

Psychology of Stress, Health and Well-Being.
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Lecture 28
Cultivating Happiness With Signature Strengths

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MODULE 10: HAPPINESS ACTIVITIES 2 (LECTURE 1)
Lecture 28: Cultivating Happiness With Signature Strengths

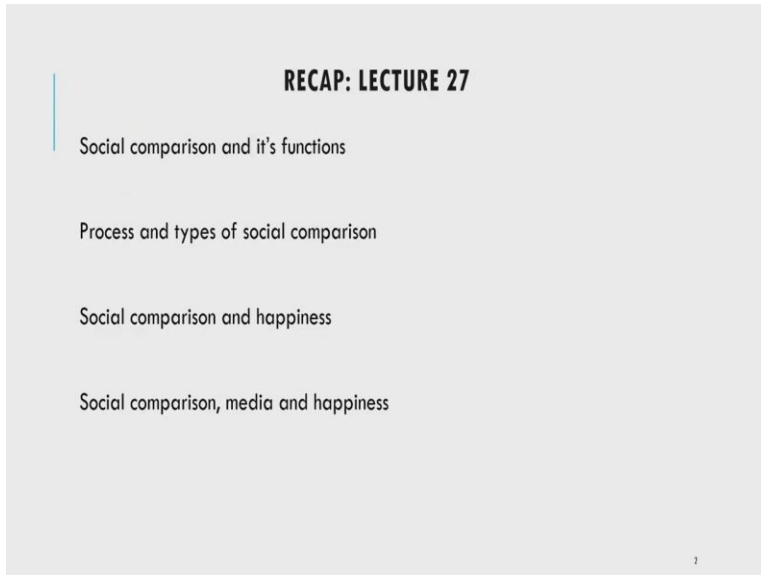
Key Concepts

- Strengths and their benefits
- The VIA Classification Of Strengths And Virtues
- Character strengths and happiness/well-being
- Cultivating character strengths

Hello, friends. I welcome you to the lecture number 28 of the course titled Psychology of Stress, Health and Well-Being. So this is the first lecture of module 10 and overall it is lecture number 28. So in this module also, we will keep talking about various happiness enhancing activities that research has shown certain potential in terms of enhancing our happiness.

So, today, we will talk about the concept of Signature Strength or Psychological Strength. How can we enhance our happiness using our signature strengths or Psychological strengths? So before we talk about today's lecture, let me briefly talk about what we discussed in the last module and specifically in the last lecture.

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So, module 9 was also about happiness, happiness-enhancing activities, and in that sense, we explored three happiness-enhancing activities in the last module, which are practicing gratitude, acts of kindness, and social comparison. What role does social comparison have in our happiness? So we've gone through how they can affect our happiness and how we can improve our happiness by using them.

So, specifically in the last lesson, we explored the topic of social comparison and how it affects our happiness. So far, we've established that humans have a tendency to compare themselves to others in different aspects of their daily life. So, this social comparison has a lot of emotional implications. As a result, it has the potential to influence our happiness. We've also talked about the many forms of social comparisons and the processes that go into them. One is upward and downward social comparison. As previously stated, we can compare ourselves to someone who is superior to us in certain dimensions, which is referred to as upward social dimensions, and we can compare ourselves to someone who is inferior to us in certain dimensions, which is referred to as downward social dimensions. We can do social comparison in both assimilative and contrastive ways. So, in the assimilative social comparison, we compare ourselves to a target, and when we compare ourselves to a target, we essentially move towards or like the target. As a result, the distance between you and the goal has decreased. When you compare and like the

target, it's called assimilative social comparison; when you compare and move away from the target or dislike, it's called contrastive social comparison.

We can have many forms of self-evaluation consequences depending on upward, downward, assimilative, and contrastive social comparison. According to study, upward contrastive social comparisons can have a negative impact on our self-evaluation. We walk away from or dislike the target because we compare ourselves to someone who is superior to us. As a result, it will have a negative impact on our self-esteem. We will be made to feel inferior. When we make an upward social comparison in an assimilative manner, however, we may gain inspiration and benefit from it, or it may have a positive impact on self evaluation. In an assimilative manner, we can also undertake downward social comparison. Then, because we are comparing ourselves to someone less fortunate than ourselves, it may have a negative impact on us, and because we like the target, we may feel bad about the target's circumstances. And, in contrastive downward social comparison, it may have a positive effect on our self-evaluation. Which basically implies that you are feeling good about yourself by comparing yourself to someone you don't like, and there may be some sense of competition, and you may feel good about yourself by finding someone who is performing worse than you.

As a result, all of these ramifications may exist. So this is what we've talked about in depth. We also talked about how social comparison is mirrored in social media. Social networking platforms, such as Facebook and others, in particular. And, according to study, these social networking sites provide a fertile ground for social comparison since there are so many people that join, and you now have too many people to compare yourself to. And study reveals that excessive social comparison on social networking sites reduces our subjective well-being and happiness, owing to the fact that we tend to compare, and we tend to engage in upward contrastive social comparison, both online and offline. This has a negative impact on our self-assessment.

People tend to depict their best selves, best aspects of their lives, on most social networking platforms. As a result, upward social comparison takes center stage. We also talked about how to avoid making too many social comparisons. Here are a few key points to remember. So these are some of the topics we discussed in the previous lesson.

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MODULE 10: HAPPINESS ACTIVITIES 2 (LECTURE 1)
Lecture 28: Cultivating Happiness With Signature Strengths

Key Concepts

Strengths and their benefits

The VIA Classification Of Strengths And Virtues

Character strengths and happiness/well-being

Cultivating character strengths

So, today we'll speak about how we may use our signature strengths or psychological strengths to improve our happiness, subjective well-being, or overall well-being. So, basically, we'll have two lectures on signature strengths in that context. As a result, we'll go over the details of signature strengths and their classifications. So, in today's lecture, we'll discuss strengths and their benefits, as well as studying strengths, and then we'll discuss the VIA classification, also known as the Value In Action classification of strength and virtue. We'll discuss character strengths, happiness, and how they're linked, as well as well-being. We'll also discuss how we may improve our character strengths. So let's take a closer look at these concepts.

