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The Curious and Flourishing Schools - Positive Education in   
Building Character Strengths and Virtues

(draft internal manual, Feb 2023)

**Škola u kojoj cvetaju snage**

**Škola u kojoj cvjetaju snage**

**Šola, ker cvjetijo moči**

Dr. Mirjana Beara Dr. Gorana Rakić Bajić

1. **Positive psychology in education** **- Positive school**

One of the possible directions of school development, which would be in agreement with the already introduced changes in educational principles and practices (such as **focus on outcomes, standards and competences, formative assessment, inclusive education, student support, development of self-regulation and reflective teaching practice)** is its development in the direction of creating a positive school that supports the positive development of the individual (Maksić and Bojanović, 2017), not only students, but also school employees and parents. The positive development of the individual and institutions is the main goal and subject of study of the psychological direction that was developed at the beginning of the 21st century, based on the ideas of the humanist-existentialist tradition (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). According to the belief of representatives of positive psychology, the school should become a positive institution in which, **in addition to achievements, the well-being of all involved parties is valued** (Seligman et al., 2005).

„Both accomplishment and well being are important“

For example, a study in Vojvodina found that, although two-thirds of young people declare that they are mostly **satisfied with their lives (** Zotović-Kostić and Beara, 2016), the data obtained in this study is worrying, that the life satisfaction of even **one-third of young people is around or below the average values** on the life satisfaction scale. Gender differences were also found - young men show a higher level of satisfaction than girls, as well as age differences - life satisfaction decreases with age. The life satisfaction of the examined group of young people also depends on the self-assessment of the financial status of the families in which they live - the most satisfied with life are children and young people from families whose financial situation was assessed as "excellent", and which were only about 20% in the sample. Also, life satisfaction is lower among children and young people who live in cities, especially among urban girls.

Another worrisome result of the aforementioned research is that the level **of perceived stress** among our high school students is **significantly higher** than that obtained from a normative sample of their peers in the USA. (Zotović-Kostić and Beara, 2016).

Being satisfied with life and not feeling stressed is not the same as "blooming", ie. develop their potentials. The term "flourishing" is used in modern psychology to mean that we are not only filled with positive emotions, but also that we are functioning well, psychologically and socially (Keyes, 2002). If someone asked you, as a parent, what you want for your child, the answer would probably be not only that you want him to be happy and satisfied, to avoid negative and risky behavior, but also to thrive in all domains. (Moore and Lippman, 2005). We can rightly ask the question: how much does today's school contribute to this progress and in what way?

One of the ways to encourage the flourishing of children and young people in the school environment, represented by positive psychology, is to focus on finding and using their character strengths, such as Hope, Gratitude, Love, Curiosity, Zest, etc. Many character strengths are associated with greater life satisfaction and other positive indicators of mental health and flourishing, as numerous studies have shown (eg [Patrick, Ryan & Kaplan, 2007](http://psycnet.apa.org/record/2007-01726-007) ; [Ryan & Patrick, 2001](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.3102/00028312038002437) ) . In one study with children ages 3 to 9, the strengths of Love, Hope, and Zest were highly correlated with happiness; for older children, happiness was most associated with those same strenghts, with the addition of Gratitude. Strengths related to Transcendence and Temperance are also associated with greater life satisfaction in children and youth. The good news is that using strengths can be learned and practiced. Adolescents who participated in exercises based on character strengths at school showed improvements in life satisfaction compared to other students.

Focusing on strengths during schooling also reduces the likelihood of mental health problems in young people. Studies have shown that certain character strengths are associated with less internalizing psychological problems - eg. Hope, Zest, and Leadership were associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression, but effects were also observed for externalizing behavior problems (eg, Perseverance, Honesty, Prudence, and Love were associated with lower levels of aggression). People-oriented strengths, such as Kindness and Teamwork, predict fewer depressive symptoms among youth, and these two strengths, along with Social-emotional intelligence, are associated with better social functioning at school.

