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# Strengths Insight and Action-Planning Guide

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## Your Top 5 Themes

Learner  
Achiever  
Self-Assurance  
Responsibility  
Restorative

## What's in This Guide?

### [Section I: Awareness](#)

- A brief Shared Theme Description for each of your top five themes
- Your Personalized Strengths Insights, which describe what makes you stand out from others with the same theme in their top five
- Questions for you to answer to increase your awareness of your talents

### [Section II: Application](#)

- 10 Ideas for Action for each of your top five themes
- Questions for you to answer to help you apply your talents

### [Section III: Achievement](#)

- Examples of what each of your top five themes "sounds like" -- real quotes from people who also have the theme in their top five
- Steps for you to take to help you leverage your talents for achievement

## Section I: Awareness

### Learner

#### Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.

#### Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

It's very likely that you are attracted to difficult and challenging endeavors. You are not inclined to look for the easy way out. You are bold. You take risks. You dare to stretch your mind. You test the limits of your abilities in ways that timid individuals would not attempt. Chances are good that you channel your efforts into the task at hand. You persevere until you have gained the knowledge and skills needed to attain a goal. You can toil for many hours to secure your objective. You probably work hardest and most productively at a particular time of day. Driven by your talents, you yearn to increase your knowledge by being kept in the information loop. This explains why you gravitate to people who converse about ideas at a deeper and more thoughtful level than most individuals are capable of doing. "Making small talk" — that is, engaging in idle conversation — probably seems like a waste of time to you. By nature, you might search for the factors that produced a certain outcome or started a particular chain of events. Sometimes you are frustrated until you figure out why things happened the way they did. Because of your strengths, you treasure opportunities to absorb knowledge and gather ideas from forward-looking thinkers. You usually read their writings, listen to their presentations, or ask them questions about the future they envision. Whenever you can conduct experiments or participate in hands-on activities, you have a much better grasp of their innovative ideas.

#### Questions

1. As you read your personalized strengths insights, what words, phrases, or lines stand out to you?
2. Out of all the talents in this insight, what would you like for others to see most in you?

## Achiever

### Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.

### Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

Chances are good that you sometimes work with intensity to make changes, upgrades, or improvements. Perhaps you reach your goals by conquering some of your limitations or eliminating some of your shortcomings. Because of your strengths, you sometimes find that the act of work is naturally pleasurable. Perhaps you recharge yourself physically as well as mentally by toiling for hours on certain tasks, projects, or assignments. Driven by your talents, you may be inclined to pay close attention to what individuals say. Perhaps your attentiveness reassures them that you comprehend what they are thinking or feeling. You might be delighted to hear, “Finally, someone really understands me. Thank you for taking the time.” It’s very likely that you now and then diligently examine past events. You might find patterns that keep recurring. Maybe this information allows you to anticipate what might happen in the future. Perhaps you grasp the meaning of George Santayana’s warning: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Instinctively, you sometimes go out of your way to support, inspire, motivate, or embolden individuals or groups. Perhaps you regard this task as worthy of your effort and time.

### Questions

1. As you read your personalized strengths insights, what words, phrases, or lines stand out to you?
2. Out of all the talents in this insight, what would you like for others to see most in you?

## Self-Assurance

### Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Self-Assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.

### Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

Because of your strengths, you intentionally seek out what is new and different. Unexplored territory appeals to your adventurous spirit. You like to test your limits as a human being in travel, work, sports, or thinking. Even when others worry about your well-being, you trust you can take care of yourself. It's very likely that you sometimes dive into challenging situations because you trust yourself to survive or excel. Maybe you know that you have the talent to deal with obstacles or hazards as you encounter them. Launching new ventures might thrill you. Tackling impossible goals might energize you. Stepping out of your comfort zone into unfamiliar territory might stimulate you. Instinctively, you occasionally uncover how and why certain things happen as they do. You might share these discoveries with colleagues, teammates, or friends. Perhaps you streamline your explanations, covering only the essential facts. Some listeners may appreciate receiving less detail so the main points are apparent. Driven by your talents, you might help people grasp elaborate or complicated ideas, processes, theories, or rules. Maybe you intentionally use easy-to-understand words and phrases. Chances are good that you may help some individuals be stronger and tougher in the face of life's challenges, difficulties, or adversities.

### Questions

1. As you read your personalized strengths insights, what words, phrases, or lines stand out to you?
2. Out of all the talents in this insight, what would you like for others to see most in you?

