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Finding the Will and the Ways:

How Using Character Strengths Can Make Adolescents More Hopeful

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Abstract

Previous studies demonstrated that using signature strengths in new ways can increase life-satisfaction in adults (Rust, Diessner, & Reade, 2009; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). The present study aimed to replicate this finding with adolescents and consider hope as the mechanism for this change. Additionally, a third condition was added alongside the original intervention and control conditions, in which students participated in weekly discussion groups about the intervention. A data analysis error resulted in participants practicing the character strengths on which they scored lowest, rather than their signature strengths. There were no significant changes in life-satisfaction, however participants in the intervention-only and discussion-group conditions were significantly more hopeful at the end of the intervention. Although the proposed mediational model could not be tested, the present study discusses the possible role of hope as a life-satisfaction building mechanism and considers the implication of these findings regarding practicing a lesser strength.

Finding the Will and the Ways:

How Using Character Strengths Can Make Adolescents More Hopeful

In the last decade, the blossoming field of positive psychology has heralded the study of well-being and strengths as an integral part of the study of human experience. Rather than working from a deficit model, the field has called for investigation of what makes people flourish. One vein of positive psychology that has received substantial attention is the study of subjective well-being (SWB), a construct that captures what most people call happiness. While laypeople see the face value of happiness, research demonstrates that happiness does more than make us feel good; it is also correlated with an array of other positive factors. On average, happy people do better than unhappy people across the domains of love, work, and health (Lyubomirsky, King, & Diener, 2005) and longitudinal studies suggest happiness may even be a correlate of longevity (Ardelt, 2000; Danner, Snowdon, & Friesen, 2001). For the purposes of this discussion, subjective well-being (SWB) will be used synonymously with happiness. SWB is comprised of three components: high positive affect, low negative affect, and high life-satisfaction (Diener, 2000). Life-satisfaction plays a key role as the component that remains most stable over time (Eid & Diener, 2004).

Among adolescents, high life-satisfaction correlates with physical and psychological health as well as prosocial behavior and positive outlook (see Park, 2004a for review). Young people with high life-satisfaction are more likely to exercise regularly, to set and achieve goals, to feel socially supported (Proctor, Linley & Maltby, 2008). Recently researchers have made great strides in summarizing and analyzing the literature on youth life-satisfaction, however the literature on the causes of life-satisfaction in youth, including well-being interventions, is just beginning to appear (Huebner & Diener, 2008; Proctor, Linley & Maltby, 2008).

Interventions intended to increase SWB are typically very specific in their mechanisms for doing so. Lyubomirsky (2007) laid out 12 scientifically supported activities to increase well-being as measured by the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. Each activity accommodates people with different interests and values. Such interventions were originally developed for adults, but some are now being adapted for young people. A study by Froh, Sefick, and Emmons (2008) for instance, demonstrated that an intervention shown to increase gratitude and SWB in adults similarly benefitted middle schoolers.

The majority of interventions for adolescents do not stem from the field of positive psychology; most instead were developed by the field of Positive Youth Development (PYD). The National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth defines PYD as an “approach [that] suggests that helping young people to achieve their full potential is the best way to prevent them from engaging in risky behaviors” (NCFY, 2008). Programs designed to build protective factors in the lives of at-risk youth take many forms ranging from small-scale extra-curriculars to community-wide projects that involve parents, schools, and neighborhoods. These programs, while often claiming positive goals like character building and prosocial development, are still more likely to focus in practice on preventing negative outcomes and problem behaviors (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004).

Fortunately, these two perspectives on improving the quality of life of adolescents do not need to be at odds with one another. The field of positive psychology may be able to provide additional theory and empirical evidence necessary to implement interventions that increase well-being in adolescents into the already established and respected framework of PYD. Park (2004a) argued for movement towards this collaboration, suggesting that SWB should be considered as a possible goal of youth development programs because of the well-established

correlation of SWB with positive outcomes. Larson (2000) also called for a bridging of the divide between positive psychology and PYD. Based on a review of past research on PYD he argued that nearly any extra-curricular activity can make a positive impact on students' lives and suggested that the next step, which PYD and positive psychology must take together, is to work to provide all students with positive extra-curricular activities well-suited to their strengths, values, and environment.

Whether discussing after-school programs to help adolescents thrive or interventions to foster well-being in adults, it is equally important to consider Larson's (2000) suggestion that participants are likely to benefit more from an activity that is tailored to their personality and context. A recent project by Dickerhoof (2007) demonstrated that people who participate in happiness interventions that fit with their preferences, values, and interest are more likely to be successful in increasing well-being through intervention (as cited in Lyubomirsky, 2007, p. 77). Schueller (2010) found that some individuals gravitate towards certain well-being interventions more than others, and has begun to cluster some of the well-investigated interventions together by characteristics that make them appealing and enjoyable to certain types of participant. Participants engaging in activities that aligned with their preferences according to these clusters were more likely to adhere to and enjoy their interventions (Schueller, 2010). These effects are likely to be accounted for by the same mechanism that causes people to be more successful at achieving any goal if they are aiming for something aligned with their own values and motivations (Sheldon & Houser-Marko, 2001). The intervention intended to be tested by the current study aligns with this theory, by asking participants to work on their own greatest strengths in order to increase well-being. This individually tailored technique was expected to be a more effective method for boosting well-being than interventions in which all participants

develop the same assigned strength. Adolescence should be a particularly salient time for this intervention as they are likely beginning the process of identity formation and selecting the goals and pathways that lay a foundation for their futures (Marcia, 1980).

The current study planned to test the efficacy of an intervention in which practice using one's signature strengths serves as a pathway to life-satisfaction, and aimed to investigate the mechanism that makes it work. In adult populations a similar intervention successfully increased happiness and decreased depression over the course of six months (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005), therefore it was hypothesized that adolescents would show similarly positive outcomes. The literature review that follows will summarize the current understanding of character strengths and how they are used in work with adolescents. Through a discussion of the construct of hope the present study will provide a rationale for the assertion that hope may be a mediator of the relationship between a strengths intervention and life-satisfaction.