Character strengths appear to help students adjust to school, from elementary school through high school and beyond; identifying and using different learning strengths is associated with school satisfaction, academic self-efficacy, and positive classroom behavior, as well as academic achievement.

„Nothing is as practical as a good theory“

With this well-known quote from psychologist Kurt Lewin, we want to draw attention to one of the frequent errors in the application of concepts and techniques of positive psychology, including positive education, which is "jumping to action", without a proper understanding of both the concepts themselves and the characteristics of those with whom want to apply new techniques. It is not enough just to be aware of a new approach, in order to implement it successfully. After raising awareness, it's time to research and consider, and only then, with proper understanding, will adequate action follow. We hope that this manual will provide the right balance between theoretical concepts important for adequate understanding and recognition of similarities and differences with current practices on the one hand, and practical advice and ideas on how to apply positive education in our educational context on the other.

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* <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/student-well-being/character-strengths-for-students/#t>ab\_\_2
* [How to use Character Strengths to create a Positive Classroom - Geelong Grammar School (ggs.vic.edu.au)](https://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/Blog-Posts/use-character-strengths)

**2. POSITIVE EDUCATION - A SCHOOL WHERE STRENGTHS FLOURISH**

How would you answer the question: what is the most important task for schools to achieve? Why is it necessary for a society to have schools?

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| Your Answer: |

And now, if you recognize in your answer the overwhelming focus on the development of knowledge and skills in students, think again: are knowledge and skills enough for someone to live a fulfilling life and succeed in their goals? What else is needed?

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| Your Answer: |

If you can recognize your answer in the statement that the most important task and challenge of the school is to support and develop students' abilities to fulfill their potential (Lavy, 2020) and that knowledge and skills are very important, but it is necessary for students to develop their personality and **character** , then your idea of the role of the school is close to what Positive Education proposes. In order for students to fulfill their potential, that is, to develop (cognitively, emotionally, socially) in accordance with their capabilities, it is important to recognize what **strengths** they can rely on in that process and how **to develop those strengths.**

It is important to note that education is not just another area in which character strengths can be applied, but it is precisely the educational environment in which the use and development of strengths is **crucial** if we want to adequately prepare young people for the challenges of the 21st century.

**Character strengths and virtues**[[1]](#footnote-1)

Peterson and Seligman define character strengths as sets of traits that individuals possess, are stable over time and represent adopted, moral-value systems of thoughts, feelings and actions, which contribute to the fulfillment of life. (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). With the aim of providing a theoretical framework for the practical application of positive psychology, and based on the model of diagnostic manuals within the model of character strengths and virtues (CSV model), 24 strengths are classified into 6 classes of virtues.

Strengths of character

During the construction of the CSV model, a good character was definedas a set of positive dispositions and characteristics, such as kindness, teamwork, perspective, hope... In search of universal character strengths, major ethical and religious teachings were analyzed - from the Bible, Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism and ancient cultures to religion of western cultures. How people interpreted character strengths in the past is also discussed. From contemporary life, the process of identifying character strengths included a review of texts on education, politics and culture, messages in holiday greetings, personal ads, graffiti, stickers, popular songs, films, magazines, books were also analyzed, and educational programs that were were based on character building and strengthening.

Based on the above, a preliminary list of forces that met the following criteria was created:

1) that they are ubiquitous and recognized in different cultures;

2) that they make a contribution to individual fulfillment, satisfaction and interpretation of happiness and that they are morally valued as their own right and not as a last resort;

3) not to diminish the value of other people, but to encourage them to become their witnesses without jealousy;

4) that they possess an antonym, that is, an opposite characteristic or an opposite description;

5) that they are general and stable, similar to personality traits;

6) that they are measurable;

7) that they have distinctive characteristics in relation to other character strengths;

8) that they are embodied in certain individuals (personified in popular characters from songs, stories, etc.);

9) that they manifest early in children and youth;

10) that they may be selectively absent in some individuals

11) that they are nurtured through social norms and institutions (Peterson, 2006).

