



# YOUR BEST YOU

UNCOVER THE STRENGTHS THAT MAKE YOU THE BEST VERSION OF YOU, AND TAKE STEPS TO DEVELOP THEM SO THAT YOU CAN USE THEM TO BUILD THE FUTURE THAT YOU WANT, AND DESERVE, AND BECOME THE PERSON YOU TRULY WANT TO BE.

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[info@biglifesolutions.com](mailto:info@biglifesolutions.com).



# INTRODUCTION

Living your real life is all about becoming the best version of you. And one of the key components of that best version of you is your portfolio of strengths. Those things that you are good at, the things that just flow naturally – they all have a starring role in your real life: they aren't walk-ons or extras, they are central to the story. So you need to know what they are.

The thing is, though, talking about your strengths, worse still pushing your strengths to the fore, is vulgar. It's boastful. It's arrogant. Or, at least, that's what many societies would have you believe. So you keep your strengths under wraps. You smile sheepishly and brush it aside when someone commends you for doing something well, or being good at a particular task or in a particular situation and possibly you even point at someone else who is far better at those things than you are to shift the spotlight from you.

And, as a result of this misguided so-called 'humility' that society demands (although it's not really humility at all), far too few opportunities exist for individuals to use their strengths to their full potential. And as a result of under-using your strengths, the pursuit of your real life becomes far more difficult than it needs to be.

So, this exercise is designed to help put that right, by raising your awareness of what your strengths are, and helping you present them in a way that helps you to embrace and own them, rather than shy away from, and maybe even deny, them.

Everyone loves a good story. And, in this exercise, you are going to tell your story. You are going to cast your mind back and pick out an actual event, an experience, a situation – something real and concrete – that was a success for you, and, as you tell the story of that event, experience or situation, you will explore the strengths that you used. And, by anchoring that exploration of your strengths in fact – in that real and concrete thing that no one can deny, not even you – it will become easier to accept, acknowledge and embrace your strengths,

When you accept, acknowledge and embrace your strengths you begin to build a picture of your best you – who you are and what you look like when you are at your best – and your real life begins to seem much more achievable. Over the page are a few stages to work through as you tell your story, but first, before you begin that process, remember these key points:

- You must give your self time and space to tackle this exercise properly. It requires that you truly explore the experience of that time you can remember being at your best, so that you can bring out every detail
- Being at your best is not about conforming to the image of the person that you think other



people want you to be, it is about discovering and becoming the version of you that you want to be.

- Being at your best is subjective – it is a feeling, not a measure of performance. You can produce outstanding results without being at your best.

## **STAGE 1: FIND YOUR STORY**

Think of a specific time when you were at your very best. It may be recent, or it may be way back in the dim and distant past. You may have been facing a particular challenge, found yourself in a difficult situation, or it may have been an already positive experience that you made better. Whatever the circumstances, this was a situation or experience where you expressed the qualities that make you feel most authentic and most energised – your core qualities and your Signature Strengths. At the time, and even now as you recall it, those events made you feel proud and happy.

## **STAGE 2: TELL YOUR STORY**

Now tell your story. Write it down in the space provided on page six (if writing really isn't your thing, though, you can speak it into a voice recorder or an app on your phone, but writing really is the best way to really take hold of this process).

Here's a tip that may help you: whenever I am writing courses or material, I write what I would say if I was delivering the session face-to-face. I literally deliver the topic in my mind, and type what I would be saying in that classroom, coffee shop or wherever I might be doing it. Sure, it needs a bit of refining at the end, but I find it so much easier to find the words than simply writing to no-one.

So, rather than writing the story to yourself, maybe try to imagine yourself telling the story to someone who you feel super-comfortable sharing your success with, and simply write what you say to them as you tell them your story. And don't let the story fizzle out – remember, this is something you are proud of – something you want to celebrate and hold on to, so be sure to give it a powerful ending.

## **STAGE 3: READ IT BACK**

Once you are done writing, read it back. As you read, circle the words and phrases that relate to your strengths

## **STAGE 4: GET FEEDBACK**

This stage is entirely optional, but sometimes it can be really good to get a second opinion - just to check out whether there is some substance to your thoughts. So, consider getting a



second opinion. It's likely that there are more strengths at play than you spotted, and other people who were either present in the event you have used for your story, or who know you well, may review your account of what took place and identify additional strengths that you missed.

Consider asking some trusted friends or family members to read your story, and see if they think you told the whole picture. You may also want to use this as a basis for discussion with your coach in your one-to-one sessions.

## **STAGE 5: FIND YOUR STRENGTHS**

Now, in the space on page four, make a list of the strengths that you circled in stage three, and explain how you think your story demonstrates that you have that strength, and used it in that situation.