Putting Character Strengths to Work

The notion of character strengths developed from the idea that everyone has virtues, some of which are more salient in our lives than others, and that we can draw on these strengths in times of need (McCullough & Snyder, 2000). A person may be able to, for example, utilize the strength of humor to help cope with a difficult loss, or the strength of love when in conflict with family members.

A key distinction drawn by recent research is between the study of the *virtues* and the study of *virtue*. The study of virtues (like assets) focuses on the specific things people think and do that benefit themselves and society, whereas the study of virtue (like righteousness), assesses the individual's goodness or badness on an overarching level (McCullough & Snyder, 2000). The construct of virtue encompasses what is referred to as character development, the number

two goal of PYD programs (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The current study, in contrast, calls upon what is known about developing virtues in young people. Although psychology once abandoned the study of character on the grounds that it is overly value-laden and moralistic (McCullough & Snyder, 2000), research in the last decade has brought about a renaissance of these ideas.

Virtues reemerged in psychological research with the onset of the positive psychology movement. Peterson and Seligman (2004) proposed that psychology must stop striving to prescribe the moral laws for a good life and shift focus to describing good character and why it emerges. Out of this proposal came a research program on the character strengths and virtues. A large-scale research undertaking considered countless sources from greeting cards to ancient texts to develop a list of 24 widely valued characteristics and the Values in Action Inventory of Strengths (VIA-IS), a measure that assess participants attitudes about the strengths to isolate their top five, called their “signature strengths” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). The taxonomy that was developed organized these 24 character strengths under the six core characteristics (called virtues) of wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. These characteristics are suggested to be universally valued across cultures, a claim which has been supported by cross-cultural studies of the VIA in Switzerland (Peterson, Ruch, Beermann, Park, & Seligman, 2007) and Japan (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004a). Although ten criteria were used to select the character strengths, they can most simply be thought of as the “psychological ingredients” that define virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 13). More formally, a character strength is defined as a fulfilling, morally-valued, positive trait that correlates with human flourishing (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004a).

Because the definition of character strengths implies that a strength should be related to well-being, Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004a) assessed the relationship between each of the 24 character strengths and life-satisfaction. Zest (similar to enthusiasm) and hope were the two strongest correlates of life-satisfaction in US adults and adolescents, followed closely by gratitude, love, and curiosity. Strengths that are less linked to emotion, often referred to in the literature as *head strengths*, such as appreciation of beauty, love of learning, creativity, and judgment, were weaker predictors of life-satisfaction (Park, 2004b).

Law students who were polled on how often they used their top strengths in every day life reported a significant positive correlation between frequency of use of a signature strengths and life satisfaction as measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Peterson & Peterson, 2008). These findings were purely correlational in nature and may demonstrate that people who identify enough with their signature strengths to use them spontaneously in everyday life are more likely to be satisfied with life. They may otherwise suggest that people who know what skills they possess and how to use them are better off than those who do not know how to use their strengths.

Character Strengths in Adolescents

As the field gathers data on character strengths in adults the study of strengths in children and adolescents continues to develop as well. A study by Steen, Kachoreck, and Peterson (2003) conducted focus groups with high school students to describe adolescents' understanding of character strengths. The qualitative findings suggested that adolescents could make sense of the concept of character strengths and could distinguish between different strengths. Students described their own perceptions of the importance of various strengths and individually identified with some strengths more than others. When Peterson and Seligman (2004) describe

character strengths they note that these tend to be the traits people associate with their own excitement and invigoration, so it was very important to determine whether young people could connect with these strengths.

Based on the finding that adolescents do grasp and identify with character strengths, a version of the Values in Action Survey was developed for youth (VIA-Y; Park & Peterson, 2006). A call by some school psychologists to focus on strengths-based assessment in addition to traditional measures of psychopathology and problem behavior (Jimerson, 2004) just a few years prior to the development of the VIA-Y speaks to the need for measures that extend past the deficit-based model of adolescent psychology. Studies of various populations of students from high-risk adolescents struggling with drugs (Cosden, Panteleakos, Gutierrez, Barazani, & Gottheil, 2004), to those in special needs settings with behavioral disorders (Jimerson, Sharkey, Furlong, & O'Brien, 2004) and emotional disturbance (Nickerson, Brosos, & Shapiro, 2004), suggested that strengths-based measures are just as useful for assessing students as deficit-based measures. These studies converged on the idea that pairing strengths-based measures with more traditional ones allows program designers to evaluate positive impact rather than only measuring the alleviation of problems. Despite this, the VIA and VIA-Y have not been extensively utilized as measures of positive outcomes, possibly because they are still being revised and perfected.

Currently, the VIA-Y is beginning to be applied in real-life settings. One Australian boarding school, for instance, is currently incorporating positive psychology into its curriculum in a variety of ways, including training students to practice their signature strengths (White, 2009). Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania developed positive education curricula for primary and secondary students with a variety of positive psychology interventions that include helping students to build upon their character strengths. Preliminary findings demonstrate that

these curricula improved cooperation and social skills and decreased the likelihood of conduct and psychological problems in Australian schoolchildren (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). No published empirical studies have yet tested the intervention investigated by the current study on its own.

Developmentally, the intervention intended to be tested by the current study was expected to resonate with adolescents. Erikson's theory of psychosocial development states that the main focus of adolescence is identity development (Erikson, 1950). During this time, while students struggle to discover who they are and how they fit into society, they may be particularly receptive to this intervention because it helps them identify their strengths, and also validates and nurtures those they have already identified. The developmental considerations for giving students their bottom strengths in place of their signature strengths, as occurred in the current study, are less clear. These will be considered in the discussion section of this paper.