Character strengths are measurable, they differ from each other and a person can have a high score on one strength or group of strengths and a low score on some others. Also, strengths are generally stable over time, but can change in response to important life events or as a consequence of intentional actions that a person takes to change their lifestyle (Peterson, 2009).

Each person has a personal list of strengths that Peterson and Seligman call "signature strengths".

**Virtues and classification of strengths**   
Virtues are representative of the best human behavior and core values across time and different cultures. Universal and biologically determined. They developed through the processes of evolution, by selecting those virtues that proved to be necessary for the survival of the species. Virtues are the basic characteristics of the values of moral, philosophical and religious thinkers. these are **Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance and Transcendence** (Peterson, 2006).

With the aim of providing, in addition to the theoretical framework, help to people in recognizing character strengths, their use and improvement, Peterson and Seligman publish the manual "Character strengths and virtues, a handbook of classification " . Within the manual, 24 strengths grouped into 6 virtues are described in detail, whereby it is not claimed that this classification is definitive, but the possibility of including new strengths is left if they are empirically established.

Virtues of **Wisdom and Knowledge** relate to the acquisition of knowledge and the use of the acquired knowledge:

***Creativity*** - refers to those who are original and ingenious, to those who think in new and productive ways and who devise how to do something new;   
***Curiosity*** – refers to a wide range of interests, novelty seeking and openness to new experiences for personal benefit and to the pursuit of exploration and discovery;   
***Openness of mind, judgment*** - refers to the ability to judge and think critically, to tend to think deeply about things, examining them from all sides, as well as to make an impartial   
assessment of all facts;   
***Love of learning*** - refers to the tendency to master new topics and knowledge, as well as physical skills, whether one succeeds actually or only formally;   
***Perspective, wisdom*** - refers to the virtue of being able to advise others wisely, as well as being able to see events that concern us and others from a broader perspective.

Virtues of **Courage** are emotional forces that involve engaging the will to achieve goals despite external or internal obstacles:

***Courage, boldness*** - refers to those who do not retreat at the hint of discomfort, threats, challenges or worries, but tend to act according to their convictions;   
***Persistence*** - refers to those who finish what they started and who persevere during their actions despite obstacles;   
***Integrity, authenticity*** - refers to those who are sincere, authentic, who present themselves in the right way, to those who take responsibility for their feelings and actions;   
***Vitality*** - refers to those who are full of zest and enthusiasm, those who approach life with excitement and energy, and those who feel alive and active.

The virtues **of Humanity** refer to interpersonal strengths that include nurturing and showing kindness to others:

***Love*** - refers to those who value close relationships with other people, especially those relationships that imply that care for other people and sharing are mutual;   
***L kindness*** - refers to those who are generous, caring, compassionate, "tanna" and have altruistic love, and also refers to the desire to provide services and do good deeds to other people;   
***Social intelligence*** - refers to those who are emotionally intelligent and who are aware of their own motives and feelings, as well as those of others, and those who are successful in interacting with other people.

Virtues of **Justice** refer to the civil forces that create the basis for a healthy society:

***Team work, social responsibility*** - refers to those who are socially and socially responsible, to those who are able to work in a team or as members of some groups and to those who are loyal to the group they belong to   
;   
***Fairness, honesty*** - refers to those who treat all people equally justly and fairly, without pettiness, while not allowing personal feelings or prejudices to compromise their judgment of others;   
***Leadership*** - refers to those who have the ability to encourage each member of the group to perform their activity, while establishing and maintaining an atmosphere of good relations between the group members.

The Virtues **of Temperance** and sobriety are virtues that protect against all excess:

***Forgiveness and mercy*** - refers to those who have the ability to forgive those who have done wrong, to those who accept the shortcomings of others and who are able to give a second chance to those who have done wrong, and to those who are not vindictive;   
***Modesty, humility*** - refers to those who let their achievements, even though they are unique, speak for themselves;   
Prudence ***or prudence*** - refers to those who are careful when making choices, to those who do not take unjustified risks, as well as to the tendency not to say or do things that they might later regret;   
***Self-regulation*** - refers to those who have the ability to establish self-control, regulate what they feel and do, and strive for discipline and control of appetite and emotions.

