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STRONG MINDS EXPERT CHECKLIST

Each Strong Minds Expert Package consists of the following resource sets:

- This comprehensive digital manual
- 4 x 24 character strength A4 instructional poster sets
- 4 x sets of 30 character strength A4 stage specific charts
- All staff receive an A2 Character Strength Poster
- A Staff Character Strength Tree
- 4 x 24 strength cards sets



4 x sets of 24 Character Strength Instructional Posters &
4 x sets of 24 Character Strength Cards



4 sets of 30 Character Strength Charts





ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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BA(Psych), MSc(Psych), BTeach(Primary), Registered Psychologist

Nicole holds a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science degree in Psychology from the University of Wollongong. She is a Registered Psychologist and completed a Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) at the University of Western Sydney. Nicole is passionate about combining her two careers in a Positive Education context, to promote wellbeing and resilience for children. She is inspired to offer scientifically proven Positive Psychology interventions including cognitive behavioural strategies to students, teachers and parents in primary schools. In particular her focus is on providing strength-based approaches to create flourishing, resilient school communities.



Wendy Madden
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BEd(Primary), MAppSc(Psychology of Coaching)

Wendy has a Masters of Coaching Psychology and a Bachelor of Education, majoring in Psychology and Special Needs. She has over fifteen years of primary classroom teaching experience, both in the public and private sector. Wendy has conducted research applying strengths-based coaching within the classroom. The results showed significant increases in student wellbeing and were published in the International Coaching Psychology Review. Wendy is a Senior Associate of The Positivity Institute and a member of The International Society for Coaching Psychology.





ABOUT THE AUTHORS CONT'D

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Janine has a Master of Philosophy in research and a Bachelor of Education, with her teaching career spanning almost 40 years, in Primary school education and more recently at a university level in personal development and health. Her research was conducted in Values Education and its role in Bullying Mediation. During her research she also became a qualified mediator and has an Australian National Mediation Accreditation. She currently works on well being based writing programs, for The Broken Bay Diocese, related to the new Personal Development and Health Syllabus.

Janine was an integral part of the development team for the Strong Minds Expert New set of lessons.

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POSITIVE EDUCATION

Sadly, one in seven children (aged 4-17yrs) in Australia have a mental illness. This equates to over half a million children (Lawrence, Johnson, Hafekost, Boterhoven De Haan, Sawyer, Ainley, & Zubrick, 2015). Additionally, The World Health Organisation (2011) estimates that depression will be the number one health concern in both the developed and developing nations by 2030. These alarming facts highlight the need to not only provide treatment for mental illness but also the need for preventative measures, such as the building of resilience.

Positive Psychology aims to assist the majority of the population, functioning at an average level, to move up the bell curve away from mental illness and towards functioning at their optimum potential- 'flourishing'. Schools are in a unique position to help promote wellbeing among youth. The application of Positive Psychology in schools is known as Positive Education and was founded by Dr Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania. Australia is the world leader in Positive Education, with the first whole school application adopted in 2008 by Geelong Grammar in Victoria (Norrish, 2015).

Seligman (2011) has developed a well regarded theory of wellbeing – PERMA. He proposes that flourishing requires positive emotions; engagement – absorption in tasks of interest; positive relationships; meaning – contributing to something bigger than oneself, such as a family, charity or interest group and accomplishment. We have added a 'H' to PERMA, as good physical and mental health is important for one to flourish.

It is important to explain to students what we mean by wellbeing, that is, PERMA-H. They need to understand that in order to build resilience and live a fulfilling life then they must aim to address each part of this acronym, refer to p.7. One way this can be achieved is by knowing and using ones character strengths, and celebrating strengths in others. As Professor Seligman states, character strengths are the 'backbone' to optimal functioning. As such Strong Minds provides a character strength package to help promote a whole school approach to wellbeing in primary schools.



CHARACTER STRENGTHS

Character strengths (CS) are the distinctive qualities that are the best in us. They reflect what is important to us and what we value. Research into character indicates that when we know and apply our most valued character strengths, our wellbeing and life satisfaction improves (Proctor, Tsukayama, Wood, Maltby, Eades & Linley, 2011).