A Well-Being Intervention

In the initial trial of Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson's intervention (2005), mildly unhappy adults completed the VIA-IS online. Participants scored lower on well-being measures than average adults and were recruited from a website of information about positive psychology research, which suggests they were at least somewhat motivated to become happier. Through entirely internet-based communication, participants received a ranking of their top five strengths as well as suggestions for new ways to use them. They were directed to use one of their signature strengths in a new way every day for one week. At the end of the week participants in the intervention group showed no significant change in happiness (as measured by the Steen Happiness Inventory, also called the Authentic Happiness Inventory) or depression (as measured by the Center for Epidemiological Studies–Depression Scale) and their scores were not

significantly different from those of control participants who were given their VIA report with no intervention task (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). At a one-month follow up however, participants in the intervention group reported significantly greater increases in happiness and decreases in depression than control participants who had not been asked to use their strengths.

Of five well-being interventions tested by Seligman and his colleagues (2005) in the study, this was the most powerful. A log-linear analysis returned effect sizes of $\lambda^2 = .42$ for change in happiness and of $\lambda^2 = .29$ for change in depression for this intervention. It must be considered that these results were achieved using very large samples of adults who were assumed, because of the population from which they were recruited, to be slightly more motivated than the average person to increase their happiness. Because they began the intervention mildly unhappy these adults may have had more potential for growth, and some of the measured effect may be a result of regression towards the mean. It should also be noted that the Steen Happiness Inventory is a measure designed to capture week-by-week differences in SWB and is likely to be sensitive to small lifestyle changes.

The most surprising aspect of these results is that participants were not asked to continue using their strengths after the end of the first week, but the effect of the intervention took a month to appear. This discontinuity led the research team to ask participants if they had continued the intervention on their own. Participants who kept using their strengths after the official end of the intervention reported continued increases in well-being (the follow-up outcomes of the participants who did not persist were not reported). This suggests that the effect of the intervention was not time-lagged, but rather that the intervention required continued use in order for participants to experience its benefits. Also, the activity must be rewarding or enjoyable enough for participants to want to continue on their own. Seligman and his colleagues suggested

the possibility that the lag in the efficacy of this intervention could be a result of the time and practice required to get good at using one's strengths, but did not account for why successfully using a strength would make a participant happier. No data was reported on the change in level or ranking of participants' character strengths at the end of the intervention, which makes it very difficult to conclude what impact the intervention had on the salience of signature strengths.

A similar and more recent study attempted to build upon the findings of Seligman and his colleagues' (2005) intervention (Rust, Diessner, & Reade, 2009). Undergraduates were assessed with the VIA-IS and randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Participants in one group were asked to select two of their character strengths and work on them for 12 weeks during a school term. Participants in a second condition were asked to select one strength from their top five and another from their bottom five to work on for the 12-week duration of the study. Rather than the vague task of "working on" a strength, students were required to write four paragraphs per week about the pair of strengths they were using: two about times in which they used or saw someone use the strength, and two about a specific plan to use the strength in the coming week. Additionally, the researcher read these paragraphs every week and provided encouraging feedback.

At the end of the 12-week study students in both conditions showed significantly greater improvements in life-satisfaction as measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale than students in a control group. Perhaps surprisingly, there were no significant differences in change in life-satisfaction between the top-strengths and top-and-bottom-strengths groups. The moderately strong effect of this strength-using intervention confirms the finding that focusing on character strengths can bolster life-satisfaction. Again, no information regarding changes in the VIA-IS

scores at time two were provided, making it difficult to discern if participants identified more with the strengths they had practiced over the course of the study.

A prior study of character strengths suggested a continuous linear relationship between the salience of strengths and life-satisfaction such that there was no measured point at which too much of a strength became a liability instead of an asset (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004a), thus indicating that bolstering a top strength or a bottom strength may potentially increase life-satisfaction. With this in mind one may hypothesize that by using a character strength every day participants could fortify their strengths, and thus increase their life satisfaction. However, it is postulated by the current study that this bolstering of strengths is not the mechanism by which this intervention is effective.

Linley, Nielsen, Gillett, and Biswas-Diener, (2010) suggest that using one's signature strengths is related to goal-striving and life-satisfaction. Using Structural Equation Modeling they demonstrated that using signature strengths provided undergraduate participants with an opportunity to make progress towards their self-defined goals which in turn lead to well-being. Perhaps the benefit of these interventions is in providing participants with experience treating their strengths as new tools to use in difficult circumstances. Similarly, by asking participants to look for exemplars of the strengths they were focusing on, as well as brainstorming ways to use those strengths in the future, Rust, Diessner, and Reade (2009) may have been highlighting strategies for problem solving and goal achievement. Armed with these new tools participants may feel more capable than they once were, and more hopeful that they can achieve goals they once did not feel they had the ability to achieve. If participants develop new tools or way to reach goals, as well as feelings of agency and efficacy, they are developing what Snyder (1991) describes as hope.

The Construct of Hope

Hope, as defined by Snyder and his colleagues (1991), is a global perception that goals can be attained. It is made up of two factors: agency and pathways, which are more commonly referred to as wills and ways. Agency is the extent to which a person feels he or she has the capacity to move towards that goal, and pathways are conceptualized as the ways in which a person can envision moving towards a goal (Snyder, Cheavens & Sympson, 1997). For example, a hopeful student has the will to achieve a goal, such as getting into college, and the ways to achieve it, like working hard in high school, volunteering, and studying to do well on entrance exams in order to present a strong application.

Hope is more than simply an optimistic outlook or even self-efficacy (Ciarrochi, Heaven & Davies, 2007; Magaletta & Oliver, 1999). The difference between hope and either of these constructs lies in its scope. While optimism is a wider belief in positive outcomes, self-efficacy is a focused belief in one's specific ability. Scheier and Carver (1998) define dispositional optimism as the belief that one will have good outcomes in life, which is a broader expectancy than hope suggests. Hope requires not just expecting good outcomes, but progressing towards achievable goals in order to attain those outcomes. Bandura's (1994) construct of self-efficacy captures one's beliefs in whether one has the *ability* to accomplish something in a specific context. The agency portion of hope goes on to capture the belief that he or she *intends* to accomplish it. As Snyder (2002) describes, "An important difference here lies with the words can and will..." (p. 58). In the context of this study, hope proves to be the most fitting construct because the intervention not only gives students the tools to accomplish their goals, but trains them to put those tools to use. Self-efficacy building focuses on giving students opportunities to be successful and demonstrating the successes of others (Bandura, 1994), whereas the aim of this

intervention is to get students actively using their strengths and applying this new technique for success in all domains of their lives.