## Responsibility

### Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

### Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

By nature, you sometimes feel twinges of guilt when certain tasks are done carelessly. Perhaps you want to be associated with quality. You might be disappointed in yourself when you compromise some of your beliefs about right and wrong. It's very likely that you are impelled to deliver on all of your commitments. You are determined to meet all of your obligations. Doing so is your badge of honor. It is one reason why people describe you as trustworthy and dependable. Instinctively, you sometimes work hard to do things properly and ethically. Maybe you blame yourself when you fall short of your high standards. Perhaps being a solo performer frees you to work at a task until you decide it perfectly meets the specifications or aligns with your moral principles. Because of your strengths, you might have a reputation for performing with precision and care. Your attention to detail may be noticeable in your financial records, personal appearance, study notes, home, and/or workplace. You may want to put things in their proper order or sequence. Perhaps you are impelled to do things right. When you are ultimately held accountable, your need for order and structure intensifies. Chances are good that you often argue that people should be held to the highest moral standards. You insist that those who break the law be required to accept the consequences of their deeds. You have little sympathy for people who are caught in the act of taking things that do not belong to them.

### Questions

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2. Out of all the talents in this insight, what would you like for others to see most in you?

## Restorative

### Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.

### Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

Driven by your talents, you consistently strive to improve yourself personally and professionally. You are inclined to target your shortcomings rather than enhance your natural abilities. You aim to minimize your limitations or eradicate them altogether. You think this is a smart short-term plan for reaching your long-term goals. Chances are good that you rarely avoid telling people about yourself, your experiences, or even your shortcomings. You reflect on what you should do better, more completely, or more perfectly. You are comfortable admitting all sorts of things about yourself. Instinctively, you constantly search for ways to better yourself by making changes or corrections. Because of your strengths, you are highly sensitive to what others think of you. This sensitivity continually motivates you to do things better than you have in the past. It's very likely that you naturally consider what you can accomplish in the coming weeks, months, years, or decades. You usually get more done when you have goals. Pondering what you can upgrade, enhance, or perfect motivates you to excel at higher levels than you have in the past.

### Questions

1. As you read your personalized strengths insights, what words, phrases, or lines stand out to you?
2. Out of all the talents in this insight, what would you like for others to see most in you?

## Questions

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1. How does this information help you better understand your unique talents?
2. How can you use this understanding to add value to your role?
3. How can you apply this knowledge to add value to your team, workgroup, department, or division?
4. How will this understanding help you add value to your organization?
5. What will you do differently tomorrow as a result of this report?

## Section II: Application

### Learner

#### Ideas for Action:

- Refine how you learn. For example, you might learn best by teaching; if so, seek out opportunities to present to others. You might learn best through quiet reflection; if so, find this quiet time.
- Develop ways to track the progress of your learning. If there are distinct levels or stages of learning within a discipline or skill, take a moment to celebrate your progression from one level to the next. If no such levels exist, create them for yourself (e.g., reading five books on the subject or making three presentations on the subject).
- Be a catalyst for change. Others might be intimidated by new rules, new skills, or new circumstances. Your willingness to soak up this newness can calm their fears and spur them to action. Take this responsibility seriously.
- Seek roles that require some form of technical competence. You will enjoy the process of acquiring and maintaining this expertise.
- As far as possible, shift your career toward a field with constantly changing technologies or regulations. You will be energized by the challenge of keeping up.
- Because you are not threatened by unfamiliar information, you might excel in a consulting role (either internal or external) in which you are paid to go into new situations and pick up new competencies or languages quickly.
- Research supports the link between learning and performance. When people have the opportunity to learn and grow, they are more productive and loyal. Look for ways to measure the degree to which you and others feel that your learning needs are being met, to create individualized learning milestones, and to reward achievements in learning.
- At work, take advantage of programs that subsidize your learning. Your organization may be willing to pay for part or all of your instructional coursework or for certifications. Ask your manager for information about scholarships and other educational opportunities.
- Honor your desire to learn. Take advantage of adult educational opportunities in your community. Discipline yourself to sign up for at least one new academic or adult learning course each year.
- Time disappears and your attention intensifies when you are immersed in studying or learning. Allow yourself to “follow the trail” by scheduling learning sessions during periods of time that will not be interrupted by pressing engagements.

#### Questions

1. Which of these action items speak to you? Highlight the actions that you are most likely to take.
2. How will you commit to taking action? Write your own personalized action item that you will take in the next 30 days.



