Do you focus a lot on trying to fix your personality flaws? Find out about personality strengths and turn your attention to making the most of the best parts of yourself instead. Everyone has strengths and using those strengths to your advantage is a really important part of becoming happier.

**Building Strengths Means:**
- focusing on the best parts of you
- not worrying about your flaws and weaknesses
- using your best qualities more often.

**What are strengths?**
‘Strengths’ are the best parts of your personality. A good way to understand what this means exactly is to think about your friends. Why do you like them? Is it because they’re hilarious, fun, kind, creative, passionate or enthusiastic? These great parts of your friends’ personalities are a few examples of different strengths. We’re not talking about talents, like being a fast runner or a great guitar player (or whatever your thing is). Talents are things you do, and are good at, but they aren’t part of your personality. They don’t count as strengths.

The reason strengths are so important is that everybody is at their best and happiest when they are using the best parts of themselves, or their individual strengths.

**Everyone has twenty four strengths**
Researchers have identified twenty four different personality strengths, which everyone in the world has. While these strengths are part of everyone’s personality to a degree, different strengths will be more dominant than others in different people. These are known as ‘top’ strengths. The 24 strengths are; curiosity, love of learning, open mindedness, originality, social intelligence, perspective, bravery, persistence, integrity, zest, ability to love and be loved, teamwork, kindness, leadership, self-control, prudence, modesty, appreciation of beauty, fairness, gratitude, hope, sense of humour, spirituality and forgiveness.

**Why would I focus on my strengths?**
If you figure out what your most dominant (or top) strengths are, and try and find ways to use them more it can help to improve your physical health and happiness. They can also increase your motivation, capabilities, energy, ability to tackle challenges, confidence and resilience.

It’s pretty normal to take the opposite approach and try and work on fixing the flaws, weaknesses and problems in your personality. There’s nothing wrong with this, but when you spend too much time working on your weaknesses, it can be really uninspiring, and a bit of a downer. You end up only focusing on half the picture of your abilities – the things you aren’t so great with.

On the flip side of that, concentrating on the good things about yourself makes you feel good. Why wouldn’t you want to spend more of your time amplifying the best parts of yourself?

**Tips for figuring out your strengths**
To work out what your dominant (or top) strengths use the following tips:
- Ask other people. People in your life are likely to notice stuff about your personality which you haven’t. Chat to a family member, friend, lecturer, boss, or even a counsellor about what they see as the best parts of your personality.
- Think about some of the compliments you’ve received in the past. Do people ever compliment a particular part of your personality? It’s pretty likely to be a strength of yours.
- Figure out what you are most proud of. If you’re proud of something you have done/achieved (for example, winning your grand final footy match), then think about what parts of your personality you used to achieve it. Did it require focus, creativity, bravery etc?
- Ask yourself, when do you feel most like yourself? The things about your personality that make you most happy are likely to be your top strengths. For example, you might be happiest when you’re making other people laugh. This could indicate that you’re kind and compassionate (and hilarious).
- Take a strengths quiz. Check out the VIA Survey of Character Strengths on psychologist Martin Seligman’s Authentic Happiness website for more clues on where your strengths may lie. [https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter](https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/testcenter)

**What can I do now?**
Grab a notebook and start listing your strengths. Remember, everyone has plenty and no-one is strong at everything. If struggling, get the ball rolling by listing the strengths of your friends and family.

**Extract from Reach Out:** [http://au.reachout.com/what-are-strengths#why](http://au.reachout.com/what-are-strengths#why)

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