Hopeful people, by definition, have more volition to achieve their goals as well as more ways to achieve them. They are more likely to maintain hope in stressful situations and continue to believe in their efficacy even in the face of negative feedback and adversity (Snyder et al., 2003). High hope people set higher goals than low hope people, yet both groups are equally successful in attaining their goals, thus high hope is correlated with higher achievement (Snyder et al., 2003). Although hope is highly correlated with well-being in adults (Magaletta & Oliver, 1999) and adolescents (Ciarrochi, Heaven & Davies, 2007), and unpublished studies of applied hope interventions have suggested causation, no studies have shown a causal relationship between hope and well-being.

In their discussion of hope Peterson and Seligman (2004) suggest that hope is a “velcro construct,” meaning that it tends to correlate with nearly any positive construct. As noted above, of the 24 character strengths described by Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004a), hope was one of the two best predictors of life-satisfaction. Hope as a character strength, though, is not so clearly or specifically defined as the construct of hope described by Snyder (1991). In fact, Peterson and Seligman (2004) cluster hope, optimism, and the vague construct of future mindedness (i.e., a general orientation toward the pursuit and achievement of future goals; Seligman & Peterson, 2004) all together under the heading of hope. Considering the earlier discussion of the differences between hope and optimism, it is not likely that Snyder’s construct will map perfectly onto the way hope is described as a character strength. Nevertheless, it should be noted hope as a character strength is briefly defined as “expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 30), which is nearly identical to Snyder’s

in that it captures both pathways and agency. The Hope Scale was used as one of the validation measures for the VIA, suggesting that Peterson and Seligman (2004) consider their definition of hope to be comparable to Snyder's definition.

As the literature on character strengths developed, a debate emerged about the implications of VIA results for various positive psychology constructs (Harvey & Pauwels, 2004; Snyder, 2004). Snyder (2004) argued that hope, demonstrated by its robustness and strong correlations with positive characteristics and outcomes, is the most important strength, and is superior to the other strengths in terms of predictive utility. Park, Peterson, and Seligman (2004b) responded by highlighting the empirical evidence that shows hope to be no better a predictor of life satisfaction than other important strengths like love, zest, curiosity and gratitude. Additional regression analyses of the data from both adults and adolescents indicated that while hope is an important predictor of life-satisfaction, it is not the most important predictor.

The current study does not intend to argue that any one strength is superior to another, but rather will test whether the character strengths intervention previously shown to increase life-satisfaction in adults will do so by increasing hope in Snyder's sense. Although the intervention does not actively train students in the initial step of goal-setting, it is hypothesized that it provides alternative pathways (ways to achieve their goals) which participants are likely to feel capable of using successfully. In using these new pathways and consistently brainstorming new applications of their strengths students will be setting goals and working towards them, and thus becoming more agentic as well. In developing both pathways and agency participants will be building the skills that define Snyder's construct of hope.

Building Hope

Research on hope allowed for the formation of hope-building programs for youth and adults. The empirical literature to demonstrate the efficacy of these programs, however, is still developing. A pilot study using a hope-building intervention that stemmed largely from Snyder's Hope theory (1994) successfully increased the agentic dimension of hope, and decreased depression and anxiety in non-clinical adult participants (Cheavens, Feldman, Gum, Michael, & Snyder, 2006). Hope scores (made of combined agency and pathways) only showed a marginally significant increase as a result of the intervention ($p = .07$), however the small sample size ($N = 30$) may have hindered statistical power. The intervention consisted of eight small group therapy sessions in which participants were taught hope-building skills involved with developing agency, pathways, and goals. In the sessions participants were allowed nearly an hour to discuss in their groups how best to apply their new skills to everyday life and as homework put these skills into action.

In the professional literature, teachers and school psychologists are also provided with suggestions for increasing hope in students that include ways to build three hope-enhancing skills (Snyder et al., 2003). Children can be taught to 1) make specific positive measurable goals, 2) to break goals into sub-goals, and 3) to develop alternatives to their established pathways. Supportive adults can help enhance agency by nurturing a belief in internal rewards and by reminding students of their past successes (Miller & Nickerson, 2007; Snyder et al., 2003). Snyder (1994) suggested that building skills is also an important aspect of building hope, as people need to have the necessary skills to achieve their goals. Finally, the literature suggests that creating a "ripple of hope" and allowing students to pass their hopefulness along to one another is critical. This is best done, the authors claim, by eliminating the institutional barriers to

students' personal growth and by connecting students with similar or interdependent goals so they might support one another (Snyder et al., 2003).

McDermott and Hastings (2000) developed a hope-building program for first through sixth grade classrooms in which children read and discussed short stories with hopeful characters. The students became somewhat more hopeful by the end of eight weekly sessions. Two other published studies have demonstrated actual increases in hope in young people as a result of these suggestions (McNeal et al., 2006; Snyder et al., 1997). Neither of these evaluated programs were specifically designed to build hope, but rather each found parallels between hope-building techniques and their own programs. In the first, a team of British researchers increased hope and hardiness in a sample of high school girls via individualized life-coaching where students were taught to set goals and identify resources to achieve them (Green, Grant, & Rynsaardt, 2007).

In the second, a residential care facility for adolescents with emotional and behavioral disorders that used techniques such as social skills training, teaching positive problem solving, and immersion in an environment with consistent expectations and consequences, significantly increased hope in its residents (McNeal et al., 2006). This investigation is particularly salient to the proposed study because it targeted an ethnically diverse and low-hope group of adolescents yet still increased hope. In fact, there were no differences in effect size across different ethnic groups in this study, and hope interventions are generally thought to be more useful in low-hope participants than in their high-hope counterparts (Snyder et al., 2003).