Strong Minds is based on the VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues. The VIA Classification is the result of three years of study involving fifty-five scientists. It states that there are twenty-four character strengths that are valued across cultures, religions, gender, and race (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). These twenty-four strengths are divided into six virtues as shown below:

WISDOM	COURAGE	KINDNESS	COMMUNITY	SELF-CONTROL	MEANING
Creativity	Bravery	Love	Fairness	Self-Regulation	Gratitude
Curiosity	Energy	Kindness	Teamwork	Forgiveness	Humour
Love of Learning	Perseverance	Social Intelligence	Leadership	Humility	Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence
Open-Mindedness	Authenticity			Prudence	Spirituality
Perspective					Hope

Individuals, ten years old and above, can complete The VIA Youth Survey (Peterson and Seligman, 2004). This provides us with our own unique strengths profile. It rates strengths from one through to twenty-four, with the top five strengths referred to as our signature strengths (SS). Dr Seligman states that when we employ these signature strengths we improve our level of wellbeing and maximize opportunities to flourish. Signature strengths are those that come more naturally to us, they energise us and are often used. Understanding our SS increases our self-acceptance and understanding of self. In addition 'SS have been found to be positively associated with academic performance, motivation and effort' (Lounsbury, Fisher, Levy & Welsh, 2009).



CHARACTER STRENGTHS CONT'D

It is important to note that character strengths are malleable, changing over time and situation. All strengths can be developed, and whilst we can gain from maximising our signature strengths, we can also benefit from working on other (socially desirable) strengths such as kindness and forgiveness (Fox-Eades, 2010).

Strengths are different from talents or abilities. A talent is something that we do, but not who we are. Whilst it is good to have talents, they are different to character strengths. For example a professional soccer player obviously has soccer talent, but he/she would also need to employ character strengths, such as perseverance, love of learning and teamwork. The consequence of a talent might be fame and fortune, but this could be misused and short lived. In contrast, character strengths last a lifetime. Used correctly, character strengths help guide us to make good decisions.

Understanding and using our own character strengths helps build self worth and self esteem. Likewise, it is very important to notice strengths in others. Spotting strengths in others helps to build communities. It teaches us to look for the good, unique qualities in everyone. Strength spotting also emphasises the importance of diversity, tolerance and inclusiveness.

A great way to explain character strengths is by using the metaphor of muscular strength. Muscles will be different sizes depending on how often we use them, just like character strengths, the ones we use often will be stronger. Character strengths are the best parts of us, and what are important to us. If kindness was one of our top strengths then we would value people who are kind, it would be an important trait for us. Practicing kindness often would make us feel good. Therefore our strength of kindness would get stronger – it would grow like a muscle.

Developing muscles and developing character strengths both take perseverance, goal setting and, at times, seeking help. But, when we know what our character strengths are and put them in to practice, we are able to actively bring more happiness in to our lives. These signature character strengths make us unique and show us what great qualities we have. They allow us to feel great, and do great too!



PERMA-H MODEL

Seligman (2011) has developed a well regarded theory of wellbeing – PERMA. He proposes that functioning at our optimum potential requires: positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment. We have added the ‘H’, to represent good mental and physical health as

<p>P</p>	<p>POSITIVE EMOTIONS</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joy - Love - Excitement - Awe - Gratitude <p>Experiencing positive emotions increases your creativity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could you use character strengths to increase positive emotions? • Do things that make you feel good: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - play with friends - lie under a tree and admire the sky and branches - practice mindfulness – Smiling Mind app - read a funny book - watch a funny TV show - listen to music - display your signature strengths - gratitude journal once/week - practice kindness - model a positive emotion for the week
<p>E</p>	<p>ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>Refers to being totally absorbed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify your signature strengths: www.viacharacter.org for students 10yrs + or consider which strengths are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Really you - Energise you - Often used. • Set a SMART goal to use a strength in a novel way. • If you are not interested in an activity in class think of how you could use a signature strength to increase your interest. • Pursue a hobby that uses one of your signature strengths



R	<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>Positive relationships have the biggest impact on wellbeing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is important in your life? For example: teachers, friends, family, coaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chose a relationship that you would like to improve. How could you use character strengths to improve this? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - perform acts of kindness - be a good listener - practice gratitude • Spot and celebrate strengths in others
M	<p>MEANING</p> <p>Belonging to and serving something bigger than yourself - doing something for others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you use your signature strengths to help others (in your family, your school, the broader community)? • Volunteer or fundraise for a cause you believe in.
A	<p>ACCOMPLISHMENT</p> <p>Doing well at something.</p> <p>'Grit' (perseverance) predicts success more than IQ</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set a SMART goal to use a signature strength in a novel way, see Stage 3 Original Lessons p. 32-33. Using your signature strengths increases your engagement, improving opportunities for success • Celebrate successes: learning a new word, a new maths strategy, making a new friend • Practice a Growth Mindset/Persevere: try different strategies, make mistakes, practise, ask for help • Have helpful self-talk: 'You can do it! Great try. Keep going, you'll get there.' Catch your ANTS - Automatic Negative Thoughts (unhelpful thoughts) and turn them into PETS - Performance Enhancing Thoughts (helpful thoughts). See Stage 3 New Lessons p.35

