

# Do You Know Your Child's Strengths? Here Are 165 Possibilities.

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Nothing has been more disconcerting to me in my forty-five years as an educator than to ask a parent or teacher: "What is your child's (or teen's) strengths?" and have them answer: "He hasn't got any." I've actually heard this several times in my career. It was such responses that motivated me to come up with an inventory of strengths so comprehensive that any parent or teacher could go through it and be assured that they would find at least a few strengths for their kids.



Nothing is more important to a child's or teen's welfare than to be surrounded by adults who see the best in them. Knowing your child's or teen's strengths helps them in several ways:

1. It strengthens their core sense of self, which enables them to confront difficulties without collapsing.
2. It fortifies their meta-cognitive functions so that they can think more clearly about what they do well.
3. It provides opportunities for teaching things that are difficult for them using their strengths as teaching strategies (e.g. for a child who has reading challenges but is "picture smart," having them read graphic novels).

The following is a 165-item inventory. Go through this list and check any item that applies to your child/teen. You might even want to go through it with them (sometimes a child or teen will know their strengths better than the adults around them). In any case, make sure to communicate to your child/teen on a regular basis about the things they do well. After all, strengths—not difficulties—will determine their ultimate success in the world.

## Personal Strengths

Enjoys working independently

Has a good sense of his/her personal strengths and weaknesses

Learns from past mistakes

Has persistence in carrying out assignments or activities

- Is courageous in dealing with adversity unknown
- Keeps a personal diary or journal
- Has a good sense of humor
- Possesses a sense of responsibility
- Has strong opinions about controversial topics
- Marches to the beat of a different drummer
- Handles stressful events well (e.g. is resilient)
- Has good character (e.g. honesty, integrity, fairness)
- Has the ability to set realistic goals for him/herself
- Has a sense of confidence or high self-esteem
- Has good self-discipline
- Has personal ambitions in life
- Displays good common sense
- Possesses personal vitality, vigor, or energy

### **Communication Strengths**

- Explains ideas or concepts well to others
- Asks good questions
- Is a good storyteller
- Is a good joke teller
- Has good listening skills
- Handles verbal feedback well (especially negative feedback)
- Has good articulation ability
- Is able to effectively use non-verbal cues to communicate

with others

\_\_\_ Is persuasive in getting someone to do something

\_\_\_ Has good assertive skills without being pushy

### **Emotional Strengths**

\_\_\_ Is emotionally sensitive to perceiving the world around

him/her

\_\_\_ Has an optimistic attitude toward life

\_\_\_ Can tell how he/she is feeling at any given moment

\_\_\_ Can easily pick up on the emotional state of another person

\_\_\_ Is able to handle strong internal feelings in a

constructive manner

\_\_\_ Has gut feelings about things

### **Social Strengths**

\_\_\_ Has leadership ability

\_\_\_ Has a good sense of empathy for others

\_\_\_ Enjoys socializing with others

\_\_\_ Is good at helping others

\_\_\_ Is kind or affectionate towards others

\_\_\_ Has at least one good friend

\_\_\_ Prefers working with others than alone

\_\_\_ Likes to play board games and/or card games with others

\_\_\_ Has skill in refereeing disputes conflicts between

classmates

\_\_\_ Is polite and has good manners

- Is able to work out his/her own conflicts with others
- Works well in groups
- Volunteers his/her time in some worthy cause
- Belongs to at least one club or social group (e.g. Scouts.)
- Has a good relationship with at least one family member
- Is friendly to others
- Is good at sharing with others
- Follows class rules
- Has a good relationship with at least one teacher in the school
- Has good personal hygiene
- Trusts others without being taken in
- Is liked by his peers

### **Cognitive Strengths**

- Has good organizational skills
- Has good study skills
- Is able to use cognitive strategies (e.g. self-talk) to solve problems
- Is able to pay close attention to details
- Has a good short-term and/or long-term memory
- Is able to think ahead
- Is able to become totally absorbed in an activity
- Can easily divide his/her attention between two or more activities

**Cultural Strengths**

- Has traveled to other countries
- Speaks more than one language
- Is tolerant of others who have cultural, ethnic, or racial differences
- Has pride in his/her own cultural, ethnic, or racial background
- Likes to find out about historical events around the world
- Enjoys learning about different cultural traditions

**Literacy Strengths**

- Enjoys reading books
- Has good reading comprehension
- Enjoys doing word puzzles or playing word games
- Is a good writer in one or more genres (e.g. poetry, stories etc.)
- Is a good speller
- Has a large vocabulary for his/her age
- Enjoys listening to audio books or to someone telling a story or reading out loud

**Logical Strengths**

- Does well in science class
- Can estimate things easily
- Enjoys working with numbers and/or statistics
- Is good at solving math problems