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What are Strengths?

Psychological strengths are built-in capacities for certain thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. For example, courage, optimism, perseverance, gratitude etc.

The study of strengths are foundational agenda of positive psychology, because they reflect positive side of human functioning.

So, what are strengths? We're not talking about physical strength when we talk about strength; we're talking about psychological strengths. So, psychological strengths are capacity for specific thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are built in. As a result, each of us, as human beings, has some inherent abilities. Certain abilities and capacities in terms of their mental processes, emotions, and behaviors. All of these inherent capabilities that we all possess, whether spoken or unspoken, are referred to as strength. Courage, for example, is a psychological strength that provides you a sense of competence and capacity to accomplish goals. As a result, it is a form of strength. Optimism can be a strength, as can perseverance, and gratitude can be one of the strengths. As a result, we have a wide range of psychological strengths. We all have different psychological strengths, and the majority of them are kind of built in, specific abilities that we display in our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Because strengths reflect the positive side of human functioning, the study of strengths is very essential and foundational in psychology, particularly in the field of psychology known as positive psychology. We accomplish a lot of wonderful things in our lives by relying on our strength. As a result, understanding strength is a crucial part of positive psychology, and it has numerous important implications in a variety of fields.

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Benefits Of Understanding and Using Psychological Strengths

Boniwell (2012) summarized following values and functions of strengths-

- encourages insight and perspective in life
- makes one less sensitive to stress
- generates optimism and resilience
- provides a sense of direction
- helps to develop confidence and self-esteem
- generates a sense of vitality and energy
- stimulates a sense of happiness and fulfilment
- helps to achieve one's goals
- enables one to be more engaged at work and perform better

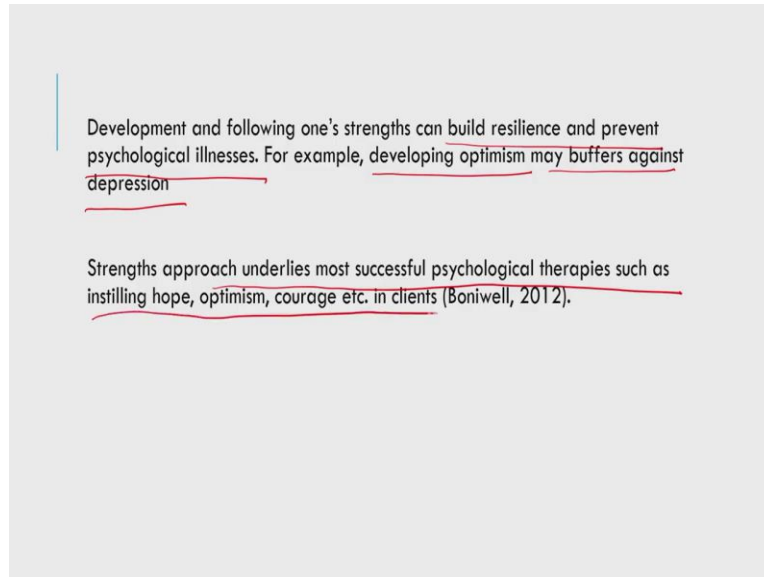
There are numerous advantages to comprehending and exploring our psychological strengths. It has numerous advantages. Boniwell described some of these benefits in one of her books in 2012, saying that understanding and exploring our own psychological strengths has a lot of essential roles and benefits. Strengths encourage insights and perspectives in life, which is one of these advantages. So, if you investigate and understand your psychological strengths, they will provide you with a wealth of information about your life, what you need to do, and what path you should take. As a result, it will assist you in comprehending and providing a richer perspective on your life. Strengths reduce sensitivity to stress. So, if you employ strength, you will certainly use your built-in capacity to deal with your life's challenges, and you will be less impacted by life's problems and stresses. Possessing strengths leads to hope and resiliency. Strengths, on the other hand, foster resilience by allowing you to bounce back and give us hope that you will be able to accomplish goals in your life.

It gives you a sense of direction, which is linked to the other topics we've examined. When you know what you can accomplish, what abilities you have, and you have a positive view on life, you can have a very clear concept of where you want to go and what you want to do. As a result, it aids in the development of confidence and self-esteem. When you realize you have specific qualities and strengths, it gives you a sense of self-assurance and boosts your self-esteem. It gives you a feeling of life and vigor. We

always lack energy and vigor while we are under the impact of weaknesses. We are always full of energy and vitality when we are under the influence of strengths.

It promotes feelings of joy and fulfillment. The more you use those psychological strengths, the happier you will be and the more fulfilled you will feel in your life. It also aids you in achieving your goals. You will be more likely to attain your goals if you use your strengths because you will approach them in an appropriate, healthy manner, employing healthier coping mechanisms. As a result, it boosts your chances of achieving your life goals. It allows you to be more involved and productive at work. So, when we use our strengths, we become more involved in the process because we know what we're doing and have the potential to complete those tasks, and in that sense, we become more interested in the task, and the result is always better with engagement.

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As a result, growth and focusing on one's strengths can help to build resilience and prevent mental illnesses. One of the best or most essential functions of positive traits like strengths is that they help you avoid or act as a protective factor against a variety of psychological problems. As a result, if you utilize them more frequently, you will become less susceptible to psychological disorders and emotional issues. For example, if you develop optimism, you are less likely to suffer depression and sadness, owing to the fact that optimism is similar to not being depressed. You notice an opportunity. As a result, this power assists you in becoming less vulnerable and protects you from a variety of emotional and psychological disorders and disruptions.

In addition, most successful psychological therapies, such as creating hope, optimism, courage, and so on, are based on the strength approach. Most psychological therapies or counseling that are done for people to assist them cope with the challenges in their lives, focus on instilling specific strengths in their lives or in their psychological make up in some way. So, hope and optimism are instilled in the clients in some way so that they can deal with the issues in their lives. As a result, it is one of the most important parts of both positive psychological functioning and preventing psychological diseases.