## Achiever

### Ideas for Action:

- Select jobs that allow you to have the leeway to work as hard as you want and in which you are encouraged to measure your own productivity. You will feel challenged and alive in these environments.
- As an achiever, you relish the feeling of being busy, yet you also need to know when you are “done.” Attach timelines and measurement to goals so that effort leads to defined progress and tangible outcomes.
- Remember to build celebration and recognition into your life. Achievers tend to move on to the next challenge without acknowledging their successes. Counter this impulse by creating regular opportunities to enjoy your progress and accomplishments.
- Your drive for action might cause you to find meetings a bit boring. If that’s the case, appeal to your Achiever talents by learning the objectives of each meeting ahead of time and by taking notes about progress toward those objectives during the meeting. You can help ensure that meetings are productive and efficient.
- Continue your education by attaining certifications in your area or specialty in addition to attending conferences and other programs. This will give you even more goals to achieve and will push your existing boundaries of accomplishment.
- You do not require much motivation from others. Take advantage of your self-motivation by setting challenging goals. Set a more demanding goal every time you finish a project.
- Partner with other hard workers. Share your goals with them so they can help you to get more done.
- Count personal achievements in your scoring “system.” This will help you direct your Achiever talents toward family and friends as well as toward work.
- More work excites you. The prospect of what lies ahead is infinitely more motivating than what has been completed. Launch initiatives and new projects. Your seemingly endless reserve of energy will create enthusiasm and momentum.
- Make sure that in your eagerness to do more at work, you do not skimp on quality. Create measurable outcome standards to guarantee that increased productivity is matched by enhanced quality.

### Questions

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## Self-Assurance

### Ideas for Action:

- Look for start-up situations for which no rulebook exists. You will be at your best when you are asked to make many decisions.
- Seek roles in which you convince people to see your point of view. Your Self-Assurance talents (especially when combined with Command or Activator talents) can be extremely persuasive. Leadership, sales, legal, or entrepreneurial roles might suit you.
- Let your self-confidence show. It can be contagious and will help the people around you grow.
- Realize that sometimes you will find it hard to put your certainty or intuition into words, possibly leading others to see you as self-righteous. Explain that your confidence does not mean that they should withhold their opinions. It might not seem like it to them, but you do want to hear their ideas. Your conviction doesn't mean that you are unwilling to listen to them.
- Your independent streak can leave you standing alone. If this happens, make sure you are out in front, or partner with someone who can help others see how they can benefit from following you.
- Partner with someone with strong Strategic, Deliberative, or Futuristic talents. This person can help you assess the goals to which you commit. You need this help because once you set your sights on a goal, you are likely to stay with it until you achieve it.
- Your exceptionally hard work and long hours are natural products of the passion and confidence you feel about your work. Don't assume that others are similarly wired.
- You can be decisive, even when things get dynamic and distracting. When there is chaos around you, intentionally display and share the calm and certainty within you. This will give others comfort and security.
- Set ambitious goals. Don't hesitate to reach for what others see as impractical and impossible, but what you see as merely bold and exciting — and most importantly — achievable with some heroics and a little luck. Your Self-Assurance talents can lead to achievements that you may not have otherwise even imagined.
- You don't have a great need for direction and support from others. This could make you particularly effective in situations that require independent thinking and action. Recognize and actively contribute the value of your Self-Assurance talents when confidence and self-control are crucial.

### Questions

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2. How will you commit to taking action? Write your own personalized action item that you will take in the next 30 days.

## Responsibility

### Ideas for Action:

- Emphasize your sense of responsibility when job hunting. During interviews, describe your desire to be held fully accountable for the success or failure of projects, your intense dislike of unfinished work, and your need to “make it right” if a commitment is not met.
- Keep volunteering for more responsibility than your experience seems to warrant. You thrive on responsibility, and you can deal with it very effectively.
- Align yourself with others who share your sense of responsibility. You will flourish when working with people who share your determination to get things done.
- Tell your manager that you work best when given the freedom to follow through on your commitments — that you don’t need to check in during a project, just at the end. You can be trusted to get it done.
- Push yourself to say no. Because you are instinctively responsible, it might sometimes be difficult to refuse opportunities. For this reason, you must be selective. Ask for more responsibility in only the areas that matter most to you.
- You naturally take ownership of every project you are involved in. Make sure that your capacity to own does not keep you from sharing responsibility. Allow others the opportunity to experience the challenges of ownership. In doing so, you will contribute to their growth and development.
- Learn to manage your Responsibility talents by considering whether you really are the person who should be handling a particular issue. Defer to your existing responsibilities and goals before undertaking additional burdens, as you may end up skimping on quality if you have too many tasks or competing demands.
- Partner with someone especially talented in Discipline or Focus. This person can help you stay on track and prevent you from becoming overloaded.
- Working with a like-minded, responsible colleague is satisfying for you. Be sure to clarify expectations and boundaries so that each person can feel ownership for his or her particular tasks — without stepping on each other’s toes.
- Responsible individuals like to know they have “delivered” on their commitments, so create metrics and goals to gauge how effectively you meet your obligations. Also, make sure you have explicit and concrete expectations so that there is no question regarding quality outcomes and so that you can hit the mark as promised.

