

# Character Strengths and Vocational Interests:

By:

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# What Are Personal Strengths?

"Personal strengths are our built-in capacities for particular ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving."

— Linley (2008)

Within positive psychology, these inherent capacities form the foundation of our character. They represent our natural tendencies and abilities that, when recognized and developed, can lead to greater fulfillment and success.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) spent three years researching what personal strengths might look like across cultures and throughout human history, ultimately identifying 24 core character strengths organized under six virtues.

# The Six Virtues of Positive Psychology



## Wisdom

Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge, such as curiosity, creativity, and open-mindedness.

**Short Story:** Sarah loved to learn new things. When her computer game had a tricky problem, she didn't give up. She read books, asked her friends, and tried many different ideas until she figured it out. Her cleverness helped everyone play the game better!



## Courage

Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals, including bravery, perseverance, and integrity.

**Short Story:** Mark and his friends were lost in a big forest. Everyone was scared, but Mark was brave. He took a deep breath, looked for a path, and led his friends safely back home. He showed courage by being strong even when it was hard.



## Humanity

Interpersonal strengths that involve tending and befriending others, like love, kindness, and social intelligence.

**Short Story:** One rainy day, Emily saw a mom struggling with bags and a crying baby. Even though Emily was busy, she stopped and helped. She held the umbrella, made the baby smile, and carried some bags. Her kindness made a tough day much better for the mom.



## Justice

Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life, such as teamwork, fairness, and leadership.

**Short Story:** David was picking teams for a game. Some kids felt left out. David made sure everyone had a turn and that the rules were fair for all. He showed justice by making sure everyone was treated equally and felt included.



## Temperance

Strengths that protect against excess, including forgiveness, humility, prudence, and self-regulation.

**Short Story:** John felt angry when someone said his painting wasn't good. Instead of yelling, he took a deep breath and listened. He learned from what they said and tried to make his next painting even better. He showed temperance by staying calm and learning from his feelings.



## Transcendence

Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and provide meaning, like appreciation of beauty, gratitude, hope, humor, and spirituality.

**Short Story:** Maria was very sick, but she still smiled. She watched the beautiful sunrise, thanked her family for their love, and even told funny jokes. She found happiness in small things and inspired everyone around her to feel hopeful too.

# Wisdom and Courage: Character Strengths

## Wisdom

### Creativity

Thinking of novel and productive ways to conceptualize and do things

**Short Story:** Maya wanted to build a super cool fort. Instead of just using blankets, she thought of using old boxes, string, and even a flashlight. Her fort was the most amazing one because she thought of new and fun ideas!

### Curiosity

Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake

**Short Story:** Leo always asked "Why?" about everything. Why do birds sing? Why does the sky turn blue? He loved to learn new things just because they were interesting, and he would read books and watch documentaries to find answers.

### Love of Learning

Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge

**Short Story:** Chloe wanted to learn how to play the piano. It was hard at first, but she practiced every day because she loved learning new songs. Soon, she could play her favorite tunes beautifully!

### Open-mindedness

Thinking things through and examining them from all sides

**Short Story:** When her friend suggested a new game, Lily listened carefully, even though she thought her own game was better. After playing, she realized the new game was fun too! She was open-minded to trying something different.

### Perspective

Being able to provide wise counsel to others

**Short Story:** Tom and Sam were arguing about whose turn it was. Mia listened to both of them and then said, "Maybe you can take turns playing with the toy for five minutes each?" She helped them find a fair way because she could see both sides.

## Courage

### Authenticity

Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way

**Short Story:** Sarah liked to wear her bright, mismatched socks, even if other kids wore plain ones. She felt good being herself, and didn't pretend to be someone she wasn't.

### Bravery

Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain

**Short Story:** David was a little scared of the dark, but he knew his puppy was lost in the backyard. He took a deep breath, grabbed a flashlight, and went out to find his puppy anyway. That was very brave!

### Persistence

Finishing what one starts despite obstacles

**Short Story:** Emily was building a tall tower with blocks, but it kept falling down. She didn't give up! She tried again and again until her tower stood tall and proud.

### Zest

Approaching life with excitement and energy

**Short Story:** When it was time for art class, Ben's eyes sparkled. He loved mixing colors and painting with all his energy, always excited to create something new.



# Humanity and Justice: Character Strengths

## Humanity

### Kindness

Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them

### Love

Valuing close relations with others

### Social Intelligence

Being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others

## Justice

### Fairness

Treating all people the same according to notions of fairness and justice

### Leadership

Organizing group activities and seeing that they happen

### Teamwork

Working well as a member of a group or team

# Temperance and Transcendence: Character Strengths

## Temperance

### **Forgiveness**

Forgiving those who have done wrong

### **Modesty/Humility**

Letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves

### **Prudence**

Being careful about one's choices; not taking undue risks

### **Self-regulation**

Regulating what one feels and does

## Transcendence

### **Appreciation of Beauty**

Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and skilled performance

### **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 tease; bringing smiles to others

### **Spirituality**

Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life

# Key Findings About Character Strengths

## Universal Across Cultures

Peterson and Seligman (2004) found that these 24 strengths are evident across human history and world cultures, transcending geographic, cultural, and temporal boundaries.

