

Strengths > Stress

This exercise combines character strengths and mindfulness to reduce stress. Research supports the use of positive psychology to deal with stressors (Gander et al., 2013; Seligman et al., 2005), such as managing academic distress, finding work–life balance, or coping with major disruptions. This activity has **3 steps**, inspired from blogs on stress management (Niemiec, 2016, 2017).

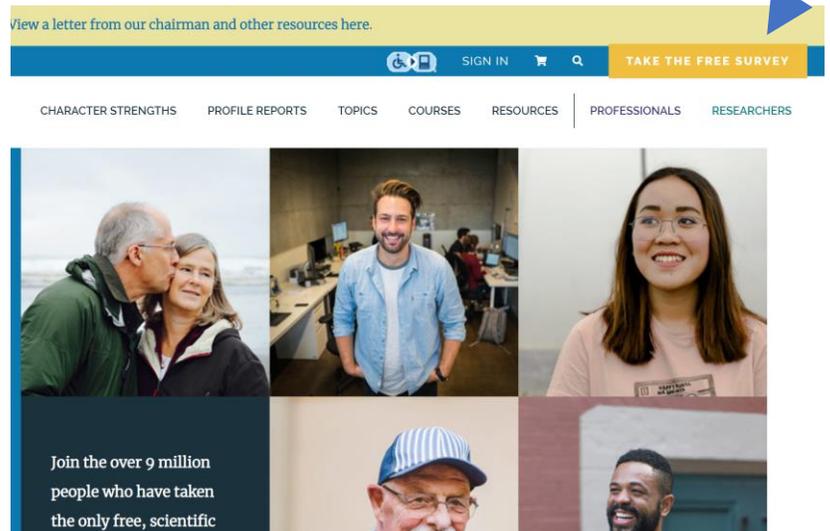
Step 1: Identify Your Strengths

To begin, figure out which character strengths bring you the most joy.

You can pick 3 to 5 from [this list below](#).

Or, if you want to take a short 10 minute survey, navigate to the VIA Institute on Character and [take the free survey](#). Sign up for a free account using an email and password.

If you are over 18, make sure to take the [VIA Adult Survey](#), answering each question honestly. Note that there is a version for children ages 13 to 17.



Once you are done with the survey, you can skip the next page and get your results. Feel free to create a deeper profile—totally up to you. A deeper profile is not needed for this activity.

Thank you for taking the VIA Survey!

We know you're excited to see your results, but we'd like to learn just a little more about you. This information is optional and kept confidential.

SKIP & GET YOUR FREE RESULTS

Gender	<input type="radio"/> Male	<input type="radio"/> Female	<input type="radio"/> Other
Where are you located?	<input type="text" value="Please Choose One"/>		
Age	<input type="text" value="Please choose one"/>		
What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.	<input type="text" value="Please choose one"/>		
Household Income (in USD)	<input type="text" value="Please choose one"/>		
What is your current employment status?	<input type="text" value="Please choose one"/>		

On the next screen, you will see a rank order of your character strengths.

There is no need to pay for anything (unless you want to).

Scroll down and note your top 3 to 5 character strengths. What are they?

Your Character Strengths Survey Results



Maximize your Unique Character Strengths with the VIA Me & VIA Pro Report Package

The VIA ME and VIA Pro Report package provides you with a robust view of what is best in you and how to leverage your strengths to build your best life.

\$50.00 USD

[GET DETAILED REPORT](#)

Congratulations!

We've identified your strengths! Here is your unique character strengths profile. Could you already guess a few of these? Are some a complete surprise? Read

Your Greatest Strength



1 | Love of learning

Write down your greatest 3 to 5 strengths:

What do you think about these strengths?

Are you surprised?

Do they seem to fit you?

If you took the survey and do not agree with the order of these character strengths, then choose the ones you think fit your personality better from [this list below](#).

Once you have your top 3 to 5 character strengths, you are ready for the next step.

Step 2: The Mindful Pause

Whenever you find yourself feeling stressed, take a moment to pause.

Take one deep breath. Let your eyes drift down, focusing softly on the ground or whatever is in front of you. You also can close them.

Simply notice yourself breathing for the next 10 to 15 seconds.

Now, ask yourself: **how can I use one of my character strengths right now?**

The flow is simple:

1. **Pause** with one deep breath
2. **Notice** your breath for 10 – 15 seconds
3. **Apply** your strength(s) to the moment

Step 3: Practice

Try using the mindful pause throughout the day, whenever you feel stressed. It is okay to pause several times.

You may notice yourself having thoughts like *this is not working* or *I'm not good at this* or even *this is so dumb*. When you notice those thoughts, simply **pause**, **notice**, and **apply**.

There are [many ways you can use your character strengths](#). Here are some examples to manage the stress of balancing school, work, and family life during COVID-19. How would you use your strength?

