

Becoming Strengths-Based in Career & Counseling Services

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Initial Idea

- The current Career Exploration Workshop did not explore one's strengths/talents
- Many students found it difficult to identify and communicate strengths to employers.
- Many students seemed to lack positive self-esteem



Strengths Principles

Major findings from studying the Best of the Best - 2 Million people, from all walks of life

“What would happen if we studied what is right with people?” Dr. Don Clifton

- They are all alike in one respect: They build their lives around their strengths.
- They focus on developing and applying their strengths and managing their weaknesses.
- High achievers don't necessarily have more strengths, but they do more fully develop and apply the strengths that they have.

Strengths Principles

(CONTINUED)

- Strengths develop best when one can reflect on past success patterns and receive feedback from a trusted friend, supervisor, mentor.
- Most people are not aware of their strengths and talents because they are so “natural” to them.
- Strengths can have “blind spots” As a result, strengths and talents may be seen as weaknesses.

Strengths Principles

(CONTINUED)

- Positive relationships are formed when strengths are discussed.
- Developing strengths has a motivating effect on a person and seems to generate hope and optimism about the future

StrengthsFinder Test

- 177 Items
- Gives responder 20 seconds for each item
- Measures 34 Strengths
- Results are the top 5 strengths, with explanations of the strengths

How We Applied Strengths in Our Services

- Career Exploration Workshops
- Training of Practicum students and interns
- Personal Counseling
- Interview Coaching
 - In classroom demonstrations/presentations
 - With individual students
- Leadership Development
 - Service Learning program
 - Leaders in Action Program
- Team Building
 - CCS Staff, UHCL departments

Outcomes

- CEW Evaluations

- The result of the assessment learning objective “I have identified my strengths and abilities” (1-5 scale)

Year	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
2010-2011 Feb	3.06	4.75	1.69
2009-2010	3.48	4.82	1.34
2008-2009	3.46	4.76	1.30

Outcomes - Interview Coaching Classroom Sessions

- I was skeptical at first as well about the Strengths finder but I found my results to fit me perfectly. I will definitely use them when applying to jobs and interviewing in the future. **It gave me other ways to explain my strengths instead of just saying "I'm organized" or something more cliché.**
- I did not want to pay the fee for the Strengths Finder test because I thought I already knew my strengths and it would be a waste of money, but after we received the results of the test, I realized that there were strengths I had that I did not know about or how to define. **Now I can more clearly explain how I can fit into certain positions I might be interested in for employment.** The fee turned out to be worth it!
- I really enjoyed the strength finder, and I think it helped me rediscover strengths that I used to use and recognize. However, I lost confidence in some of these strengths and my ability, **so it was very helpful to visually list my strengths for me to reconnect with. It also pointed out a couple of strengths that I would have never seen. It made me reflect back upon different experiences in my past where I might have used these unknown strengths.** Overall I think it was a great confidence booster as well as very motivational by showing us these core strengths and encouraging us to put them into action. Loved it!
- I thoroughly enjoyed the strengths finder workshop with Chuck because it helped me break down my basic and cliché strength of being a "people person" into several specific skills to present to others that help me explain that. **I have used my WOO (winning others over) strength as a conversation starter in several academic settings including the Presidential Cabinet dinner.** The workshop and Chuck's feedback also gave me the confidence to reach out and network using my strengths. Thanks to Chuck, I am now one of the "faces of UHCL" representing our university (and I'm on the web site)! Thanks so much!

- provided a systematic way of describing myself to potential employers in concept words.
- I really like it. From those "strengths" you can create your top 5 in your own words to use in interviews .
- The Strengthquest was **effective in allowing me to identify strengths that I had never considered .**
- The Strengthfinder was beneficial to me updating my resume so that **I could include key descriptive words that will help me stand out against other applicants.**
- The survey helped me realize what my strengths are and how to build on them. It revealed things I didn't know about myself.
- The Strengthfinder helped me put my strengths into words.
- This helps you understand how you can use your strengths when interviewing and how to improve on them.
- A great tool that helped me discover my strengths - also using my strengths to build my career as well as working on my weaknesses.
- The Strengthfinder was beneficial to me because I was able **to hear strengths (new strengths) and define them. Once defining them I was able to know my weaknesses.**
- It helped me revamp my resume and give me a better understanding of where to direct my career search. It was a great learning opportunity - essential.

Outcomes

● Service Learning Program

- How to help my strengths and helpful suggestions to make them better
- The way to apply individual strengths. I will apply this to help me choose the right career and to help me follow the correct career path for me.
- I learned how to combine my leadership strengths and focus on them to become a better person both at work and at school. **I really was able to see the inter-relatedness of my strengths and how to use them to my advantage as well as gained insight about how to interact with others that have different strengths than me.**
- Appreciation of each other's strengths and how to incorporate them in their everyday.
- I learned to appreciate people for their strengths though they may be different from mine as a leader it will help me to be me and use my strengths to achieve goals.
- To prepare myself and knowledge on how to manage situations.
- I'm a strong, confident person and should not doubt my abilities!
- My major strengths – I'm really the only person that truly knows who I am and my best strengths. My strengths should make me feel strong and good.

Service Learning Program

- Look at different perspectives of each person's strengths
- It has made me realize that different people have different strengths , in their personalities as well as in their leadership styles.
- It made me feel good about my individual strengths and how to accept my lesser talents.
- By encouraging me to use my strengths and appreciate what I have to offer.
- To prepare for challenges or changes.
- You have to know your peer's/coworker's strengths and honor it.
- I can overlook my weaknesses and focus on my strengths.
- Helps me when working with others – communicating what I would like, but also what others would like.
- I believe I will be able to communicate better with my peers at work as well as with coworkers by assessing their strengths and taking them into account.
- Always putting a positive spin on things and to enjoy my true self
- If I am in an interview I will know how to verbally communicate my strengths effectively.
- To reflect on other's comments on what needs to be improved.
- I learned that I can achieve my goals but I have to focus on the goal and stay strong with that goal.

● Service Learning Program

- To find out how best to recognize my strengths.
- Develop my strengths more!
- It has **motivated me to assess other people's strengths to better interact with them**; it has motivated me to work on and focus on my strengths so as to excel at them and also to identify my weaknesses and work to manage them.
- To set my goals, stay focused and keep up my positivism in my approach to life.
- By continuing to set goals and go for it, using all my strengths in order to feel fulfilling about my career and life.
- Plan, strategize and prepare for objectives that may or may not go according to plan. Adapt to change. Once objectives are completed, prepare for new goals.
- Don't doubt myself!
- By focusing on my strengths, I can learn to deal with my weaknesses and use them to my advantage.

Lessons Learned – What worked best

- Using a group format seems to create more learning
- Use of interactive exercises enables students to identify and appreciate their strengths
- The challenge is how to intentionally build or develop one's strengths over time.

Additional possible applications

- First Year Experience
- Senior capstone courses
- Expanded use in individual counseling
- Couples counseling