The Virtues **of Transcendence** are the virtues that create connections with the universe and give meaning to life:

***Appreciation of beauty and excellence*** - refers to those who feel awe, wonder and sublimity before beauty, to those who   
have aspirations towards excellence and appreciation of works of art from different fields of creativity;   
***Gratitude*** - refers to those who are aware of the good things that happen to them and those who are grateful for them and are ready to express their gratitude;   
***Hope*** - refers to those who have positive expectations, who are optimistic, oriented towards the future and who will do whatever it takes to make it happen;   
***Humor*** - refers to those who are playful, who like to laugh and tease, who are able to make other people laugh and who see the bright side of things and events;   
***Spirituality*** - refers to those who are religious, who have faith and who have firm beliefs that there is a higher purpose and meaning in life and in the universe ***.***

Exploring the virtues and strengths of character

According to Peterson and Seligman (Peterson and Seligman, 2004), research on 24 character strengths conducted in the United States of America shows that Kindness, Fairness, Honesty, Gratitude and Open-mindedness are the strengths with the highest levels, and Modesty, Self-regulation and Prudence with the lowest levels.

Linley et al. (2007) conducted research in Great Britain on a sample of 17,056 subjects and over a period of several years. The sample consisted of respondents with higher education; a larger number of younger people and more women were represented. They found that there is a positive correlation between the age of the subjects and Love of learning, Curiosity, Forgiveness, Self-regulation and Fairness, while Humor was negatively correlated with the age of the subjects. Women have higher levels on the interpersonal strengths of Humanity, Love and Social Intelligence, and men on Creativity. For both sexes, the "list of personal strengths" referred to intellectual strengths: Open-mindedness, Fairness, Curiosity and Love of learning.   
  
References:

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**Strengths of character in the educational context - how to introduce them into teaching practice?**

It is possible to design different activities for noticing and strengthening the character strengths of students in an educational context, and we believe that teachers will have original ideas on how they can incorporate this into their teaching and educational work with their students. Here we will present some of the methods that have been used abroad, and that have been evaluated through research on the effects on some indicators of well-being and mental health.

1. **"Strengths Gym" (Strengths Gym, Proctor et al., 2009; 2011; 2016). https://www.mathworkshops.com/courses/strengths-gym-for-education-online**

This program was created on the basis of the VIA model of character strengths and consists of activities that teachers initiate with students as part of some subjects or at class teacher meetings. Students in this program learn to become more aware of the strengths in themselves, in other people, and in the world around them, which can lead to increased self-esteem, academic achievement, better teamwork, and improved social skills.

The pilot program was created so that teachers received written instructions and students received brochures with descriptions of strengths and tasks for observing and training them. Each brochure began with a section called "Discover Your Strengths." Strengths are defined as "your best qualities". The booklet provided a list of 24 VIA strengths with brief descriptions and the students were tasked with choosing five strengths from the list - the strengths that best describe them. Then they wrote those strengths in the blank space below the task. In the next few months, with the help of tasks from the brochure, they were tasked with "exercising their strengths, like muscles", in order to sharpen their ability to perceive strengths in themselves and others, as well as to learn to use and develop them better and more efficiently. your strength.

*Examples of strength building and practice tasks for students:*

1. Ask the students to choose one of their "top-5" strengths that they will practice during one week. Then, for that strength, give them one or several "tasks" to perceive and develop that strength. Prepare worksheets (for each strength separately, but according to a similar model). Here is an example of a worksheet for the "Love of Beauty and Excellence" strength.

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| "Love of beauty and excellence - description: you notice and love beautiful things, in nature, art, music or people.  During this week, you should engage with this strenght. For example.  (1) Strenght in action story - do you remember a situation when you or someone you know well showed love for beauty and excellence? Write, draw or tell a story about Love for beauty and excellence in action. (or)  (2) Animal beauty contest: which animals do you find beautiful? Why? (group work): Which animals do your classmates think are beautiful? Make a top list of the most beautiful animals. Compare your leaderboard with the list of other groups in the department. (or)  (3) Look for beauty on the way to school. Tell someone from your family or a friend what you noticed on the way to school. |

Based on these examples, it is possible to design similar tasks to strengthen each of the 24 strengths.