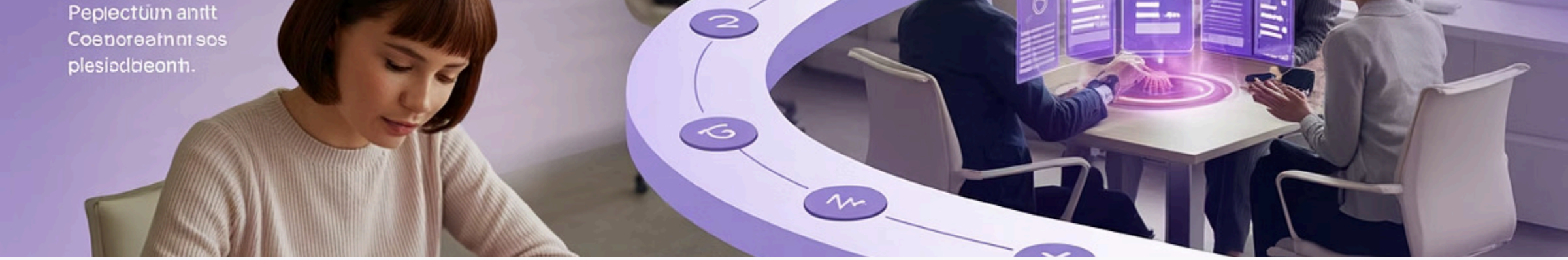
## Present in Everyone

Each of the 24 strengths exists in all of us to varying degrees. No one possesses all strengths equally—we each have a unique profile of dominant and lesser strengths.

## Developable

While we have natural tendencies toward certain strengths, all character strengths can be cultivated and developed through intentional practice and awareness.





# The Evolution of Interest Tests

Interest tests are psychological assessments designed to gauge an individual's preferences for certain activities, behaviors, or occupations. They play a crucial role in educational and career counseling, employment, and vocational guidance.

## Early 20th Century

The vocational guidance movement begins, recognizing the need for systematic approaches to career selection

1

2

1921

The Carnegie Interest Schedule launches as the first formal interest test

## Mid-20th Century

Development of theoretical frameworks to understand vocational interests

3

4

Present Day

Over 80 international interest tests in use across various contexts

# Defining Vocational Interests

"Trait-like preferences to engage in activities, contexts in which activities occur, or outcomes associated with preferred activities that motivate goal-oriented behaviors and orient individuals toward certain environments."

— Su et al. (2019, p. 692)

Vocational interests are more than just casual preferences—they represent deep-seated inclinations that drive our career choices and satisfaction. These interests shape not only what activities we enjoy but also the environments in which we thrive and the outcomes we find rewarding.

Understanding your vocational interests can help align your career path with your natural tendencies, potentially leading to greater job satisfaction and performance.

# Holland's RIASEC Model

John Holland theorized six types of vocational personalities and six corresponding work environments, collectively referred to as RIASEC:

## **Realistic**

Practical, physical, hands-on, tool-oriented

## **Investigative**

Analytical, intellectual, scientific, explorative

## **Artistic**

Creative, original, independent, chaotic

## **Social**

Cooperative, supportive, helping, healing/nurturing

## **Enterprising**

Competitive environments, leadership, persuading

## **Conventional**

Detail-oriented, organizing, clerical

# The Principle of Congruence

## Holland's Key Insight

According to Holland's theory (1997), when a certain personality type is matched with the corresponding type of environment, **congruence of interest** ensues, and the person will flourish.



### Personality Type

Your unique RIASEC profile



### Congruence

The alignment between person and environment



### Work Environment

The RIASEC characteristics of your workplace



When your vocational personality aligns with your work environment, you're more likely to experience job satisfaction, performance, and persistence.

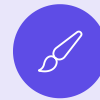
# The SETPOINT Model: A Contemporary Approach

Building on prior factor analytic studies of interests, Su et al. (2019) proposed a new dimensional model of vocational interests with eight domains—SETPOINT:



## Health Science

Medical, healthcare, wellness



## Creative Expression

Arts, design, performance



## Technology

IT, programming, digital systems



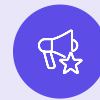
## People

Social services, education, care



## Organization

Administration, structure, process



## Influence

Leadership, persuasion, management



## Nature

Environment, outdoors, agriculture



## Things

Mechanical, construction, hands-on



# Why SETPOINT Matters

One critical reason for the development of the SETPOINT model is to capture interests in the contemporary work environment. The model incorporates interests in rapidly growing sectors that were not well represented when the RIASEC model was established:



## Technology

Reflecting the digital revolution and the explosion of tech-related careers



## Healthcare

Addressing the growing healthcare sector and its diverse career opportunities



## Green Occupations

Incorporating sustainability and environmental careers that have emerged in recent decades

# Bringing It All Together: Strengths and Interests

## Character Strengths

Your 24 character strengths represent **how** you naturally think, feel, and behave. They are the tools you bring to any situation.

Example: If *creativity* is one of your top strengths, you'll likely bring innovative approaches to any field you enter.

## Vocational Interests

Your vocational interests represent **where** you prefer to apply your strengths. They guide you toward environments where you're likely to thrive.

Example: A strong interest in *Technology* (SETPOINT) or *Investigative* (RIASEC) might lead you to apply your creativity in tech innovation.

By understanding both your character strengths and vocational interests, you can make more informed decisions about career paths, professional development, and personal growth opportunities that align with your natural tendencies and preferences.