- Has a chemistry set or other science kit that he/she works with at home
- Has an interest in astronomy, chemistry, physics, or biology
- Enjoys logical or number games or puzzles like Rubik's cube or Sudoku
- Can easily calculate numbers in his/her head

### **Visual-Spatial Strengths**

- Has an aptitude for fixing machines
- Likes to create three-dimensional structures with building materials
- Is good at doing jigsaw puzzles or other visual puzzles
- Is able to read maps well
- Reports being able to visualize images clearly
- Gets information more easily through pictures than words
- Is sensitive to the visual world around him/her

### **Physical Strengths**

- Has a good sense of balance
- Learns material best when moving around
- Likes to ride his/her bike, skateboard, and/or other self-powered personal vehicle
- Is good at playing team sports like baseball, soccer, basketball, or football
- Is good at playing individual sports like tennis, swimming, gymnastics, or golf
- Is in good physical health
- Likes to dance
- Is physically strong

- Is a fast runner or has other athletic abilities
- Likes to exercise (e.g. weights, aerobics, jogging, treadmill)
- Has good physical endurance
- Has good physical flexibility

### **Dexterity Strengths**

- Has a hobby building model cars, planes, ships or other similar projects
- Displays good handwriting
- Likes to juggle or do magic tricks
- Enjoys hand crafts like knitting, crocheting, embroidery, or needlepoint
- Likes to make things with his/her hands
- Has good tactile ability
- Enjoys arts and crafts like origami, collage, and/or *papier mâché*
- Enjoys woodworking, carpentry, carving, and/or metal work
- Has good eye-hand coordination

### **Nature Strengths**

- Has good rapport with animals
- Is good at taking care of plants in the classroom or at home
- Is sensitive to weather patterns
- Takes care of a pet at home or at school
- Is concerned about the welfare of the planet (e.g. is

ecologically-minded)

\_\_\_ Likes to go hiking and/or camping in nature

\_\_\_ Enjoys studying nature (e.g. insects, plants, birds, rocks, and/or animals)

\_\_\_ Likes to hunt or fish

\_\_\_ Has a good sense of direction

### **Musical Strengths**

\_\_\_ Is sensitive to the rhythms of music

\_\_\_ Enjoys playing a musical instrument

\_\_\_ Knows the music and lyrics of many songs

\_\_\_ Has a particular interest in one or more musical genres (e.g. rock, classical, jazz)

\_\_\_ Enjoys listening to music

\_\_\_ Has a good sense of hearing auditory acuity

\_\_\_ Has a good sense of pitch

\_\_\_ Has a good singing voice

\_\_\_ Makes up his/her own tunes or melodies with or without/lyrics

### **High Tech Strengths**

\_\_\_ Likes to spend time using a computer, tablet, or smart phone

\_\_\_ Has a facility for playing video games

\_\_\_ Likes to surf the Internet

\_\_\_ Knows how to set up audio-visual or computer equipment



- Likes to text on the phone
- Enjoys social networking (e.g. blog, website, Facebook)
- Enjoys using a still camera or video camera to record events or express him/herself
- Has several his/her own favorite movies or TV shows that he/she likes to talk about
- Understands at least one computer language

### **Creative Strengths**

- Expresses him/herself dramatically
- Has a good imagination
- Enjoys doodling, drawing, and/or painting
- Likes to act in plays and skits
- Works well with clay or other forms of sculpture
- Demonstrates creativity in one or more school assignments
- Possesses a love of beautiful things
- Has ideas for futuristic or fantastic projects
- Comes up with ideas that nobody else has thought of

### **Spiritual Strengths**

- Enjoys meditation, yoga, or some other form of contemplation
- Asks big life questions (e.g. what is the purpose of life?)
- Has a deep sense of wisdom
- Participates in religious or other spiritual events

\_\_\_ Has a philosophical attitude toward life

\_\_\_ Has a strong faith in something higher than  
him/herself

### **Miscellaneous Strengths**

\_\_\_ Likes collecting things (e.g. stamps, coins, buttons)

\_\_\_ Loves to cook

\_\_\_ Has a love of learning new things

\_\_\_ Is a good test taker

\_\_\_ Possesses a good memory for nighttime dreams

\_\_\_ Is curious about the world around him/her

\_\_\_ Has a good sense of time

\_\_\_ Manages money well

\_\_\_ Has good fashion sense in the clothes he/she wears

\_\_\_ Has good entrepreneurial skills (e.g. has started own  
business) started his/her own business

**Other Strengths** (write in other strengths not mentioned

elsewhere in checklist):

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For more information about discovering strengths in students, especially those with special needs, see my book (from which this inventory was adapted): *Neurodiversity in the Classroom: Strength-Based Strategies to Help Students with Special Needs Succeed in School and Life* .

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