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Different Approaches To The Concept Of Strengths

There are two major approaches to the concept of strengths and their measurement:

- VIA Classification of Strengths and Virtues,
- Gallup's StrengthsFinder

So, if you look at the literature in psychology, you'll notice that numerous approaches to strength exist. People have attempted to categorize psychological strengths in a variety of ways. As a result, we'll discuss two key approaches that have been documented in the literature. The VIA classification of strengths and virtues is one of them, and we will discuss it in today's session. There's also Gallup's Strength Finder, which is another way of looking at strength. Gallup is an American consulting organization that specializes in conducting international polls. They discovered specific strengths, which are mostly employed in the corporate sector to assist individuals in identifying their talents and excelling at work. In the next lecture, we'll discuss Gallup's Strength Finder. Today, we'll discuss the VIA Strengths and Virtues Classification. As a result, both of these classes have slightly distinct conceptualizations. As a result, we will make every effort to comprehend in due time.

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The VIA Classification Of Strengths And Virtues

Peterson & Seligman (2004) developed a classification system of strengths and virtues taking cue from DSM called value in action (VIA) classification.

As DSM classifies mental disorders, VIA tries to classify character strengths and virtues.

Character strengths are those aspects of personality that are morally valued (Park & Peterson, 2009). We look for good characters as a desirable quality in all people including leaders, teachers, students.

Academic skills and abilities such as thinking critically help people to achieve goals but without good character, individuals may lack the desire to do the right thing. (Park & Peterson, 2009).

As a result, VIA is a classification system for strengths and virtues. VIA stands for Value In Action. So, in 2004, these two psychologists, Peterson and Seligman, published a book in which they discussed these classifications of psychological strengths, and they specifically used the term "character strengths" in that book, and they elaborately discussed this classification of various human character strengths. So, based on DSM, they devised a classification system for strengths and virtues that they dubbed "value in action classification." Many of you may be aware that DSM stands for Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. So, in psychology, there is a detailed manual in which psychological disorders are categorised. There are various types of psychological disorders. So, using the DSM as a model, Peterson and Seligman reasoned that if psychological disorders can be carefully classified, why can't psychological strengths? As a result, they attempted to classify psychological strengths like DSM's classification of psychological disorders. As the DSM classifies mental disorders, VIA attempted to classify psychological strengths and virtues. Humans exhibit a wide range of psychological strengths and virtues, which we can classify as well. As a result, they coined the phrase "character strengths." It's not only about psychological ability in general. They used the word "character strength" quite specifically, and they defined it as those characteristics of our personality that are morally valuable. We consider excellent

character to be a desirable trait in everyone. So, these are essentially desirable attributes or qualities that are morally respected and to which we place a high value in all cultures. As a result, these are mostly universally acknowledged, morally valued desirable attributes that human beings are expected to demonstrate. They were referred to as character strengths.

Thus, scholastic skills and abilities such as critical thinking assist people in achieving their goals, but without high character or character strength, people may lack the will to do the right thing. One significant difference is that we, as individuals, may possess considerable intellectual capacity. Your ability to assimilate information or think critically is referred to as intellectual strength. Those qualities are a little bit like personal characteristics. So, the basic idea is that while intellectual strengths or thinking abilities may assist you in achieving goals, morally desirable character strengths assist you in making decisions, assisting you in doing the right things in life, and thus are more closely linked to your happiness and well-being. As a result, they have a very strong connection to you and the well-being of humans.

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According to Park and Peterson (2009), exercising character strengths-

- Prevent undesirable life outcomes
- specific strengths of character (hope, kindness, social intelligence, self-control, and perspective) buffer against the negative effects of stress and trauma.
- Help people to thrive and are associated with desired outcomes such as school success, leadership, tolerance and valuing of diversity, ability to delay gratification, kindness, and altruism

As a result, Park and Peterson expounded on the advantages of utilizing character strengths. As a result, practicing character strengths can help you avoid negative life

outcomes. One of the key reasons for our undesirable life outcomes and actions could be that we lack such character strengths. When we lack certain morally virtuous characteristics or traits, we may become involved in a variety of behavioral issues and problems. As a result, if you build those character strengths, you will be able to avoid a lot of negative life consequences. Character strengths like hope, kindness, social intelligence, self-control, and perspective, as well as the ability to see things from other people's perspectives, can help or buffer against the negative effects of stress and trauma. Some psychological strengths, such as hope, kindness, social intelligence, and a sense of self-control, have been shown to be very important in terms of protecting you against stressful and traumatic events in your life, according to research. They could be critical in terms of stress and traumatic events buffering. Assist you in protecting yourself from life's negative influences.

Character strength also aids people's well-being and is linked to desirable outcomes such as academic performance, leadership, tolerance, and diversity appreciation. Kindness and charity, as well as the ability to delay gratification.

As a result, character strengths are linked to a plethora of beneficial life outcomes. They've also been linked to achievement in a variety of areas, including school, school success, and leadership success. One cannot be a good leader if he lacks character strengths. As a result, it is critical for leadership.

People with character strength value and tolerate a diversity in humans. They have the ability to delay gratification. As a result, they have a lot of opportunities to work productively. They are likely to exhibit more friendliness and altruistic or helpful behavior. As a result, it's linked to a slew of favorable effects.

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Peterson & Seligman (2004) used certain criteria to select a list of major universal strengths. Some of these are-

- ✓ A strength contributes to fulfilment of the good life for a person and others around him or her.
- ✓ A strength is morally valued in its own right, irrespective of whether or not it leads to beneficial outcomes.
- ✓ Displaying the strength does not diminish others, but may rather benefit them, causing admiration rather than jealousy
- ✓ A strength must be manifest in a range of a person's behaviours, thoughts, feelings and actions. It should be generalizable across situations and times.

Now, we have Peterson and Seligman, who have created an intricate classification, which we shall see in the next few slides. They discovered 24 character strengths that are generally valued throughout cultures, and they used certain criteria to identify these 24 character strengths. What is the best way to describe something as a character strength? What should the traits or distinguishing aspects of those character strengths be in order for them to be included in the list?