## **STAGE 6: REFLECT**

Look at the reflective questions on page five and take some time to think about how this exercise made you feel and what you learned.



# YOUR STORY

In the space provided below, tell your story. A tip if writing is not something that comes easily: you may find it helpful to imagine that you are telling your story to someone else, and write out what you would actually say to them. Remember, the space provided is just there in case you need that much (you may have a long story to tell!). So, don't get hung up on filling the space, just tell your story in as much detail as you need to for it to make sense, and reveal all of your strengths that were present in it.





# YOUR STRENGTHS

Now, identify the strengths that you can find in that story. Use your VIA Inventory strengths profile (if you don't have a profile yet, go to [www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org) and take the free online assessment to generate one). For each strength you identify, provide evidence to back up your thoughts. This is useful if you begin to doubt yourself, because the evidence (provided it is factual) doesn't lie, so, when those doubts creep in as to whether or not you really *do* have that strength, you can use the evidence to silence them, and reassure yourself. List your strengths, and the supporting evidence, in the space provided below. And, remember, you don't have to fill in every row - just use as many as you need for the strengths that you identify.

Strength identified	Evidence it really was present



# TIME TO REFLECT

Now, reflect on your story, and what it tells you, so that you can extract maximum value from this exercise, and use it to help you develop as the person you want to be, in the future that you want to have.

In the box below, list out the strengths that you highlighted by telling your story.

Now take some time to pause and reflect. Start by explaining how telling your story made you feel?

How aware were you of the strengths that telling your story highlighted? Were there any surprises? Did you already know you had those strengths?





How do you feel about the 'You at Your Best' that the story has captured? Do you like them? If so, what do you like most about them? Do they make you feel uncomfortable? If so, why is that? Do you believe that version of you (and if not, why not)

What, if anything, has this exercise highlighted that you need to work on if you are to truly become the best version of you – someone who is living their real life every day, and not simply someone with snippets of their best self scattered here and there.

What **ONE** thing could you do **THIS WEEK** to begin working on what you have identified as being the thing (or things) that you need to nail in order to be someone who is living their real life, as the best version of yourself, each and every day?



# STRENGTHS - EVERYDAY LIFE FOCUSED

Accurate	Enthusiastic	Organised
Action oriented	Fairness	Outgoing
Adventurous	Fast	Patient
Ambitious	Gratitude	People skills
Analytical	Helping	Perseverance
Appreciation of beauty	Honest	Precise
Appreciative	Hope	Prudence
Artistic	Humility	Respectful
Athletic	Humorous	Responsible
Authentic	Idealistic	Self assured
Bravery	Independent	Serious
Caring	Ingenuity	Self controlled
Citizenship	Industriousness	Speaking
Clever	Inner peace	Spirituality
Compassionate	Inspiring	Spontaneous
Charming	Integrity	Social intelligence
Communicative	Intelligent	Social skills
Confident	Kindness	Straightforward
Considerate	Knowledgeable	Strategic thinking
Courageous	Leadership	Tactful
Creativity	Lively	Team oriented
Critical thinking	Logical	Thoughtful
Curiosity	Love	Thrifty
Dedicated	Mercy	Tolerant
Determined	Modesty	Trustworthy
Disciplined	Motivated	Visionary
Educated	Observant	Vitality
Empathetic	Open minded	Warm
Energetic	Orderly	Willpower
Entertaining	Originality	Wisdom



# STRENGTHS - WORK FOCUSED

Activating	Finalising	Preparing
Adapting	Guiding a group or individual	Presenting
Administering	Gathering information	Problem-solving
Analysing information	Generating ideas	Proof reading
Arranging	Giving feedback	Prioritising
Advising	Helping	Questioning
Budgeting	Handling	Qualifying
Building teams	Hosting	Researching
Briefing	Imagining	Resolving
Balancing	Implementing	Reporting
Communicating	Influencing	Recording
Controlling	Initiating	Repairing
Coordinating	Innovating	Reviewing
Creating	Interviewing	Scheduling
Checking	Instructing	Selling
Counselling	Judging	Setting-up
Compiling	Learning	Supervising
Coaching	Listening	Simplifying
Data input	Locating	Speaking
Deciding	Launching	Strategising
Detailing	Leading	Teaching
Developing people	Managing	Team-work
Directing	Mentoring	Trouble-shooting
Devising	Motivating	Training
Discovering	Meeting people	Tracking details
Empathising	Marketing	Thinking creatively
Evaluating	Negotiating	Understanding
Examining	Navigating	Uniting
Explaining	Observing	Upgrading
Editing	Organising	Updating
Empowering	Overhauling	Verbalising
Finding	Overseeing	Volunteering
Fixing	Persuading	Verifying
Formulating	Planning	Writing