Research with a program and a control group at an older elementary school age (12-14 years) showed that students who participated in the six-month program significantly increased their life satisfaction compared to adolescents who did not participate in exercises based on character strengths. (Proctor et al., 2011).

1. **Linkis et al. (2014). Through the lens of strength: A framework for educating the heart**

* **An example of an activity for identifying strengths:** With this the student chooses an individual who respects and admires him . The student describes the person he admires in his own words. The group/class compiles a trait list consisting of all the traits identified by the students.
* **An example of how to spot an individual strengths in someone** : Each student is assigned a "secret partner." Over a period of one week, students are asked to work secretly by observing their partners and recording (on a simple form) any examples of optimal use of character strengths. strengths, indicating which strengths they used, how they used them, and evidence for the positive effects of such behavior.
* **Example of an activity for developing strengths** : Each student identifies (1) a strength that he /she would like to use more in school and (2) a strength that he / she wants to use more often outside school \_ \_ The student can choose the same strength for both categories or two different strengths . The student develops a concrete plan - for a certain period of time - which identifies a specific way of applying each strength in the appropriate environment (inside or outside the school).
* **An example of an activity to promote strengths within a class** : Students, after identifying strengths, and "collecting" them in their class strengths list, conduct a "group strengths audit": identify the different ways in which the group's strengths are already being used in the classroom and/or across schools and examples of optimal use. They identify what new ways to use the department's strengths would help make the department or school a better place for all of them. They then develop and execute a plan to implement the new practices.

1. **Language of strength in the class**:

Geelong Grammar School [[2]](#footnote-2)in Australia was one of the first to foster positive education and focus on student strengths. Today it is a resource center and a center for horizontal learning of teachers who want to apply the principles and methods of positive education in their schools. In its model, GGS places special attention on nurturing students' strengths through the development of the "language of strengths" in everyday communication in the classroom. Here are a few ways:

* **Adopting and using the "Language of Strengths":** teachers who are themselves familiar with strengths and how to use them, can use a different language when communicating with students. This approach provides an excellent starting point for fostering a positive culture in the classroom. The language of strengths can be used to set classroom expectations by first focusing their attention on what collective strengths each class possesses. In doing so, rather than trying to cover all 24 strengths, it is best to focus on 3 to 5 strengths so that each of these strengths can be comprehensively explored and generalized to different situations. Applying a strengths-based perspective, teachers might ask, “What strengths do my students already exhibit?” . The process of determining student strengths can be done through observation and/or asking students to choose from a list of strengths the 5 that they think are the most prominent in their class and best describe them. The strengths of individual students can also be used to find the most common strengths in the class.
* **Telling stories to build strength** . Starting with the strengths that are already close to the students and in which they are strong, we can further build the "language of strengths" in the class. The principle "from the known to the less known" is applied, whereby the definition and description of power should not be limited to the description of the power itself or the meaning of that word in the dictionary. "Storytelling" should be applied instead. These stories can come from history, news, popular culture, teachers, students, parents, people from the local community. For example, we can initiate a conversation about honesty and integrity by starting activities where they talk to a couple or individually reflect on events and situations in their lives when honesty/honesty was the best policy, and other times when honesty/honesty was the best policy. worsened the situation. By exploring the extremes of power use, students can develop their own sensitivity to the skills of balanced use of power in the classroom. These discussions could be enhanced by documenting and demonstrating key learning points, which could include how this strength works, the department's goals – what they want to achieve in terms of this strength, and insights about that strength. Learning situations can happen along the way, in everyday classroom situations. For example. when a student admits that he/she did not do homework, the teacher can use it in two ways: as an opportunity to explain the consequences of not doing homework on learning, but also as an opportunity to praise the student's honesty as a strength.
* **Perceiving strenghts** . A very powerful way to positively reinforce student’s strengths is a routine of giving feedback in class or at the end of the day. The teacher can set aside a certain period of time in each lesson/day in order to observe and give feedback on the strengths that he/she observed in the students during that lesson or during the day. At the end of the lesson or at the beginning of the next lesson, teachers give specific feedback on the strengths they have observed. For example, “Today, I noticed great hope and persistence in the way you approached a problem, created lists of solution ideas, and negotiated through disagreements in your groups.” By making spotting strengths a routine in the classroom, students can learn from repeated teacher's model and be gradually guided to see and reinforce each other's strengths and use the language of strengths.