You can't just pick any morally valuable quality or strength because there could be hundreds. As a result, they apply a set of criteria to arrive at a number of character strengths. As a result, these are the most essential factors they used. One is, a person's strength contributes to the fulfillment of a good life for him or her and others around him. So, as you may be aware, character strength should help to the fulfillment of a happy life. So it encourages a good life or a specific level of goodness in that person's life as well as the lives of others around them, or it does not harm others. As a result, it fosters goodness in the lives of others as well as your own. As a result, one of the most essential qualities of character strengths is this. A character strength is thereby morally appreciated in and of itself. As a result, it has its own set of moral standards. So, regardless of whether or not it leads to favorable outcomes, anything is considered right from a moral standpoint. Even if you don't care about the results, it should be morally respected. As a result, this is

yet another trait. The third one is, displaying the strength, does not diminish others but may rather benefit them causing admiration rather than jealousy. As a result, displaying those character characteristics should not result in any hurdles or harm to others. It should not be used to harm or obstruct others' lives; rather, it should be used to promote and benefit them.

The next attribute they mentioned was that strength must be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including behavior, thoughts, and feelings, as well as actions. It should be applicable in a variety of circumstances and times. As a result, when we speak about character strength, we are referring to a personality trait. As a result, that person should demonstrate it consistently over time and in various situations, then, we can call it as one's character strength. It is part of one's personality trait. These are considered more like personality trait. So they use these criteria to boil down or come to a conclusion of a 24 number of character strengths. We will see what are these.

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VIA Classification

Using these criteria, Peterson and Seligman (2004) identified 24 character strengths which are organized into 6 major virtues.

Virtues are the core universal characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (Park & Peterson, 2009).

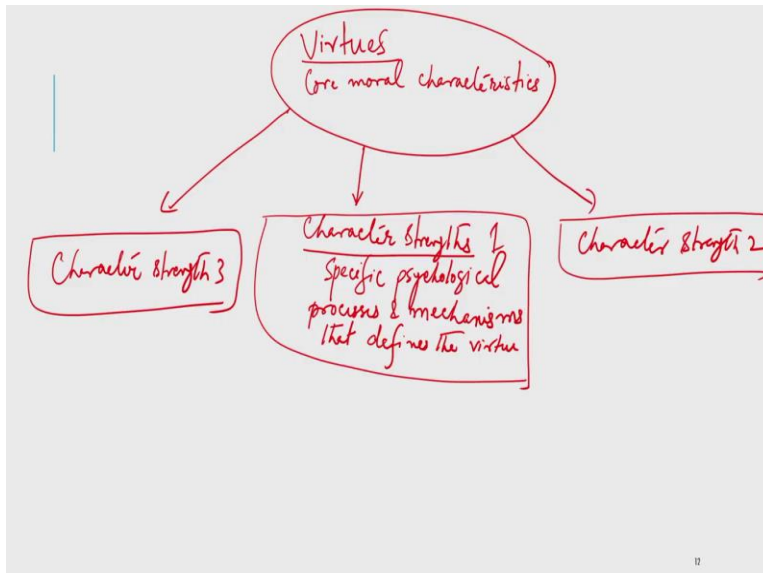
Character strengths are the specific psychological processes or mechanisms that define the virtues such as kindness and love are aspects of virtue of humanity.

So, let's take a closer look at what this VIA classification, or value in action classification, is all about. Peterson and Seligman identified 24 character strengths that are arranged into six key virtues using the criteria we outlined in the previous slide. So they found 24 major characteristics, or strengths, that individuals appreciate universally, and they split these 24 into six primary virtues.

So, when they say virtues, what they really mean is that virtues are key universal characteristics that moral philosophers value. These are more essential values that philosophers and religion thinkers agree on morally. Wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence are examples of basic values.

As a result, virtues are defined by basic values, character strengths are specific psychological processes or systems. Character strengths, on the other hand, are more particular mechanisms or psychological processes that define that virtue. As a result, these are secondary qualities or features of those virtues. Love and kindness, for example, are character strengths that fall under the virtue of humanity.

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So, if I show it diagrammatically, virtues are at the top level, and broader categories. These are fundamental moral characteristics. Then there are some sub-aspects that come together to form those virtues. Character strengths are these sub categories. The virtue is defined by unique psychological processes and mechanisms. As a result, numerous character strengths can be found under one virtue. So, you might have one character strength, two character strengths, and so on. You might also have many, many sub

dimensions that describe that particular virtue. This is the distinction between a virtue and a strength of character.

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Virtues and their corresponding character strengths are as follows-

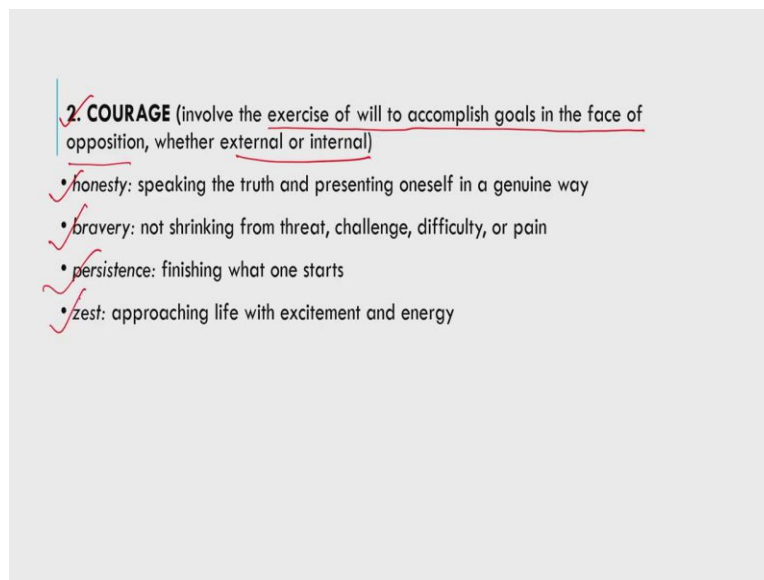
✓ **1. WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE** (this virtue incorporates strengths related to the acquisition and use of knowledge)

