
The Values in Action (VIA) Classification of Character Strengths

Free Introduction & Instructional Guide

CLARITY IS A SUPERPOWER!

No matter what you are dealing with, the more clarity you have about it, the more effective and powerful your response can be. It is also true about the clarity of who you are and who you want to be as a person and as a leader. Clarity empowers you. When you have clarity, you exude a more powerful and confident presence. You connect to a deeper meaning and purpose with greater conviction. This guide will help you gain greater clarity on your character strengths or what most of us would call *values* by providing you with an overview of the VIA and how to take it.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE VIA

The VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues emerged from several scientific meetings led by Dr. Marty Seligman and rigorous historical analysis led by Christopher Peterson beginning in 2000.

They collaborated with a prestigious array of fifty-three scholars and practitioners over a period of three years. The result was a comprehensive typology published as *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*. The authors view their classification of character strengths as a kind of healthy version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* or the DSM. They set out to help people evolve toward their highest potential with an approach based on recognizing people’s strengths and aspirations.

The VIA Survey has been taken by over 25 million people reaching every country around the globe and it has strong reliability and validity.

THE SIX VIRTUES

Six virtues were identified as core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers and are universal across cultures, nations, and belief systems. They are grounded in biology and evolution and have been necessary for the survival of our species. Research has revealed that using your strengths leads to happiness, well-being, life satisfaction and success—what the researchers call human flourishing, the good life, and the meaningful life.

The six virtues are:

- Wisdom
- Courage
- Humanity
- Justice
- Temperance
- Transcendence



STRENGTHS OF CHARACTER

Twenty-four corresponding strengths of character emerged out of a lengthy list of candidates that were thoroughly examined. They are the “psychological ingredients” or pathways to those six virtues. These character strengths could also easily be called *values*. That’s why identifying your character strengths by taking the VIA is a great place to start when trying to hone in on your top three to five core values. Your 24 strengths or values will be rank ordered with the strengths that are most core to your identity at the top.

Some strengths are easier and more natural for the individual to express. These are known as one’s *signature strengths*. A convention in positive psychology is to consider the top five strengths on the VIA Survey to be signature strengths. Research has revealed that some people have less than five and some people have more than five. The most important criterion in considering whether a character strength is signature or not, is whether the strength is essential and core to who the person truly is.

WHY TAKE THE VIA?

The VIA Survey is the only free, scientific survey of character strengths in the world. The VIA report will rank order your 24 character strengths or values with those that are most core to your identity at the top. Additionally, the VIA has strong validity & reliability. Research shows that knowing and using your character strengths can help you:

- Empower yourself with greater clarity & get into flow
- Boost confidence & influence
- Increase happiness & well-being
- Find more meaning & purpose
- Boost relationships
- Manage stress & health
- Increase engagement
- Accomplish goals & be more successful!

THE VIA & STRENGTHSFINDER

Many people are curious about how the VIA compares with StrengthsFinder. Here is a highlight of how they compare and contrast:

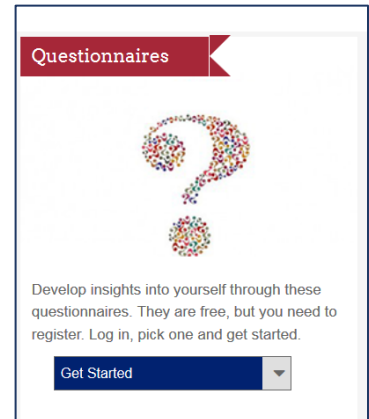
	StrengthsFinder	The VIA Survey
Orientation	Talent themes	Universal paths to virtues or human goodness
Domain(s)	Work	Home, work, school, social
Key question	What’s best about what you do at work?	What is best about who you are?
Strengths identified	Talents & skills	Core character
Basis for validity	Polling & surveys	Historical analysis, meet specific criteria, reliability & validity studies
Focus	Top five only	Signature strengths, but all 24 strengths matter
Scrutiny of science	Not peer-reviewed	Peer-reviewed



HOW TO TAKE THE VIA

Follow the steps below to access and take the Via for free. There is no charge, but you must create an account. There are many other free empirically-based assessments you can take through the site such as Angela Duckworth's Grit Scale and more.

1. Using your web browser, go to the University of Pennsylvania's/Dr. Marty Seligman's [Authentic Happiness website](#)
2. In the middle of the page, you will find the **'Questionnaires'** box pictured at right. Click the **'Get Started'** arrow and scroll down to choose an assessment. There are several versions of the survey. I highly recommend you choose the full version: **'VIA Survey of Character Strengths'**
3. A User Login page should open. Under the login fields and a 'Forgot Password?' link, you will find a **'Register'** link. Click that.
4. Fill in the required fields.
5. Click the **'I agree'** box, complete the 'CAPTCHA' letters.
6. Click the **'Create New Account'** radio button.
7. You may now take any of the assessments you like.
8. The VIA should take about 10-15 minutes.
9. Your 24 strengths or values will be rank ordered with the strengths that are most core to your identity at the top.
10. **Printing & saving your VIA:** Before printing the VIA, scroll down and make sure you click the **'Show More'** hyperlink so that all of your strengths' rankings are visible. I recommend that you print to a PDF and save the file.
11. You can log back in and view any assessment results you have taken again.



NOTE: At the top of the page, there is a 'Questionnaires' hyperlink. You can click that, then click **'Questionnaire Center'** and find all of the surveys. For those you've already taken, you can click **'Details'** and it will take you back to the pages where you can view your results and print from there too. You can also quickly access and take any other of the free surveys.

VALUES/CHARACTER STRENGTHS COACHING WITH ALAN MIKOLAJ

While you can use your VIA report on your own, coaching is a great way to explore your VIA signature strengths in a confidential and safe place. You will learn more about signature strengths, discover how to leverage yours, and how to integrate them more effectively into your life and leadership so that you can begin sustained practice that will make changes permanent.

When you coach with me, you will receive a *VIA Strengths Development Guide* and a *VIA Constellations* worksheet. Mention that you heard about the VIA from me or this guide and I'll give you **25% off** your coaching!

Here are four ways you can contact me: www.alanmikolaj.com/contact

Or, you can go ahead and schedule a [free Discovery Conversation](#), right now!