Perhaps most successful hope-building program, Making Hope Happen, (MHH; Pedrotti, Edwards, Lopez, 2008) is an intensive five-week-long program designed for junior high school students in which they learn the basics of hope theory and set a specific goal to work on for the

course of the program. Through individual and group exercises including discussion groups and games, students learn how to set goals, develop pathways, and overcome obstacles, and are trained to use more hopeful language. The significant success of this program in 2000 led to the development of a similar program for younger children and high school students as well. As these programs were developed for master's theses, their precise results have not been published, and until recently information about them was difficult to obtain.

Considering the importance of setting clear goals and brainstorming plausible pathways to achieve these goals, the protocol of Rust, Diessner, and Reade's (2009) strengths-using intervention, in which participants were asked to make specific plans to use strengths in the upcoming week, may have been fostering hope in participants alongside fostering whatever strengths they were working on. Likewise, Linley, Nielsen, Gillett and Biswas-Diener (2010) demonstrated that after receiving reports about their strengths, without any other instruction or intervention, some students reported that they began to use their signature strengths to work towards their goals. Thus, signature strengths may seem like natural pathways towards one's goals.

The Benefit of Discussion Groups

Similar to the journaling modification to the strength-using intervention added by Rust, Diessner, and Reade (2009) the aspect of the current intervention that most differentiates it from the work of Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005), is the addition of the discussion group condition. In previous work with adolescents regarding character strengths students asked specifically for a discussion oriented approach to strengths-building and demonstrated in a focus-group setting that they were willing to discuss these topics with peers (Steen, Kachoreck, & Peterson, 2003). Students in these focus groups agreed that character strengths are formed

through life experience and that the best way to teach students values is to provide opportunities to learn them experientially. They asked for good role models in order to see virtues modeled, as well as a discussion approach to teaching rather than feeling indoctrinated with values by an authority figure (Steen, Kachoreck, & Peterson, 2003). In this vein, it is important to note that because adolescence is a period in which peer relationships are increasingly important and the need for support of peer-groups begins to surpass the need for support from adults and parents (Shaffer, 2009), these discussion groups were expected to be especially important for an adolescent population.

Students in the discussion group condition of the current study were expected to reap more benefit from the intervention than students who did not participate in the discussion groups for two reasons. First, the discussion group provided an added level of accountability for participation, which was expected to make discussion-group participants use their strengths more frequently than non-discussion-group participants. Having to report back on their progress in front of peers was expected to make students more likely to actually engage in the intervention. Second, the discussion groups were expected to make the intervention more salient, useful, and feasible for students. Students in the discussion-group condition received feedback from the facilitator and their peers on their progress in using their strengths. It was expected that coming up with a new way to use a strength every day for a month would be a challenge for some young people, and the aid of peers in brainstorming ways to use them, as well as the opportunity to mimic techniques that peers had been successful with, may have been an integral part of success with this intervention. These social aspects of the discussion groups may have been particularly relevant for adolescents because of the importance of peer acceptance and support at this age (Shaffer, 2009).

As for the utility of groups in developing hope, Snyder, Cheavens, and Sympson (1997) argue that hope-building should be studied as a group process rather than an individual process and that the kinds of goals that characterize high hope are not competitive goals, but rather are related to achieving a personal best or making a positive impact on society. Because of this claim that hope is an interpersonal process, successful hope-building interventions make use of group sessions so that hope might be passed along from person to person (Cheavens et al., 2006; Pedrotti, Edwards, Lopez, 2008). Just as McDermott and Hastings (2000) were able to transmit hope through stories, it is possible that hopefulness can be modeled and spread through discussion groups. The intervention-only condition served as a control to the discussion group conditions to test these hypothesized benefits.

Main effects of condition (discussion, intervention-only, control) on the dependent variables of life satisfaction and hope were hypothesized such that intervention participants with or without discussion groups would show significant increases in life-satisfaction and hope at post-test, but students in the control condition would not. The discussion condition was also expected to show significantly greater increases in life-satisfaction and hope than the intervention-only condition.

Two potential mediators were considered by the current study. It was hypothesized that students in the discussion condition would show greater increases in both hope and life-satisfaction than students without discussion groups even after controlling for dosage (i.e. the number of times they used a strength per week). That is, the discussion groups were expected to encourage students to use their strengths more frequently (increase dosage) and also make the intervention stronger above and beyond that effect. Finally, the current study planned to test hope

as a partial mediator of the impact of the intervention on life-satisfaction. It was hypothesized that hope would increase in participants, which would in turn increase life satisfaction.

Methods

Participants

This study included 57 middle school students (27 males and 30 females) between the ages of 11 and 14 years ($M = 12.1$ years) recruited from three school sites in an after-school enrichment program in Southern California. The discussion condition included 17 sixth, seventh, and eighth grade participants with a mean age of 12.1 years. The intervention-only condition included 13 students in seventh and eighth grades with a mean age of 13.0 years. The control group was made up of 27 sixth and seventh graders with a mean age of 11.8 years. Group sizes reflected the number of students active in the after-school program at each site, as well as the willingness of each site's coordinator to allow students to miss other planned activities in order to participate.

Three separate school sites were used in order to prevent students from talking with their peers about the intervention. All three schools were in the same district. It was predicted by a coordinator at the after school program that the type of student (in terms of SES, race, motivation to participate, and possibly other factors) who enrolls in an after-school program would be similar across schools, and would make these samples more similar than a random sampling of students from each school. Anecdotal evidence of differences between the students at the different school sites will be considered in the discussion section. Participants provided assent and their parents or guardians provided informed consent for participation in this study. In order to maintain confidentiality all students were assigned identification numbers to assure student names were not linked to their responses on any surveys.