How can teachers develop their sensitivity to strengths?

By completing the VIA inventory of human strengths on the website of the VIA Institute <https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>, teachers can find out in detail the ranking of their strengths. The youth version exists only in English.

In addition, teachers can practice in advance their sensitivity for recognizing strengths and reacting in accordance with the principles of Positive Education by solving situations from everyday practice through the prism of the "language of strengths".

**Is a strength ever a problem?**

Try to think about this question and answer it. If you believe that the use of force can sometimes be a problem in the educational context (department), state when and why.

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Strenghts usage can sometimes be a problem - usually it's a situation where one or more strenghts are OVER-used. For example, student’s Leadership, if used excessively, can be seen as imposing one's will and aggression; excessive Hope or enthusiasm can lead to unrealistic assessments of one's abilities to master certain tasks; too much Modesty can lead to passivity, etc. It is necessary to teach students what OPTIMAL use of their strengths means. The following table can serve that purpose.

Table 1: Optimal use of forces (VIA Institute on Character, 2021)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Strenght | Under use | OPTIMAL USE | Excessive use |
| Love | Isolation, withdrawal from other people | Sincere, reciprocated warmth | Hypersensitivity, excessive emotionality |
| HOPE | Negativity, too focused on the past | Positive expectations, optimistic | Unrealistic, blind optimism |
| LOVE OF LEARNING | Not interested; narrow-minded, self-satisfied | Seeks information; lifelong learning | "Know-it-all", elitist |
| CURIOSITY | It's boring; apathetic | Interested, open | Too curious; intrusive |
| KINDNESS, GENEROSITY | Indifferent; selfish | Nurtures and cares for others, sympathizes | Intrusive, too focused on others |
| FORGIVENESS | Vengeful, merciless | Get over the offense | Permissive; "doormat" |
| APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY AND EXCELLENCE | Oblivious, "stuck on autopilot," "work-home" | Find meaning in things; to notice the beauty in everyday life | Snobbery, perfectionism |
| TEAMWORK | Self-sufficient, "individual" | Loyal, cooperative | Envious, loss of individuality |
| ZEST | Passive, motionless | Active, energetic | Hyperactive, unstoppable |
| HONESTY AND HONESTY | Fake, inauthentic | Authentic, in line with yourself | Impolite (excessively direct); moralizer |
| JUSTICE | Prejudice, self-sufficiency | Implements equal opportunities for all | Justice without warmth and concern for others, at any cost |
| JUDGMENT | Illogical, naive | Analytical, open-minded | Cynical, rigid |
| SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE | Aloof, doesn't get along with people | Involved, empathetic | Over-analyzes others, self-deception |
| CREATIVITY | Conformist, ordinary | Uniqueness that is practical, originality | Eccentric, strange |
| GRATITUDE | In love with himself, he thinks that everything belongs to him | Connected, appreciates positivity, grateful | Artificial, repetitive |
| PERSEVERANCE | Laziness, helplessness | Completes tasks, persistent | Stubborn, he won't give in |
| SELF-REGULATION | Impulsive, undisciplined | Attentive, disciplined | Constrained, obsessive |
| SPIRITUALITY | Unaware of core values | Associated with that which is sacred and purposeful | Fanatical, "preaching" |
| COURAGE | Coward; without the will to do anything | Facing fears; overcoming adversity | Foolish risk-taking, "head through the wall" |
| PERSPECTIVE, WISDOM | Superficial, shallow | See and share the bigger picture with others | Arrogant, haughty |
| LEADERSHIP | Passive, follower | Positively influences others | Tends to control, "bossy" |
| CAUTION, CAUTION | Reckless, looking for thrills at any cost | Wisely cautious, goal oriented | Too cautious, hesitant |
| HUMOR | Too serious, flat affect | He laughs with others, plays | Offensive, lazy |
| MODESTY | Arrogant, self-centered | Pays attention to others, moderate | He devalues himself, has a limited self-image. |

