

# Signature Strengths Project

## I. Introduction:



Show the TED talk by positive psychologist Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage* as an attention gainer. This high-interest talk has over 16 million views to date. (12 minutes)

**URL:** [http://www.ted.com/talks/shawn\\_achor\\_the\\_happy\\_secret\\_to\\_better\\_work?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work?language=en)

## II. VIA Signature Strengths Survey:

Have students log on to [www.authentic happiness.org](http://www.authentic happiness.org) and take the VIA Survey of Character Strengths. This assessment was developed at the University of Pennsylvania and it contains a total of 240 action-packed questions. The signature strengths are based on a list of 24 compiled by positive psychologist Martin Seligman. After completing the survey, students will each immediately receive a rank-ordered list of their top strengths.

The survey can be found by clicking on the drop-down menu titled “Questionnaires”. In order to take the survey, students are required to fill out registration information. We recommend that they use their school email and school password so that they will easily be able to retrieve their information later. Students must answer all questions if they want to receive their results.

## III. Read Signature Strengths Descriptions:

Students will use their results from the VIA Survey of Character Strengths to create a rank ordered list of their signature strengths on the handout titled “Signature Strengths Descriptions.” They should read over the information about each of their signature strengths and create a list of their top three strengths at the bottom of the page.

## IV. Signature Strengths Actions List:

Students will spend one week utilizing their top three strengths in as many ways as possible in order to increase happiness and well-being. During the week they should concentrate on finding opportunities to engage in intentional behaviors and thought processes that build on their natural strengths, preferences, and talents. They should examine the list of activities on the handout titled Strength Training Plan. While it would be difficult (or impossible) for them to accomplish all of the suggestions, they should consider making a few of the ideas part of their strength training week. Some of the activities will require more effort and time than others. Encourage your students to utilize a mix of challenging and less challenging activities throughout the week. If necessary, they can also generate their own activities, as long as they relate to their signature strength and are approved in advance by their instructor.

### **V. Strength Training Log:**

Students will keep a log of their actions, feelings, thought processes, and observations from each day of their strength training week. They should discuss any activities (intentional or unintentional) that they carried out, as well as the reactions of others in their environment. They can also write about how they felt on each particular day of strength training week.

### **VI. Strength Training Evaluation:**

The week will culminate with students writing a two-page evaluation of their strength training experience. Some of the topics that could be addressed in their written response include:

- Define your signature strengths in your own words.
- To what extent do you feel that your top three strengths describe you? Do you feel that the test was accurate? Why or why not?
- Examine the strength training log: what actions were the most meaningful to yourself and others?
- How did friends and family react to your intentional activities? Do you think that they noticed a difference in your behavior? Why or why not?
- What parts of the week were difficult for you? Under what specific circumstances was it difficult for you to embody your signature strengths? Please explain why you felt challenged in these moments.
- In the future, how and when could you utilize these strengths to improve the lives of yourself and others?
- If you were to predict your behavior one month from now, do you think it will have changed in any way as a result of participating in strength training week? If so, how? If not, why not?

### **Sources:**

Achor, S. The happy secret to better work. Retrieved November 7, 2017 from [https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn\\_achor\\_the\\_happy\\_secret\\_to\\_better\\_work](https://www.ted.com/talks/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work)

Authentic Happiness. Retrieved November 7, 2017 from <https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/>

Seligman, M. (2002). *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment*. New York: Free Press.

Tayyab, R., & Anjum, A. (2014, June 18). Ways to Use VIA Character Strengths. Retrieved November 7, 2017, from <http://www.viacharacter.org>