Materials

Student Life Satisfaction Scale. Rather than testing the effect of this intervention on subjective well-being, as in the initial study (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005), the current study investigated the intervention's impact on life-satisfaction using the Student Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS; Huebner, 1991; Appendix B). While high subjective well-being encompasses life-satisfaction, high positive affect, and low negative affect (Diener, 2000), life-satisfaction is the most stable component (Eid & Diener, 2004) and thus provides the most convincing evidence of a change in well-being over time. The SLSS is a seven-item Likert-type scale for students in grades 3 to 12. It has been validated for middle school students using a multitrait-multimethod matrix approach and shown to have good convergent validity with parent ratings, and discriminant validity with the Academic Self-Concept Scale. It was also shown to have a one-factor structure and a 4-week test-retest reliability of .64, suggesting moderate temporal stability (Gilman & Huebner, 1997). Multiple assessments of the SLSS have demonstrated it to be psychometrically sound and independent of age, race, and gender (see Proctor, Linley, & Maltby, 2009 for review). The relative stability of this measure makes it unlikely that everyday changes such as a bad report card or an approaching holiday would affect the results, however the short-term intervention used in this study may also not be robust enough to move scores.

Children's Hope Scale. The trait of hope was measured with the Children's Hope Scale (CHS; Snyder et al., 1997; Appendix C), a measure designed to capture a student's perception of his or her agency and pathways to achieve goals. The six-question Likert-type scale was designed for students 8 to 14 years old, and closely resembles the adult version of the scale. It demonstrates good internal consistency, a test-retest reliability of about .72 over one month, and

satisfactory convergent and discriminant validity. Despite the trait-like nature of hope, and this high test retest reliability, interventions like those discussed above (e.g. Making Hope Happen) can change children's hope scores over time. A factor analysis of the CHS, performed with data collected from a large and racially diverse sample, demonstrated the distinct factors of pathways and agency within the scale, as well as reconfirmed the internal and external validity of the scale in participants from 10 to 19 years old (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004).

Values in Action for Youth. In order to assess character strengths, all participants completed the Values in Action for Youth (VIA-Y; Park & Peterson, 2006; Appendix A). This measure has been validated for students between 10 and 18 years old as both a paper-and-pencil and online measure with no significant differences between the two forms of measurement. It consists of 198 items measuring 24 character strengths and demonstrates good convergent and discriminant validity as well as satisfactory temporal stability (Park & Peterson, 2006). Participants are given a score for each of the 24 strengths, and typically the VIA-Y offers results in the form of a ranking of the top five character strengths of each student.

Procedure

The current study consisted of three conditions. Participants in one condition engaged in an intervention with the added support of weekly discussion groups; participants in a second condition engaged in an intervention without discussion groups, and the participants in the control condition did not do either. The treatment occurred over the course of six sessions that will be described later.

Initial measurement. At the first session students from all three schools completed the VIA-Y, SLSS, CHS, and reported very brief demographic data including age, gender, and grade level (Appendix D). One week later students were provided a listing of their top five strengths

(or *signature strengths*) in ranked order. In the event of a tie for fifth place one of the strengths was randomly selected and listed as the fifth strength. In previous research (Steen, Kachoreck, & Peterson, 2003), difficult language, like the word “humility,” distorted student understanding of the strengths, which demonstrates the need to use age appropriate and modern language when talking to young people about strengths. Although the language used in the VIA-Y accounts for this, to be prudent each character strength was presented in the strengths reports along with synonyms and a brief description of what the strength means in order to avoid any confusion associated with vocabulary (Appendix E).

The 17 students in the intervention-with-discussion-groups condition were brought together to discuss their assignment for the upcoming weeks. Because of irregular attendance the group was not broken into smaller groups for discussion. Students were directed to use one of their top five strengths every day for a month in a way they had not tried prior to the intervention. They chose which of their five strengths they wanted to use, and were allowed to use any one strength as many or as few days out of the week as they liked. Three suggestions for using each strength, adapted for adolescents from those provided by Haidt, Rashid, and Anjum (as cited in Peterson, 2006, pp. 159-162), were provided to students (Appendix E).

The discussion group’s initial session was divided into three sections. The first approximately ten minutes were reserved for discussing the results of the survey and what these strengths meant to them. The second ten minutes was a time to discuss the intervention activity as well as to clarify instructions and to talk about the provided strength-using suggestions. Finally, for ten minutes students were encouraged to engage in a dialogue about the activity and how they intend to use their strengths over the next week. So that this intervention might be replicated, the questions and structure for leading a discussion group are provided in Appendix F.

Care was taken to involve all students, however students who did not wish to share during this time had the option to pass.

Students in the intervention-only condition received the same set of paper instructions and suggestions for using a strength, as well as the same verbal instructions for the intervention activity. Students also had the opportunity to clarify and ask questions about the activity, but were not brought together to discuss the intervention in any formal way. The control group was not given the suggestions nor instructions, but instead simply received their VIA-Y results.

One-week, two-week, and three-week check-ins. One week after the first session, and once a week thereafter, students in the discussion group condition reconvened to discuss the intervention. Again, 30-minute discussion groups were made up of three ten-minute blocks. First, ten minutes were reserved for a discussion of student feelings about the activity so far. The next block was an opportunity for students to report on how they used their strengths and to share their experiences from the week. Finally, students had the opportunity to brainstorm together ways to use their strengths in the next week. Specifics of the check-in discussion groups are provided in Appendix G.

At the weekly check-ins both the discussion group participants and the intervention-only group participants were asked to complete a two-question Likert-type survey on how much they enjoyed the activity, and how many days of the previous week they used any one of their top strengths (Appendix H). The number of days each student used his or her strength was used to measure dosage for the proposed mediational model.

One-month assessment. At the end of the one-month period, students from all three conditions were again asked to complete the SLSS and CHS as well as the two-question survey they completed each week. After this final assessment full debriefing of the study was provided

in-person to all participants. Students who participated in the intervention were invited to discuss the experience of participating in the study and how it benefited or bothered them.

