

# Signature Strengths

**Martin Seligman**  
**Director**  
**University of Pennsylvania**  
**Positive Psychology Center**

The twenty-four strengths (organized into 6 strength types) are<sup>1</sup>:

## **1. Wisdom and Knowledge – cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge**

- **Creativity [originality, ingenuity]:** Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things; includes artistic achievement but is not limited to it
- **Curiosity [interest, novelty-seeking, openness to experience]:** Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; finding subjects and topics fascinating; exploring and discovering
- **Open-mindedness [judgment, critical thinking]:** Thinking things through and examining them from all sides; not jumping to conclusions; being able to change one's mind in light of evidence; weighing all evidence fairly
- **Love of learning:** Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge, whether on one's own or formally; obviously related to the strength of curiosity but goes beyond it to describe the tendency to add systematically to what one knows
- **Perspective [wisdom]:** Being able to provide wise counsel to others; having ways of looking at the world that make sense to oneself and to other people

## **2. Courage – emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal**

- **Bravery [valor]:** Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain; speaking up for what is right even if there is opposition; acting on convictions even if unpopular; includes physical bravery but is not limited to it
- **Persistence [perseverance, industriousness]:** Finishing what one starts; persisting in a course of action in spite of obstacles; "getting it out the door"; taking pleasure in completing tasks
- **Integrity [authenticity, honesty]:** Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions
- **Vitality [zest, enthusiasm, vigor, energy]:** Approaching life with excitement and energy; not doing things halfway or halfheartedly; living life as an adventure; feeling alive and activated

## **3. Humanity - interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others**

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

- **Kindness [generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruistic love, "niceness"]:** Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them
- **Social intelligence [emotional intelligence, personal intelligence]:** Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself; knowing what to do to fit into different social situations; knowing what makes other people tick

#### 4. Justice - civic strengths that underlie healthy community life

- **Citizenship [social responsibility, loyalty, teamwork]:** Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share
- **Fairness:** Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice; not letting personal feelings bias decisions about others; giving everyone a fair chance.
- **Leadership:** Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the time maintain time good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.

#### 5. Temperance – strengths that protect against excess

- **Forgiveness and mercy:** Forgiving those who have done wrong; accepting the shortcomings of others; giving people a second chance; not being vengeful
- **Humility/Modesty:** Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; not regarding oneself as more special than one is
- **Prudence:** Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
- **Self-regulation [self-control]:** Regulating what one feels and does; being disciplined; controlling one's appetites and emotions

#### 6. Transcendence - strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning

- **Appreciation of beauty and excellence [awe, wonder, elevation]:** Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in various domains of life, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience
- **Gratitude:** Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks
- **Hope [optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation]:** Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about
- **Humor [playfulness]:** Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people; seeing the light side; making (not necessarily telling) jokes
- **Spirituality [religiousness, faith, purpose]:** Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe; knowing where one fits within the larger scheme; having beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort

1 from <http://valuesinaction.org/index.aspx?ContentID=44>.