On the other hand, a weak display of strength can sometimes be improved **by strength training** (examples of activities are described above), but it is necessary to assess beforehand whether and how important it is to train weaker strength. If it is estimated that the exercise of weaker strengths would bring significant benefits, one should rely on the most pronounced strengths in that exercise. For example. if it is estimated that (otherwise poorly developed) self-regulation strength is necessary for success in learning, an activity plan can be made with the student to use and practice this strength, but it is useful to find out which strengths the student has most strongly expressed. For example. if that student has a highly developed curiosity, the student can be assigned a learning project, in which the student will use his curiosity to independently search for information that will help him solve the problems he encounters in the material. If he has a highly developed perseverance, instruct him how to use it so that he overcomes the tasks step by step and one by one.

Some ideas for resolving power overuse:

* to pay attention to situations in which power is OPTIMALLY used and to analyze the factors that contribute to this, and to use them in future situations as well.
* Use some other power that can moderate the overused power.

Helpful resources for more ideas and techniques:

* Lavy, S. (2020). A review of character strengths interventions in twenty-first-century schools: Their importance and how they can be fostered. Applied Research in Quality of Life, 15(2), 573-596
* [How to use Character Strengths to create a Positive Classroom - Geelong Grammar School (ggs.vic.edu.au)](https://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/Blog-Posts/use-character-strengths)
* <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/student-well-being/character-strengths-for-students/#tab__2>
* Proctor, C., Tsukayama, E., Wood, AM, Maltbyd, J. , Fox Eadese, J., and Linley, PA (2011). Strengths Gym: The impact of a character strengths-based intervention on life satisfaction and well-being of adolescents. The Journal of Positive Psychology   
  Vol. 6, No. 5, 377–388
* Linkis et al. (2014). Through the lens of strength: A framework for educating the heart.

**3. PERMA model**

One of the currently dominant theories that deals with the components of optimal human functioning is the PERMA model, which has gone through several development phases. The starting point of this model was Seligman's three-component theory of authentic happiness, which included Positive Emotions (P), Engagement/Motivation (E) and Meaning and Purpose of Life (M), from which, after conceptualization and more detailed research, the PERMA model grew by adding two more components: Positive relationships with others (R) and Achievement (A) ( [Seligman, 2011](https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01090/full#B44) ). The aforementioned five components are measurable and based on their levels, individual psychological well-being can be assessed. The instrument used to measure them is the PERMA-profiler, which has not yet been standardized in Serbia, but has good psychometric characteristics on an American sample (Seligman, 2018).

**Positive emotions (Positive emotions - P)**

Positive emotions, in addition to happiness, include hope, interest, joy, love, compassion, pride, amusement, and gratitude. They are considered a major indicator of flourishing and can be enhanced to improve well-being (Fredrickson, 2001). The usual level of individual functioning can be improved by practicing, exploring and integrating positive emotions. Current research shows that positive emotions can reduce the effects of unpleasant life events and improve resilience (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004), so we can say that frequent experience of positive emotions helps individuals build physical, intellectual, psychological and social resources that increase resilience and general well-being .