Results

In order to examine the validity of the CHS and VIA-Y results a Pearson's correlation was run between scores on the hope dimension of the VIA-Y and the CHS at Time 1. The relationship was found to be significant, in the unexpected direction ($r = -.601, p < .001$), and suggested that higher scores on the CHS significantly predicted lower scores on the hope dimension of the VIA-Y. Upon investigating this highly unexpected result, the researcher discovered that a data entry error had contaminated the VIA-Y scores such that students' signature strength reports actually reported the strengths on which they had scored lowest. Thus, participants in this study were not practicing their top strengths, but rather their bottom strengths. The implications of this must be considered alongside the following results and discussion. After recoding scores on the VIA-Y the relationship between VIA-Y Hope and the CHS at Time 1 was significant in the expected direction ($r = .601, p < .001$).

While the original hypotheses could not be considered because of this error, these results will consider the impact of the intervention, as it was conducted, on life-satisfaction and hope.

This was a 2 (time: pre-, post-) by 3 (condition: discussion, intervention-only, control) factorial design with two dependent variables (hope, life-satisfaction). Because of incomplete and missing data only 22 (of 27) respondents from the control group, and 12 (of 17) respondents from the discussion group were included in these analyses. All 13 of the participants in the intervention-only group provided complete data for the CHS and thus all were included in analyses. The difference in response rate between these groups was likely caused by the individual differences in leadership at each school site, as well as the attitudes of the participants

toward the after-school program. There were small age differences between the groups such that the intervention-only group was made up of only seventh and eighth graders, the control group included slightly younger students in the sixth and seventh grades, and the discussion condition included students from all three grades. The control group was predominantly female (9 males and 18 females), while the discussion (10 males and 7 females) and intervention-only (8 males and 5 females) groups contained more males than females. A one-way ANOVA suggested a marginal difference in the number of males and females between conditions ($F(2, 54) = 2.08, p = .135$). Post hoc comparisons using the Fisher LSD revealed that the intervention-only condition had a significantly larger representation of males than did the control group, but neither had a significantly different gender breakdown than the discussion condition. Although control group scores for life-satisfaction and discussion group scores for hope were slightly lower than those of the other two groups at Time 1, there were no significant differences between conditions on the SLSS ($F(2, 52) = 40.767, p = .373$) or the CHS ($F(2, 52) = 12.824, p = .647$) at Time 1 (see Tables 1 and 2 for means).

Separate one-way ANOVAs using listwise deletion were computed to compare mean scores for changes in hope and life-satisfaction independently between groups. Neither analysis was significant such that for change in hope, $F(2, 45) = 1.28, p = .287$ and for change in life satisfaction, $F(2, 44) = 1.287, p = .286$. Because the ANOVAs did not yield significant results, planned comparisons were not computed.

Mean change in hope score for the control, intervention-only, and discussion conditions were .24, .37 and .71, respectively, suggesting that on average, students in all three groups reported being more hopeful at the conclusion of the study than at the outset. Despite non-significance, the effect sizes (Cohen's d) for change in CHS for the discussion condition and

intervention-only condition were $d = .51$ and $d = .16$ respectively, suggesting a moderate effect for the discussion condition, but very little effect in the intervention-only condition. Changes in life-satisfaction score for the three groups were $-.15$, $.22$, and $.17$, respectively. Thus, life satisfaction scores for the intervention-only and discussion conditions were slightly higher at the second measurement than the first. The effect sizes for change in SLSS for the discussion condition and intervention-only condition were $d = .37$ and $d = .62$ respectively, suggesting a somewhat stronger effect for life-satisfaction in the intervention-only condition. These effect sizes suggest the small sample sizes used to calculate the previously reported ANOVAs hindered statistical power.

Additional Analysis

Paired samples t-tests were run to detect significant changes in hope or life-satisfaction over the course of the intervention. Students in the discussion condition scored significantly higher on the CHS at the end of the study than at the beginning ($t(11) = -2.938$, $p = .014$) as did students in the intervention only condition ($t(12) = -2.201$, $p = .048$). The control group did not show any significant change in hope, and no group showed a significant change in life-satisfaction. Tables 1 and 2 provide all mean scores between and within groups.

Furthermore, the two CHS factors of agency (wills) and pathways (ways) were analyzed separately (see table 2). In the discussion condition both the changes in agency ($t(11) = -2.063$, $p = .064$) and pathways ($t(11) = -3.067$, $p = .011$) were significant, with a slightly stronger effect for pathways than agency. In the intervention-only group the change in agency was marginally significant ($t(12) = -1.990$, $p = .070$) whereas the change in pathways was non-significant ($t(12) = -.928$, $p = .372$). There was no significant change for either factor in the control group.

Because there were no significant changes in life-satisfaction over time, the proposed mediational model could not be tested to consider hope as the mechanism for increases in life satisfaction. However, the significant increases in hope displayed by the intervention and discussion conditions do suggest that this intervention was useful in bolstering hope.

Finally, the effects of liking and dosage on changes in hope and life satisfaction were considered using Pearson's product-moment correlations. There was no significant relationship between liking and dosage (measured only in discussion and intervention-only participants; $r = .219$, $p = .273$), although this relationship was slightly stronger in the discussion condition ($r = .354$, $p = .214$) than in the intervention-only condition ($r = .091$, $p = .769$). Similarly, the Pearson correlations of liking and dosage with change in hope and change in life satisfaction were all non-significant. Age did not significantly correlate with any of these variables. And t-tests suggested no significant difference in liking or dosage between conditions.

Discussion

The intent of the current study was to consider possible mechanisms for the effects of the strengths-use intervention tested by Seligman and colleagues (2005) as well as replicate these findings with adolescent participants. However, because of a data-entry error that caused all score reports to provide students with their lowest ranking strengths instead of their reported signature strengths, it is impossible to confirm or disconfirm past findings. Despite the fact that the original intervention could not be tested, a great deal can be learned from the results of this project. Hope, which was expected to play a mediating role, was instead the dependent variable that produced the most interesting results.