### Questions

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2. How will you commit to taking action? Write your own personalized action item that you will take in the next 30 days.

## Restorative

### Ideas for Action:

- Seek roles in which you are paid to solve problems or in which your success depends on your ability to restore and resolve. You might particularly enjoy roles in medicine, consulting, computer programming, or customer service.
- Don't be afraid to let others know that you enjoy fixing problems. It comes naturally to you, but many people shy away from problems. You can help.
- Give yourself a break. Your Restorative talents might lead you to be overly self-critical. Try to redirect this either toward things about yourself that can be fixed, such as knowledge or skill deficits, or toward external, tangible problems.
- Let other people solve their own problems. You might want to rush in and solve things for them, but by doing that, you might hinder their learning. Watch out for this, particularly if you are in a manager, coach, teacher, or parent role.
- Turnaround situations activate your natural forté. Use your Restorative talents to devise a plan of attack to revitalize a flagging project, organization, business, or team.
- Leverage your Restorative talents not only to tackle existing problems, but also to anticipate and prevent problems before they occur. Share your foresight and your solutions with others, and you will prove yourself a valuable partner.
- Study your chosen subject closely to become adept at identifying what causes certain problems to recur. This sort of expertise will lead you to the solution that much faster.
- Think about ways you can improve your skills and knowledge. Identify any gaps you have and the courses you can take to fill them.
- Constant improvement is one of your hallmarks. Seek opportunities to enhance your abilities through a demanding field, activity, or endeavor that requires exceptional skill and/or knowledge.
- Use your Restorative talents to think of ways to "problem proof" your work. Identify existing and potential issues, and design systems or processes to prevent errors in the future.

### Questions

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### Section III: Achievement

Look for signs of achievement as you read these real quotes from people who share your top five themes.

Learner sounds like this:

Annie M., managing editor: “I get antsy when I am not learning something. Last year, although I was enjoying my work, I didn’t feel as though I was learning enough. So I took up tap dancing. It sounds strange, doesn’t it? I know I am never going to perform or anything, but I enjoy focusing on the technical skill of tapping, getting a little better each week, and moving up from the beginners’ class to the intermediate class. That was a kick.”

Miles A., operations manager: “When I was seven years old, my teachers would tell my parents, ‘Miles isn’t the most intelligent boy in the school, but he’s a sponge for learning, and he’ll probably go really far because he will push himself and continually be grasping new things.’ Right now, I am just starting a course in business-travel Spanish. I know it is probably too ambitious to think I could learn conversational Spanish and become totally proficient in that language, but I at least want to be able to travel there and know the language.”

Tim S., coach for executives: “One of my clients is so inquisitive that it drives him crazy because he can’t do everything he wants to. I’m different. I am not curious in that broad sense. I prefer to go into greater depth with things so that I can become competent in them and then use them at work. For example, recently one of my clients wanted me to travel with him to Nice, France, for a business engagement. So I started reading up on the region, buying books, and checking the Internet. It was all interesting and I enjoyed the study, but I wouldn’t have done any of it if I wasn’t going to be traveling there for work.”

### Achiever sounds like this:

Melanie K., ER nurse: "I have to rack up points every day to feel successful. Today I've been here only half an hour, but I've probably racked up thirty points already. I ordered equipment for the ER, I had equipment repaired, I had a meeting with my charge nurse, and I brainstormed with my secretary about improving our computerized logbook. So on my list of ninety things, I have thirty done already. I'm feeling pretty good about myself right now."

Ted S., salesperson: "Last year I was salesperson of the year out of my company's three hundred salespeople. It felt good for a day, but sure enough, later that week, it was as if it never happened. I was back at zero again. Sometimes I wish I wasn't an achiever because it can lead me away from a balanced life and toward obsession. I used to think I could change myself, but now I know I am just wired this way. This theme is truly a double-edged sword. It helps me achieve my goals, but on the other hand, I wish I could just turn it off and on at will. But, hey, I can't. I can manage it and avoid work obsession by focusing on achieving in all parts of my life, not just work."

Sara L., writer: "This theme is a weird one. First, it's good because you live in pursuit of the perpetual challenge. But in the second place, you never feel as though you've reached your goal. It can keep you running uphill at seventy miles an hour for your whole life. You never rest because there's always more to do. But, on balance, I think I would rather have it than not. I call it my 'divine restlessness,' and if it makes me feel as if I owe the present everything I have, then so be it. I can live with that."

