How to Identify Your Strengths

The Career Psychologist
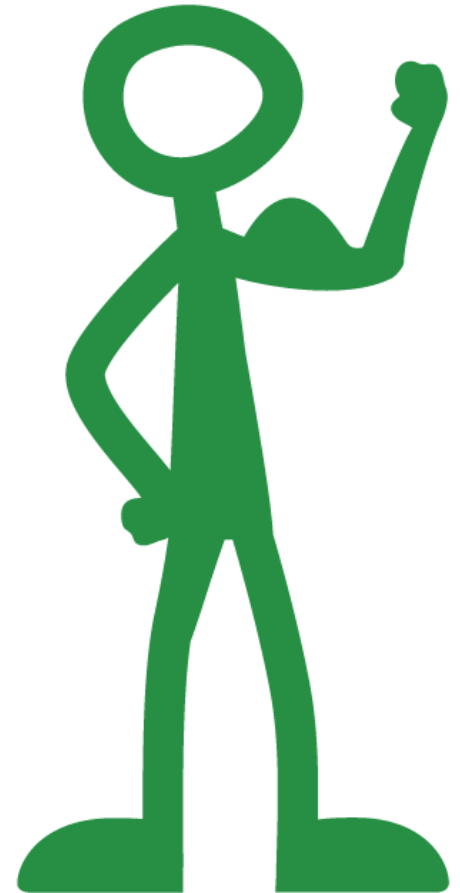
Strengths definition

*"A strength is a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is **authentic** and **energising** to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance."*

Professor Alex Linley (2008)

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Why are Strengths Important?

Using your strengths leads to:

- Improved individual **performance** (Corporate Leadership Council, 2002)

- Increased **flexibility** and openness to change (Linley, Harrington, & Hill, 2005)

- Enhanced **teamwork** and **cooperation** (Losada & Heaphy, 2004)

- Openness to inclusive working and **acceptance** of difference (Johnson & Fredrickson, 2005)

- Increased **resilience** (Fredrickson, 2003)

- Higher levels of **happiness** and **fulfilment** (Govindji & Linley, 2007)

Why are Strengths Important?

*"Research shows that when we continue to engage in tasks on the basis that we are good at them rather than because we actually **enjoy them**, we slow our ability to learn, have a reduced sense of fulfilment and tend to blame external factors rather than perceiving control over the task. It's being **passionate enough** to take risks in order to **use our strengths** that allows us to **develop and grow fastest**".*

Elliot, Dweck et al 1998

Identifying Your Strengths

Professor Martin Seligman is this bloke here.

He's one of the world's leading experts on character strengths. You can complete his Strengths Questionnaire [here](). You will find it by looking for the **VIA Signature Strengths** questionnaire (you have to sign up to the website to take the test).

This, along with all the tests on the site, is free to complete and will take approximately 30 minutes.

Note down your key strengths here:

Your **top** strength:

Your **second** strength:

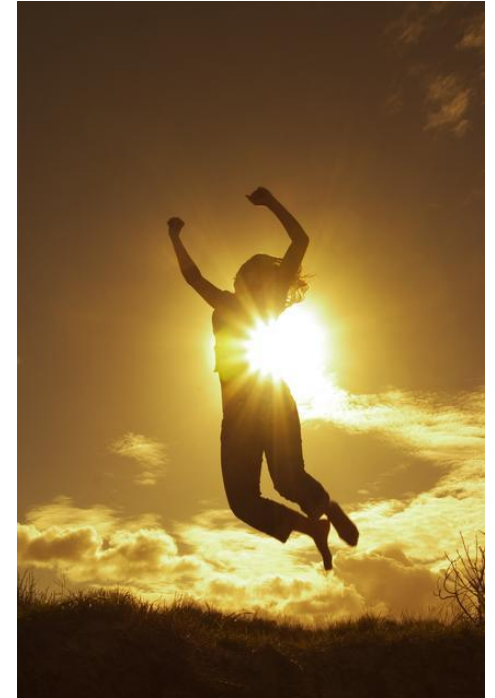Your **third** strength:

Your **fourth** strength:

Your **fifth** strength:

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Strengths Brainstorm

Instructions: simply note what comes to mind to any of the following questions. If you get confused as to what a strength is think of it as something you do which gives you energy and joy.

1. *What do other people always tell you you're good at – but you don't notice?*

2. *What activities give you energy? When do you feel most alive at work?*

3. *When did you last lose track of time? What were you doing?*

4. *What feeling makes you feel most motivated?*

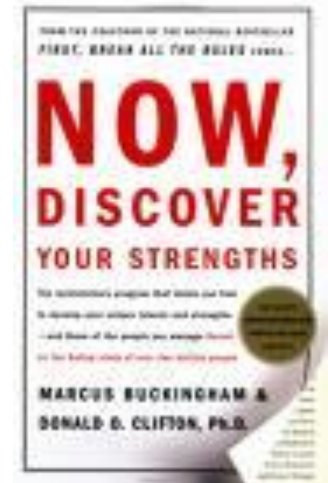# Other resources

If you were interested in the VIA test, you may also be interested in the Centre for Applied Positive Psychology website.   The Career Psychologist is a founder member of this organisation and we recommend the Realise 2 strengths report (which costs about £15).

We also really like this book.

It's called Now, Discover Your Strengths by Buckingham and Clifton.

