



Manifesto Musings

Strengths Development

At **my manifesto** we are passionate about introducing individuals to the common language of character strengths. We think of character strengths as the positive human qualities that, when used effectually and morally, support us to bring good into our world. These universal tools support us to live a good life, and we view these strengths of character as the fuel to drive our skills and talents.

From our experience, it is common for individuals to have some awareness of their positive qualities, however, it is also evident that many people are either unaware of, or unable to describe, their own character strengths. Research suggests that identifying and harnessing your highest character strengths can increase wellbeing, motivation and engagement, whilst at the same time reduce levels of stress and anxiety.

An important addition to the above 'identify and use' approach is the over-arching skill of growing our strengths of character, known as the 'development' approach. It is important for individuals to know, and to experience first-hand, that it is not only possible but common, for people to develop their strengths of character. Our character is not something we are born with, it is something we develop as we hone the skill of drawing on positive human qualities to effectively meet situations and contexts. Having a helpful [classification of character strengths](#) provides us with a language, which then supports our actions and reflections as we seek to grow in wisdom.

Key researchers in the field, Robert Biwas-Diener and Todd Kashdan, add depth to our understanding by expressing strengths as "potentials for excellence that can be cultivated through enhanced awareness, accessibility, and effort." The development approach to strengths encourages us to consider how we can become more adept at using our strengths.

The metaphor of the skilled music conductor, proficiently guiding and blending a large combination of instruments whilst being attuned to the dynamics of the overall sound, provides us with a helpful picture for each of us to aspire. Asking ourselves, what combination of strengths does the situation require, along with considering am I playing particular strengths too often (or not often enough), or too loudly (or not loudly enough) is part of living a good life – a purposeful life.

Please know that you can grow and develop your strengths of character through intentional action, awareness, and courage. Is there a character strength you would like to 'dial up' or 'dial down'? We wish you the very best in determining the 'best' constellation of character strengths for whatever situation you find yourself in. Go well!

For those readers interested in a deeper-dive, you may wish to read an academic journal paper written by Biwas-Diener, Kashdan, and Minhas, experienced researchers in the fields of positive psychology and character strengths – [A dynamic approach to psychological strength development and intervention.](#)