- ✓ *creativity*: thinking of novel and productive ways to do things
- ✓ *curiosity*: taking an interest in all of ongoing experience
- ✓ *open-mindedness*: thinking things through and examining them from all sides
- ✓ *love of learning*: mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge
- ✓ *perspective*: being able to provide wise counsel to others

So, let's take a look at these six virtues and the character strengths that go with them. Wisdom and knowledge are the first virtues. So this is one virtue that, according to them, is universally given a lot of attention or is universally respected in different cultures. As a result, wisdom and knowledge is a virtue that encompasses strengths associated to the acquisition and use of knowledge. As a result, it is a strength associated to how to learn new knowledge, use it, and apply it. As a result, your wisdom is defined by your application of knowledge. What you've learned, how can you put it to use in your life? One of the most fundamental aspects of knowledge is this. Wise people know when and how to apply their knowledge and insight. As a result, one of the most significant virtues is wisdom and knowledge. Creativity is one of the most essential character strengths related with wisdom and morality, wisdom and knowledge. Thinking up new and productive methods of doing things is what creativity is all about. One of the character strengths is the ability to come up with new and productive ways of doing things. Then there's curiosity. Taking an interest in all of the ongoing events. The ability to think outside the box. Things need to be thought out and examined from all angles. So you're

trying to look at multiple parts of whatever it is you're trying to understand, rather than being closed. The desire to study. Developing new skills, information, and topics. So you're always eager to learn new things and expand your knowledge, and the last factor is perspective. Being able to give sensible advice to others. You may give wise advice to someone if you grasp their point of view, what they are thinking and experiencing. So there you have it: five character traits linked to the virtues of wisdom and knowledge. So that's one side of it. One dimension in particular.

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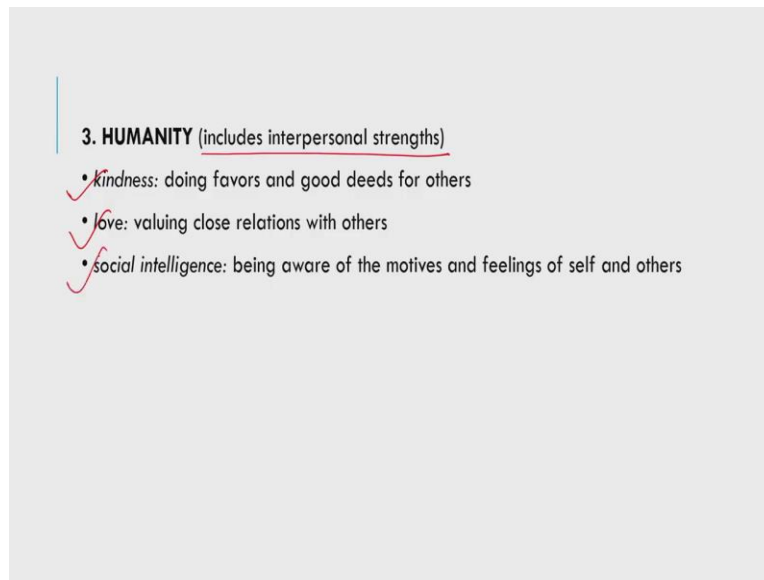


The virtue of courage is the next virtue, and it is also a universally regarded virtue. As a result, courage entails using one's willpower to achieve a goal in the face of adversity. As a result, bravery is defined as the ability to achieve one's goals in the face of adversity and hurdles. As a result, the more courageous you are, the better equipped you are to deal with challenges and barriers and achieve your objectives, whether they are internal or external. As a result, courage is characterized by this. So, when it comes to courage, numerous character strengths related with the virtue of courage include honesty, speaking the truth, and presenting oneself in a true manner. Bravery means not retreating in the face of danger, difficulty, or pain. As a result, this is a key part of courage. You are not, because you do not flee when faced with issues or obstacles. When it's necessary, you strive to face them. Any difficulty, peril, or discomfort. As a result, you're brave. Another

crucial character trait is perseverance. completing what one has begun. Consistently pursuing whatever goal you've set for yourself. As a result, perseverance is crucial, and it makes you courageous.

The fourth character strength is zest, which is defined as the excitement and vigor with which one approaches life. You approach life, problems, and everything else you want to do with a sense of zest and energy, and you want to get things done. So all of these character strengths make you courageous, or all of these character strengths instill courage as a virtue.

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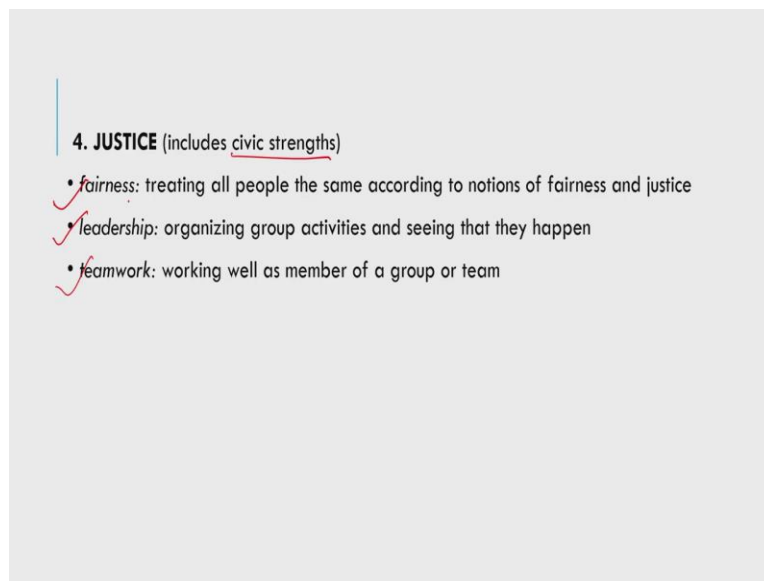


Humanity is the third virtue on the list. Humanity is mostly defined by interpersonal abilities. As a result, the strengths that are connected with interacting with others. People in our environment, in our culture, in our neighborhood. Humanity is what gives those key features their meaning. Kindness, which is defined as doing favors and good deeds for others, is one of the character qualities connected with the virtue of humanity. So, in terms of kindness, we've already covered it in one class. So it's about wanting to help others, doing favors for them, and doing good actions for them.