### Self-Assurance sounds like this:

James K., salesman: “I never second-guess myself. Whether I am buying a birthday present or a house, when I make my decision, it feels to me as if I had no choice. There was only one decision to make, and I made it. It’s easy for me to sleep at night. My gut is final, loud, and very persuasive.”

Pam D., public service executive: “I was raised on a remote farm in Idaho, and I attended a small rural school. One day, I returned home from school and announced to my mother that I was changing schools. Earlier in the day, my teacher had explained that our school had too many kids and that three kids would have to move to a different school. I thought about it for a moment, liked the idea of meeting new people, and decided I would be one of them — even though it meant getting up half an hour earlier and traveling farther on the bus. I was five years old.”

Deborah C., ER nurse: “If we have a death in the ER, people call on me to deal with the family because of my confidence. Just yesterday, we had a problem with a young psychotic girl who was screaming that the devil was inside her. The other nurses were afraid, but I knew what to do. I went in and said, ‘Kate, come on, lie back. Let’s say the Baruch. It’s a Jewish prayer. It goes like this: Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam.’ She responded, ‘Say it slowly so that I can say it back to you.’ I did, and then she said it back to me slowly. She wasn’t Jewish, but this calm came over her. She dropped back against her pillow and said, ‘Thank you. That’s all I needed.’”

## Responsibility sounds like this:

Nigel T., sales executive: “I used to think that there was a piece of metal in my hand and a magnet on the ceiling. I would just volunteer for everything. I have had to learn how to manage that because not only would I end up with too much on my plate, but I would also wind up thinking that everything was my fault. I realize now that I can’t be responsible for everything in the world — that’s God’s job.”

Kelly G., operations manager: “The country manager in Sweden called me in November and said, ‘Kelly, could you please not ship my inventory until January 1.’ I said, ‘Sure. Sounds like a good plan.’ I told my people about the plan and thought I had all the bases covered. On December 31, however, when I was checking my messages while on a ski slope, making sure everything was hunky-dory, I saw that his order had already been shipped and invoiced. I had to call immediately and tell him what happened. He’s a nice man, so he didn’t use any four-letter words, but he was very angry and very disappointed. I felt terrible. An apology wasn’t enough. I needed to fix it. I called our controller from the chalet, and that afternoon we figured out a way to put the value of his inventory back on our books and clean it off his. It took most of the weekend, but it was the right thing to do.”

Harry B., outplacement consultant: “I was just a young bank manager in one of the branches when the president of the company decided that he wanted to foreclose on a property. I said, ‘That’s fine, but we have a responsibility to give the people full value for their property.’ He didn’t see it that way. He wanted to sell the property to a friend of his for what was owed, and he said my problem was that I couldn’t separate my business ethics from my personal ethics. I told him that was correct. I couldn’t because I didn’t believe — and still don’t believe — that you can have two standards. So I quit the firm and went back to earning five dollars an hour working for the forestry service picking up trash. Since my wife and I were trying to support our two kids and make ends meet, it was a hard decision for me to make. But looking back, on one level, it really wasn’t hard at all. I simply couldn’t function in an organization with those kinds of ethics.”



## Restorative sounds like this:

Nigel L., software designer: “I have these vivid memories of my childhood woodworking bench with hammers and nails and wood. I used to love fixing things and putting things together and making everything just so. And now with computer programs, it’s the same thing. You write the program, and if it doesn’t work, you have to go back and redo it and fix it until it works.”

Jan K., internist: “This theme plays in my life in so many ways. For example, my first love was surgery. I love trauma, love being in the OR, love sewing. I just love fixing things in the OR. Then again, some of my best moments have been sitting at the bedside of a dying patient, just talking together. It is incredibly rewarding to watch someone make the transition from anger to acceptance about grief, to tie up loose ends with family members, and to pass with dignity. And then with my kids, this theme fires every day. When I see my three-year-old buttoning her sweater for the first time and she buttons it crooked, I feel this powerful urge to walk up and rebutton the sweater. I have to resist, of course, because she has to learn, but, boy, it’s really hard.”

Marie T., television producer: “Producing a morning TV program is a fundamentally clumsy process. If I didn’t like solving problems, this job would drive me up the wall. Every day, something serious goes wrong, and I have to find the problem, fix it, and move on to the next one. If I can do that well, I feel rejuvenated. On the other hand, if I go home and a problem remains unsolved, then I feel the opposite. I feel defeated.”

## Questions

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1. Talk to friends or coworkers to hear how they have used their talents to achieve.
2. How will you use your talents to achieve?