Stressful Scenarios

Pause & Notice

Apply

I feel lonely. I miss my friends.



Creativity: Create [your own meme](#) and send it to your friends. Use Zoom or FaceTime to see their reaction.

Curiosity: Explore a new game to play online together.

Judgment: Think of all the ways to contact your friend, such as sending them a surprise letter

Love of Learning: Search the Internet for focusing techniques, such as [pomodoro](#) or [special apps](#), evaluate which is best

I cannot focus at home. I'm falling behind. I feel distracted and guilty.



Perspective: Imagine somebody important. What would they tell you right now?

Bravery: Remember this is a new challenge. Tell a family member what you will do about it.

Perseverance: Identify 1 new way to relax as a family. Look into [online platforms](#) and reward your kids for completing a certain number of tasks.

There's no way I can teach my kids and myself. I feel tense and exasperated.



Honesty: Request extensions from your teacher or employer after explaining your situation.

Zest: Pause the learning for 30 mins and have "recess," playing an active game, like tag.

Love: Recite a [lovingkindness prayer](#) for yourself. Tell yourself how well you did before COVID-19.

I cannot focus at home. I'm falling behind. I feel guilty and distracted.



Kindness: Call a hospital and thank the first person who answers the phone for their service.

Social Intelligence: Write how you are feeling to an ex-partner in a way they might understand.

Stressful Scenarios

Pause & Notice

Apply

I just don't get this. The assignment is too hard. I feel overwhelmed and unsure.



Teamwork: Message your coworkers or classmates. Ask how they approached the problem.

Fairness: Take a moment to take care of your plant or pet—some being who relies on you for protection.

Leadership: Start a group discussion about the difficulty of / unrealistic demands of the work.

Forgiveness: Tell yourself, “they’re trying, we’re all trying.” Make a silent wish for them to plan the call better next time.

I am so annoyed with these conference calls. This is a waste of time. I am frustrated.



Humility: What would it be like to lead this conference call? What would you want participants to think about you?

Prudence: Listen for action steps and write them down, or if the call does not involve you specifically, plan what you will do next.

Self-Regulation: Start to monitor how many steps you take around the block. Count how many glasses of water you drink each day.

I hate being stuck here. I feel trapped.



Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence: Watch the sunrise or sunset. Listen to your favorite song.

Gratitude: Identify something good in your life, such as your health or access to electricity, and recite 5 reasons you thankful.

Hope: Write down what you will do if they live. Read about advances in modern medicine and remember the likelihood of finding a cure.

Somebody I know has COVID-19. What if they die? What if I'm next? I am afraid.



Humor: Watch your favorite stand-up comedian and call the person in a good mood.

Spirituality: Pray to your higher power. Read a book that awakens your sense of being connected to something greater than yourself.



Your Top 3 to 5 Character Strengths



VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues

Virtue of Wisdom



Creativity
Original, adaptive, ingenuity, seeing and doing things in different ways



Curiosity
Interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience



Judgment
Critical thinking, thinking through all sides, not jumping to conclusions



Love of Learning
Mastering new skills & topics, systematically adding to knowledge



Perspective
Wisdom, providing wise counsel, taking the big picture view

Virtue of Courage



Bravery
Valor, not shrinking from threat or challenge, facing fears, speaking up for what's right



Perseverance
Persistence, industry, finishing what one starts, overcoming obstacles



Honesty
Authenticity, being true to oneself, sincerity without pretense, integrity



Zest
Vitality, enthusiasm for life, vigor, energy, not doing things half-heartedly

Virtue of Humanity



Love
Both loving and being loved, valuing close relationships with others, genuine warmth



Kindness
Generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruism, doing for others



Social Intelligence
Aware of the motives and feelings of oneself and others, knows what makes others tick



Teamwork
Citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty, contributing to a group effort



Fairness
Adhering to principles of justice, not allowing feelings to bias decisions about others



Leadership
Organizing group activities to get things done, positively influencing others

Virtue of Justice

Virtue of Temperance



Forgiveness
Mercy, accepting others' shortcomings, giving people a second chance, letting go of hurt



Humility
Modesty, letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves



Prudence
Careful about one's choices, cautious, not taking undue risks



Self-Regulation
Self-control, disciplined, managing impulses, emotions, and vices

Virtue of Transcendence



Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence
Awe and wonder for beauty, admiration for skill and moral greatness



Gratitude
Thankful for the good, expressing thanks, feeling blessed



Hope
Optimism, positive future-mindedness, expecting the best & working to achieve it



Humor
Playfulness, bringing smiles to others, lighthearted – seeing the lighter side



Spirituality
Connecting with the sacred, purpose, meaning, faith, religiousness

References

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