Then there's love. It's about placing a high value on close relationships with people. Being aware of one's own and others' motives and feelings is what social intelligence is all about. People nowadays talk about various sorts of intelligence, including social

intelligence. Previously, people mainly discussed general intelligence, which was mostly concerned with academic intelligence and the ability to comprehend knowledge. People nowadays discuss several types of intelligence. People can be socially intelligent, bodily kinesthetically intelligent, or have a high level of understanding of how to use their bodies. For instance, good dancers and athletes. It's possible that there is musical intelligence. Music is well-understood and well-created by people. Some persons have a high level of intrapersonal intelligence, meaning they have a deep understanding of self. So, currently, intelligence is a form of multiple intelligence, and the concept is highly common. As a result, there may be multiple forms of intelligence, rather than simply one intellectual intelligence that is assessed by IQ scores. So social intelligence is one component of intelligence that deals with how sensitive and aware you are of other people's feelings, as well as your own, while dealing with them, and how you behave intelligently in social circumstances.

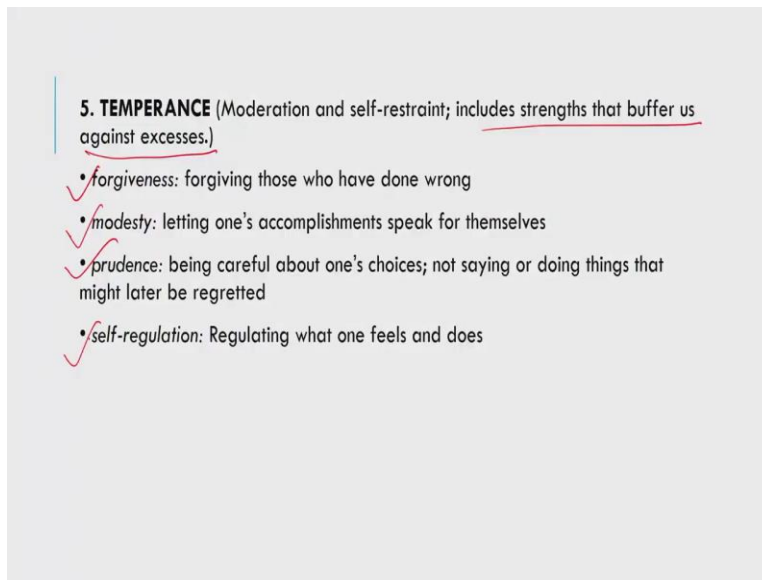
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The fourth is justice. Justice is fundamentally linked to civic strength. Citizenship rights and similar issues. Strengths in the domain of civics, which could include specific characteristics like fairness. Treating everyone equally in accordance with the principles of fairness and justice. So you're normally fair in your dealings with others? Not partial

or biased in any way. As a result, another essential character trait related with justice is justice. You may say that leadership and teamwork are two other significant virtues related with the virtue of justice. You cannot be a good leader, demonstrate strong leadership qualities, or be a good team member until and until you possess this quality of justice. As a result, the virtue of justice or fairness encourages leadership and teamwork. In that view, these three qualities are significant character traits related to the virtue of justice.

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5. TEMPERANCE (Moderation and self-restraint; includes strengths that buffer us against excesses.)

- *forgiveness*: forgiving those who have done wrong
- *modesty*: letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves
- *prudence*: being careful about one's choices; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted
- *self-regulation*: Regulating what one feels and does

Temperance is the fourth virtue. Temperance is defined as the quality of self-control and moderation. In essence, it is a strength that protects us from excesses. We've all heard the adage that too much of anything is bad. As a result, the virtue of temperance aids us in avoiding excesses of any kind. So that's self-control. It assists you in exercising self-control. To avoid going too far in any direction. It aids you in remaining in moderation, doing things to the best of your ability, whatever is required, rather than going overboard on either side. Temperance is the name given to this virtue. It could have specific traits, such as forgiving. Forgiveness of those who have wronged you. Modesty, and allowing one's achievements to speak for themselves. So, people, with modesty, don't publicize too much that I've accomplished this or that. Rather, you allow your successes to speak for

themselves. It also contains a character strength known as prudence, which is defined as being cautious in one's decisions and not saying or doing things that one could later regret. So prudence is a quality that entails being extremely cautious in one's life decisions so that one does not act rashly. You, on the other hand, are normally cautious and cautious when it comes to making judgments and life choices. So, self regulation is very important. That is, that helps you to regulate your actions that you do not go into excessive of anything which is harmful for you. So kind of control yourself, this ability to self control is very important quality that makes you, or enhances this virtue of temperance. So, these are our character strengths associated with temperance.

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6. TRANSCENDENCE (Includes strengths that connect us to the larger universe)

- appreciation of beauty and excellence: noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life
- gratitude: being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen
- hope: expecting the best and working to achieve it
- humor: liking to laugh and joke; bringing smiles to other people
- religiousness: having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life

The final one is referred to as transcendence. Transcendence is now a virtue associated with a sense of connection to the larger universe. So it's a little bit more abstract in a sense, a little bit more spiritual, and it's about, more about connecting to higher things or a wider cosmos that exists outside of your, outside of your particular life.

As a result, other specific character strengths such as appreciation of beauty and excellence may be included in transcendence. In all aspects of life, noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and skill performance. So this is also tied to some higher

elements or connecting with a broader self, such as nature, where you appreciate beauty and perfection in numerous things.

Gratitude is another essential quality, one that is linked to transcendence. Being conscious of and grateful for positive things that occur. We've already had one gratitude lecture. Hope. Expecting the best and working hard to get it is what hope is all about. Humor. I enjoy making others laugh and joke, as well as bringing smiles to their faces. And spirituality is linked to religiousness. Having a consistent set of views about life's higher purpose and meaning. As a result, they believe that all of these important character strengths are linked to the virtue of transcendence. So, if you add up these six virtues and their related character strengths, you'll find that we have a total of 24 character strengths under these six virtues.