The book comes with its own strengths test (Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0) and is another quick and cheap way of tuning into your strengths.
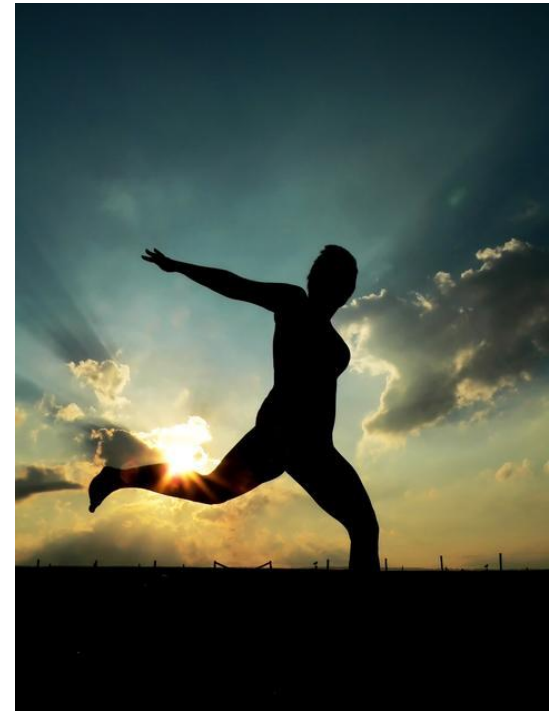
Achievements

What have been your **proudest moments** in life so far?

What are your **finest achievements?**

Usually we're so modest and self-effacing that we try to brush off our best achievements as a 'fluke' or 'anyone could have done that'.
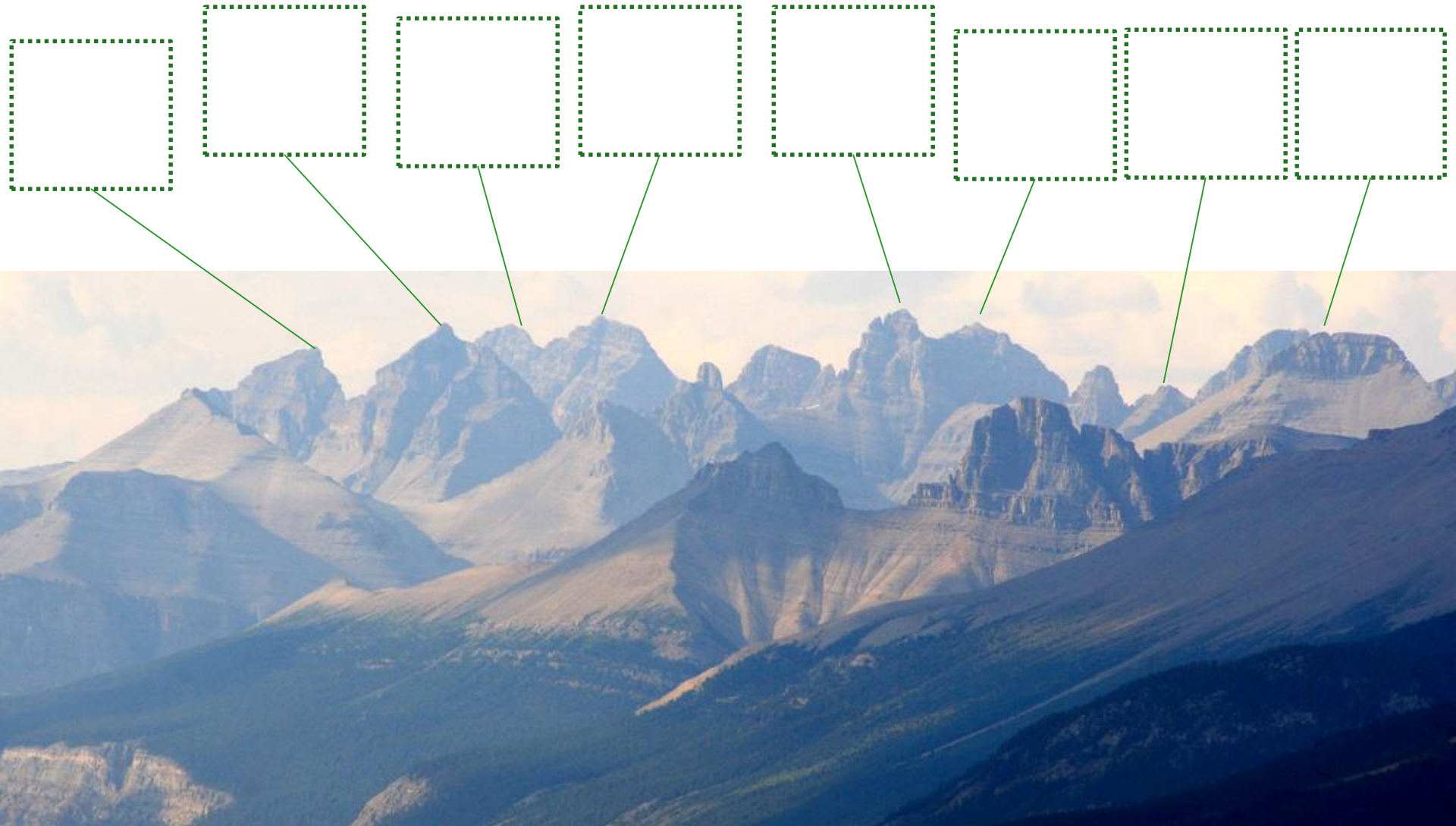
We're not letting you off the hook so easily...

We want you to identify your achievements and really recall them in detail.

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Your Peak Achievements

Instructions: think of all your achievements and for each peak you can see below, list one. Try to remember that achievement in detail. What did you do? How did you influence those around you? What strengths would you say you used during this achievement?

Which achievement was most inspiring?

Which achievement took most courage?

Which achievement was most creative?

Which achievement do you most look back on?

Which achievement took most stamina?

Which achievement was the most difficult?

Thanks for reading!

The Career Psychologist is an independent psychology consultancy based in London helping people to transform their careers.

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