working, eating, answering the phone, smiling, handling emotions, and a myriad of other daily actions, feelings, and situations. The strengths gatha intervention is part of mindfulness-based strengths practice (MBSP; Niemiec, 2014a) and has been recommended as an intervention for students in the classroom (Sharp et al., 2016).

### Examples (3 gathas)

Breathing in, I calm my body,  
Breathing out, I smile,  
Dwelling in this present moment,  
I know this is a wonderful moment. (Nhat Hanh, 1979)

Breathing in, I see my strengths,  
Breathing out, I value my strengths,  
Dwelling now in my strengths,  
I express myself fully. (Niemiec, 2014a)

Breathing in, I see my fear,  
Breathing out, I bow to my bravery,  
Remembering to call it forth,  
I grow my capacity.

# Appendix B

## Checklist for Strengths-Based Practitioners

Are you really strengths-based? Examine several of your therapy or coaching sessions or your business or school meetings through the lens of these questions. If you believe you are struggling in a particular area, review the concepts and the related practices in this book to help you move forward. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all possible strengths-based actions, rather a substantive jumping-off point for practitioners to review their work and make progress.

- Do you use the VIA Survey prior to or early on when you meet with a client?
- Do you ask several questions to assess and explore what is best in each client?
- Do you offer an equal amount of exploratory questions that target strengths/competencies compared with weaknesses/deficits?
- Do you address the various categories of human strengths, such as abilities/talents, skills, interests, and resources?
- Do you deliberately use character strengths to offer an insight or a reframe on problems, relationship conflicts, and stressors?
- Do you label character strengths in the moment during sessions and offer an explanation for the strength you spotted?
- Do you offer summary feedback on your client's character strengths in every meeting?
- Do you consciously use your own character strengths, especially your signature strengths, in your meetings with clients?
- Do you prepare for meetings by reviewing your client's signature strengths before you meet with them?
- Do you adhere to a structured model/approach when helping a client to develop their character strengths?
- Do you collaboratively discuss and draw direct links between client goals and their character strengths?
- Do you "see" your clients? Do you really understand who they are, using their signature strengths as a lens?
- Do you coherently link, at least in your mind, various character strengths concepts and applications throughout your theoretical orientation/approach (e.g., solution-focused, CBT, dynamic, performance-oriented, etc.)?
- Do you know at least a handful of character strengths interventions and how to tailor them to your client?