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Character Strengths and Well-being

- Character strengths have been consistently linked to various measures of happiness and well-being.
- Identifying and using signature strengths (*The VIA Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS)*) in everyday life can lead to psychological fulfillment (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005)
- Certain strengths are more strongly related to well-being and flourishing such as gratitude, hope, zest, curiosity, and love have been consistently related to life satisfaction (Park & Peterson, 2006).

Let's look at some of the research findings related to these specific character strengths and how they relate to happiness and well-being. As a result, numerous studies have found a consistent link between character strengths and various measures of happiness and well-being. They also use the term signature strengths to mean specific character strengths that are inherent in you or you, every individual may have certain

character strengths in a much more pronounced way than others. The majority of us will have most of these character strengths, but some will be more prominent in particular people. So, Peterson and Seligman constructed a VIA inventory of strengths in addition to this. So this is a questionnaire that you can fill out, which is, I believe, freely available on their website, and you can use it to determine your own character strengths or character profile. What is your character strength score, and what is your character strength score? So you can find out what your character strengths are by filling out this questionnaire that they've created. As a result, recognizing and utilizing character strengths in daily life can contribute to psychological fulfillment. As a result, the more you utilize and display them, the more likely you are to find fulfillment and happiness in your life. So use them since they encourage happiness and well-being in your life. Certain characteristics or character strengths, such as gratitude, hope, enthusiasm, curiosity, and love, have been consistently linked to life satisfaction, according to research. Obviously, some character strengths have been proven to be more important or consistently associated to life satisfaction or happiness than others among these 24 character strengths. Gratitude, hope, zest, curiosity, and love are just a few examples. These have been linked to a higher level of life satisfaction.

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Research also indicate that strengths of heart such as love and gratitude which connect people are more strongly related to well-being as compared to strengths of head such as creativity and critical thinking (Park & Peterson, 2008) which are mostly individual in nature. Therefore, formal education should encourage both the types of strengths for holistic development (Park & Peterson, 2009).

The character strengths of perseverance, love, gratitude, hope, and perspective have been linked to academic achievement (Park & Peterson, 2009).

The strengths of bravery and appreciation of beauty is connected with the successful recovery from illness (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Spirituality/religiousness is associated with a life of meaning and purpose (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Strengths of the heart, according to research, are linked to more emotional feelings, which is why they are referred to as strengths of the heart. So, which of them are more connected to your emotional side and help you connect with others. Strengths of the heart, such as love and gratitude, which bring people together, are more closely linked to happiness than strengths of the intellect, such as creativity and critical thinking. So they discovered that, in general, strengths that are related to your emotions and relationships with others, such as love and gratitude, and kindness, are more important or strongly related to well-being than strengths that are related to your head or thinking process, such as creativity and critical thinking. They are significant in their own right, but for happiness and well-being, strengths associated to emotional feelings and social connections are more vital. And mental toughness, such as creativity and critical thinking, is primarily individual in nature because you display it and it's almost all about you. And you always communicate your heart's strength, such as love and gratitude, to others. As a result, it connects you with others. As a result, they are more significant in terms of well-being. As a result, it is critical that our educational system encourages both sorts of strengths in order to promote holistic growth. Most school curriculum or curriculum focuses on your mental strength or capacity to digest information, analyze critically, and perform other similar tasks. They are essential, there is no doubt about it. However, research clearly reveals that in order to achieve holistic growth and increase well-being and happiness, we must encourage and apply more and more heart-related abilities, such as appreciation, love, and kindness. They should also be promoted in school curricula in order to enhance a child's overall development. Perseverance, love, gratitude, hope, and perspective are all character strengths that have been connected to academic success. According to research, some of these heart-centered characters actually encourage achievement in the realm of intellectual achievement. Love, gratitude, and those specifically related to perseverance and perspective are just a few examples. In various circumstances, they've all been related to academic success. It has been discovered that bravery and appreciation of beauty are linked to a successful recovery from disease. So, when it comes to recovering from illness, some character strengths, such as bravery and appreciation of beauty, can help people recover and overcome various illnesses-related difficulties. Spirituality or religiousness is linked to a meaningful

and purposeful life. As a result, it also encourages dynamic well-being, such as a sense of meaning and purpose.

As a result, certain character strengths may be linked to various dimensions. The most, if not all, of them have beneficial effects and implications in our lives.

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Can We Cultivate Character Strengths?

Everybody has signature strengths regardless of where he or she may stand compared to others (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Signature strengths can be cultivated as we already possess them and easier to enhance them by exercising them in our daily life. It is much more difficult to work on weakness as people lose interest and defensive about them.

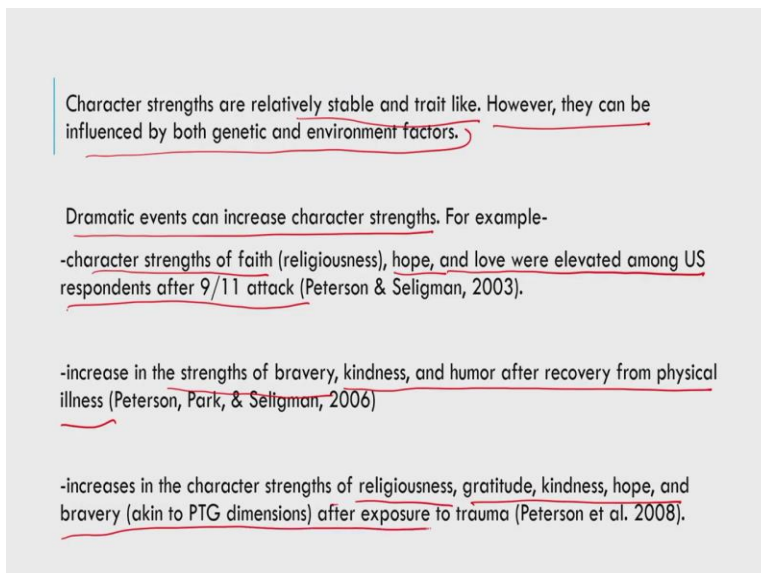
In a study, it was observed that people who used their signature strengths for a week in novel ways increased happiness and decreased depression at six months follow up as compared to the control group (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005)

The essential question now is whether or not we can cultivate character strengths. Is it feasible for them to get promoted? So that is the crucial practical question. It's pointless to know everything there is to know about character strengths if we can't do anything about it. So, let's have a look at this issue. Is it possible to develop character strengths? Everyone now has a unique set of skills. Everyone has their own set of skills. There is no denying it. Regardless of whether you have more or less than others, everyone has certain strengths.