**Engagement/motivation (Engagement - E)**

Seligman poetically describes engagement/motivation as “being one with the music” (2012). When someone experiences an all-pervading experience in which he optimally applies his skills, strengths and focuses attention on a previously set personally challenging goal, we speak of engagement/positive motivation. According to Csikszentmihalju, the balance between the challenge and difficulty of the goal (task) on the one hand and the experience of competence, that is, having the appropriate level of skill needed to achieve the set goal on the other hand, produces an experience called " flow" that is so satisfying that people engage in an activity for the sake of the activity itself, and not because of the reward/benefit that the activity will bring. Thus, "flow" is experienced when one's skills are sufficient for a challenging activity, in pursuit of a clear goal, with immediate feedback on progress toward the goal. When experiencing "flow" there is complete absorption in the activity, attention is focused, self-awareness disappears, and the perception of time is changed - we have no experience of the passage of time and cease to be interested in it, there is awareness only of the present moment. "Flow" can be experienced in various activities, for example, in a good conversation, a work task, playing a musical instrument, reading a book, writing, building furniture, repairing a bicycle, gardening, sports training .... Researching the relationship between "flow" and well- being is showed that individuals who tried to use their strengths in new ways every day for a week were happier and less depressed after six months (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005).

**The meaning and purpose of life (Meaning - M)**

The search for meaning and the need to have a sense of worth is as old as humanity itself. Although science has been dealing with this question since the beginning of its existence, it continues to intrigue theorists and researchers. Seligman (2012) defines the meaning and purpose of life as belonging to and/or serving something greater than ourselves. A sense of meaning and purpose can be derived from belonging and serving something greater than oneself. There are various social institutions that provide a sense of meaning, such as religion, family, science, politics, work organizations, justice, community, social causes... A sense of purpose in life helps individuals to focus on what is really important in the face of significant challenges or adversity. The meaning or purpose of life varies from person to person. Thus, the meaning of life can be engaging in a profession, humanitarian work or politics, but also exercising creative endeavors, nurturing religious/spiritual beliefs or maintaining good personal relationships, gaining new experiences.... A sense of meaning stems from personal values, and people who feel they lead a purposeful life live longer and have greater life satisfaction and fewer health problems (Kashdan, Mishra, Breen, & Froh, 2009).

**Positive relationships with others (Relationships - R)**

From an evolutionary point of view, good relations with the social environment are necessary for the survival of the human species, and we, as social beings, have a strong desire to connect and preserve connections to others. Developing close relationships is key to adaptation and is enabled by our capacity for love, compassion, kindness, empathy, teamwork, cooperation, self-sacrifice, etc. It follows from the above that close and fulfilling relationships with important others are necessary for psychological well-being, and often pleasant emotions and experiences such as happiness, satisfaction, sense of belonging, pride, meaning are enhanced precisely through them. Close relationships can give life meaning, and social support is one of the protective factors in stressful situations. Many studies, from Harlow's and Bowlby's findings on the importance of affective attachment to modern studies, confirm the importance of close personal ties for psychological well-being. For example, Hassed (2008) states that social isolation is a risk factor for depression, substance abuse, and suicide. Also, close relationships have been found to be important predictors of subjective well-being (Miers, 2000) and meaning in life (Hicks & King, 2009).

**Accomplishment (A)**

According to Seligman (2011), people pursue achievement, competence, success, and mastery for their own sake, in various domains, including the workplace, sports, games, hobbies, etc. even if it doesn't necessarily lead to positive emotions. A sense of accomplishment comes from achieving goals, mastering endeavors, and being self-motivated to complete what you set out to do. Experiencing a sense of pride from various successes contributes to well-being (Seligman, 2012). Persistence and dedication to achieving goals ensure success, but flourishing and well-being require intrinsic motivation, that is, achieving success due to internal motivation, as well as working on something just for the sake of research and improvement (Quinn, 2018). Pursuing intrinsic goals (such as growth and connection) leads to greater increases in well-being than pursuing extrinsic goals such as money or fame (Seligman, 2013).

1. (Source: Petrović, V. (2020). Introduction to mental health. Novi Sad: Faculty of Law and Business Studies, Dr. Lazar Vrkatić) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 1. More at: <https://www.ggs.vic.edu.au/Blog-Posts/use-character-strengths>

   [↑](#footnote-ref-2)