

Flip The Switch On Your Strengths

by Julie Bailey
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(CENTERSTONE) - Are you struggling right now? Do you feel that your issues are dragging you down and preventing you from being the person you want to be? If so, this article is for you. As you continue to read, we'll explore your strengths and how you can use them to deal more effectively with your stressors.

Everyone has strengths, including you

It's true. You have strengths. Admitting this does not make you arrogant or narcissistic. Yet, many of us find it challenging to discuss our strong points and talents. Perhaps this is due to low self-esteem. Perhaps it is because we want to seem humble.

Regardless of the reason, when we are not able to identify and focus on our strengths, we place ourselves at risk of being defeated by our problems. Why? The answer is that it is our strengths that help us overcome our weaknesses. It is our strengths that help us cope effectively and problem-solve and survive. Without your strengths, you are left to face your biggest challenges armed with nothing but your weaknesses. Clearly, this is not an ideal scenario. Instead, start utilizing your strengths in your everyday battles.

Identify your strengths

Of course, before you can begin utilizing your strengths, you must first identify them. What are your strengths? We often tend to think of our strengths as things we're good at. And, while this is true, it is only one aspect of your strengths. But let's begin here, since this is a logical starting point. What are you good at? It can be anything from math to interior decorating to fixing things. Are you a good mechanic or violinist or gardener? Do you excel in sports? Baking? Trivia? Painting? What are your hobbies and special interests?

Keeping those things in mind, let's now also think about additional strengths through the lens of your personality. What parts of your "self" do you believe to be areas of strength? Are you patient, kind, compassionate? Do you treat others with respect? Are you able to control your temper? Can you handle yourself appropriately in social situations? Are you a leader, an encourager, a good listener? Are you great with organization or time management?

Next, let's explore the people and things in your life that provide support for you because these are strengths as well. Do you have a family member or friend who is willing to help when you're in need? Do you have a friendly co-worker who interacts with you in a positive way? Do you belong to any social groups such as clubs, churches, or teams? Do you have someone to mentor or guide you such as a professor, coach, counselor, doctor, or pastor?



How to flip the switch

All too often, we place far more focus on our problems, disorders, failures, and weaknesses than we do on our strengths and supports. We think and talk about all the things that went wrong and all the things we're worried about. This is useful in helping us identify problems. But, we shouldn't stop there. From there, we can move forward and begin to think about solutions to those problems. Fixating on problems won't make them go away, but solutions will. And in order to find solutions, we need to employ our strengths.

When tackling the issues you're facing in your life, factor your strengths into the equation. Ask yourself how your strengths can be utilized to solve your problems. Granted, not all situations are within our control to change. But even then, our strengths can help us cope with the things we cannot change.

If you have a great sense of humor, use it to help you cope. Laughter relieves stress. Use situationally-appropriate humor to reduce tension during awkward conversations.

If you are athletic, use physical activities to relieve stress and decrease anger. Sports can also bring people together and bridge gaps. If your family relationships need to be strengthened, perhaps suggest a backyard volleyball game.

If you are artistic, try painting or drawing your feelings. This can help reduce the intensity of your depression or anxiety.

If you have good communication skills, put them to work in your strained relationships, when tackling your workplace woes, and when expressing your medical concerns to your doctor.

If you have a good social/emotional support network, let them know when you need support.

If you are kind to others, offer the same kindness to yourself.

Whatever your strengths may be, flip the switch and turn them on. Start utilizing them. They are your tools for coping and your weapons for survival. Stop trying to face your problems without wielding your strengths.

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About Centerstone

Centerstone is a nonprofit health system providing mental health and substance use disorder treatments. Services are available nationally through the operation of outpatient clinics, residential programs, the use of telehealth, and an inpatient hospital. Centerstone also features specialized programs for the military community, therapeutic foster care, children's services, and employee assistance programs. Centerstone's Research Institute provides guidance through research and technology, leveraging the best practices for use in all our communities. Centerstone's Foundation secures philanthropic resources to support the work and mission of delivering care that changes people's lives.