This signature strength can be developed since we already have it. So, whether in a potential form or in a more manifested form, things are already within us. Because they are already present, they may be nurtured. Even if they are more trait-like, they may be grown since they are already there in us, and it is easier to improve something that is already present. Working on flaws is significantly more difficult since people become

disinterested and protective about them. So, if you ask people to eliminate certain flaws, and other things, it becomes more difficult since some flaws must be removed, which causes people to feel defensive and lose interest in those things. However, if you already have someone within you, promoting them is not difficult. In a study, it was discovered that persons who used their signature strengths in unique ways for a week had higher happiness and lower depression after six months than the control group. So, according to studies, when people employ their signature characteristics or character strengths in unique ways in everyday life, it improves happiness and decreases depression, not only for a short time but for a long period, as seen by a six-month follow-up.

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Character strengths are relatively stable and trait like. However, they can be influenced by both genetic and environment factors.

Dramatic events can increase character strengths. For example-

- character strengths of faith (religiousness), hope, and love were elevated among US respondents after 9/11 attack (Peterson & Seligman, 2003).
- increase in the strengths of bravery, kindness, and humor after recovery from physical illness (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2006)
- increases in the character strengths of religiousness, gratitude, kindness, hope, and bravery (akin to PTG dimensions) after exposure to trauma (Peterson et al. 2008).

As previously said, character strength is more stable, and trait-like, although it can be modified by both genetic and environmental variables. As a result, while heredity may play a role in character strengths, the environment can also have a significant impact.

Character strengths can be enhanced by dramatic experiences. For example, research suggests that following the 9/11 attacks, character strengths such as faith or religiousness, hope, and love were enhanced among U.S. respondents in a survey. So one study found that after the 9/11 attack, because it was such a dramatic and traumatic event in the United States, particularly for the population of the United States, a large number of respondent, or a large number of people, developed certain character strengths such as

faith and religiousness, hope, and love as a result of the event. As a result of this occurrence, some character strengths among people have been stimulated. As a result, certain dramatic occurrences can occasionally cause character strengths to change or develop. Many people demonstrate a rise in the strength of bravery, compassion, and humor after recovering from physical ailments. When they deal with specific illnesses or life challenges, some strengths such as bravery, kindness, and humor may increase. After being exposed to trauma, the character strengths of religiousness, gratitude, kindness, optimism, and bravery increase. As a result of their exposure to diverse traumatic events, people's character strengths change or increase in some ways. You may recall that we addressed post-traumatic growth in a past lecture, and characteristics of post-traumatic growth are all tied to character strengths. As a result, this is quite similar to the concept of post-traumatic growth dimensions. So, following a traumatic event, certain positive changes may occur, which may actually encourage an increase in character strengths.

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These various notions about virtue imply that character can be cultivated by good parenting, schooling, and socialization (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Positive role models may promote development of good character (Bandura, 1977).

People should be taught specific activities of strengths and encourage them to keep using them in their daily lives (Park & Peterson, 2008, 2009).

An individualized program for cultivating character based on an individual's character strength profile may be more effective than a general for everyone (Park & Peterson, 2009).

Character strengths can also be formed through effective parenting, schooling, and socialization, according to various theories and research. As a result, these abilities develop over a period of time. So it may occur as a result of a dramatic occurrence, but it is more vital to instill or build this strength from a young age. Then, because the mind of

a youngster is more malleable, it is much easier to cultivate them. You will have a much simpler time promoting this if you begin cultivating them as early as childhood. As a result, parenting and schooling may both have a significant impact. The social environment, or socialization, plays a critical influence in the development of these abilities. Positive role models, according to research, can help people acquire good character. So, if you see other people who, for example, show or display certain strengths in character, such as kindness or love, or if they do so consistently, that, for example, someone is displaying kindness behavior in a very strong way, you may be encouraged to do similar things by looking at that person. As a result, role models may have a significant impact on others in terms of developing and promoting certain character strengths. As a result, in advertisements when individuals wish to sell something, people who are influential or celebrities are used since they have a particular impact and are considered as role models. People are more likely to mimic them if they say something or do anything. This is also true of character strengths.

People should be taught specific strengths-based activities and encouraged to continue to use them in their daily life. Another great method to use or improve this character strength is to use and express it in your daily life. As a result, the more more you use them, the more likely it is that this strength will become ingrained in you, facilitating numerous daily functions and great consequences. An tailored approach for character development based on a person's character strength profile may be more effective than a generic one. So there are tailored programs for schools and corporations where people's specific profiles may be discovered to see which character strengths they have the most of, which are their hallmark strengths, and which are less evident in a particular person. So, utilizing such questionnaires, one can create a thorough profile of character strength, and particular programs have been designed based on that, and those programs can be utilized to promote and cultivate character strengths. So, these are some of the principles associated to character strengths, or trademark characteristics, that may be promoted, or that we can comprehend, follow, and utilize more and more to improve our sense of well-being and happiness.

So, in the following lecture, we'll discuss another type of classification known as Gallup's Strength Finder, in which we'll discuss character strengths in a slightly different light.

Where we'll talk more about how talents and strengths, specifically in the context of skills and strengths, and how they apply to the corporate sector. With that, I'll conclude today's lecture. Thank you very much.