The findings of the current study are most in line with those of the aforementioned finding of Rust, Diessner, and Reade (2009) that participants who were assigned to come up with

new ways of using a signature strength and a bottom strength showed significant improvements in life-satisfaction. A notable finding of the current study is that students in the discussion group and intervention-only group did report being significantly more hopeful at the end of the intervention than they had been at the beginning, and this effect was stronger in the discussion group than the intervention-only group. Thus, this study does suggest that hope is affected by the unconventional intervention implemented, although we cannot assume that this finding would generalize to the original intervention. While it must be noted that the present study did not find significant changes in life satisfaction, if the activity of using VIA strengths, be they signature strengths or bottom strengths, helps participants to build pathways and agency it can be postulated by the current study that hope was a mediating variable in Rust, Diessner, and Reade's (2009) finding.

As has been consistently noted throughout this paper, a data entry error resulted in the contamination of the character strengths score reports provided to the participants. Students were not given reports with their top five strengths, but rather their bottom five strengths. Positive psychologists typically disapprove of the use of the VIA to identify "weaknesses" and even avoid using deficit language to describe the strengths on which participants score lowest (Rust, Diessner, & Reade, 2009). However, because of this oversight this study was able to consider the impact of working on those positive characteristics toward which a student had the least tendency. The character strengths reported to students were skewed heavily towards strengths of temperance, which are uncommon strengths in for adults (Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2004a) and adolescents (Park & Peterson, 2006). Many students also worked on leadership, bravery, and honesty. Figure 1 shows the distribution of strengths as they were reported to participants.

Serendipitously, because of the moderate levels of hope reported by most students, no participants in the discussion group, and only two students in the intervention-only group identified hope as one of their bottom five strengths. Thus few students, if any, were practicing hope as a part of this intervention. This supports the finding that the task of practicing one's lowest character strengths, rather than practicing hope, caused increases in hopefulness.

Changes in Wills and Ways

Interestingly, when hope was broken down into its two parts the results suggested that the intervention-only group participants may have benefited differently than the discussion group participants. While discussion group participants significantly developed both their pathways and agency, the intervention-only participants increased their agency, but not pathways. This finding supports the argument that developing new and effective ways to use character strengths may be a difficult task for a middle schooler to take on alone. The added support of talking with peers and adults about ways to use strengths may make participants feel as though they have added to their repertoire of pathways.

Both groups increased in agency, which suggests that this unconventional intervention does have some impact on how students feel about what they can and will accomplish even without discussion groups. It is possible that students felt more agentic because they were told that they were good at something they had previously not believed themselves to be good at, and had a chance to build those skills in a non-threatening way. It could otherwise be postulated that a greater degree of agreement with the three agency items (i.e., "I think I am doing pretty well," "I am doing just as well as other kids my age," and "I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future") may have captured life-satisfaction to some degree.

Understanding the Missing Effect

There are many possible reasons for the lack of significant changes on the SLSS. This intervention may be encountered differently or affect growth differently for middle schoolers than for the undergraduates in Rust, Diessner, and Reade's (2009) sample. It is also possible that the duration of the intervention was inadequate. While Seligman et al. (2005) found significant increases in life-satisfaction in just one month, Rust, Diessner, and Reade (2009) utilized a 12-week design to obtain their effect. Additionally, the intervention may take longer to make an impact on young people, and it is possible that hopefulness would have in turn brought life-satisfaction in a longer-term implementation. Had the opportunity to follow up with the intervention-only and discussion group participants one month after the conclusion of the study, it is possible that we would have found that some students opted to continue practicing their strengths on their own and may have increased their SLSS scores.

More practically, it should be considered that the Student Life Satisfaction Scale used by the present study captures a different dimension of SWB than the Steen Happiness Inventory (SHI; Seligman et al., 2005; renamed the Authentic Happiness Inventory) used by Seligman and his colleagues (2005). The SHI was developed to capture week-by-week changes in SWB and is more sensitive to changes in habits and daily life than the SLSS. Although psychometric properties of the SHI are unavailable, this 24-question inventory contains many items that tap into the frequency of flow experiences, quality of social interactions, and satisfaction with daily routine activities, and has been demonstrated to be sensitive to self-reported positive and negative life events over a one-week period (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). Because the SLSS is intended to capture a more stable dimension of life-satisfaction it is less likely that a one-month intervention would be capable of making a significant impact, which should be considered in future research on youth interventions. A version of the SHI for young people, or

a measure tapping positive emotion, would have been a more comparable measure of SWB for this project. While Rust, Diessner, and Reade (2009) utilized the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, et al., 1985), which is a more stable measure of life-satisfaction (test–retest reliability ranging from 0.79 and 0.89 over time periods ranging from 2 weeks to 2 months; Pavot & Diener, 1993), the 12-week duration of their study may have made it more plausible to change scores on such a stable measure.

The moderate effect sizes for change on the SLSS suggest that this intervention may have had an effect on life-satisfaction that could not be detected because of a lack of statistical power. With a more robust sample significant treatment effects may have surfaced. A sample size of 40 students per condition was derived from a power analysis expecting an effect size of $\lambda^2 = .42$ per the effect size of the original intervention for adult participants (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005), but enrollment once on-site and subsequent attrition resulted in a smaller sample. Future research with a larger sample is needed to make any conclusive statements about the impact of either the original or modified intervention on life-satisfaction for adolescents. Currently, the lack of statistical significance suggest that the resulting change in life satisfaction can be attributed to chance, and the changes in SLSS scores detected by the effect size could be explained by other variables.

Differences between Sites

Because students were assigned to conditions by site, between-group variation may be accounted for by outside factors. The students in the control and discussion groups, for instance, were both under the direction of new site-coordinators at the time of recruitment, whereas the intervention-only group had a more experienced leader. While the sites were all within a few miles of one another the social climates and facilities available at each site were notably

different. The control group completed their measures in a quiet library at Time 1, but were seated at picnic tables outside the gymnasium at Time 2. The discussion group students met to talk in the cafeteria most weeks, although tables and chairs were organized differently every time, and some weeks the space was decorated for upcoming school events. Conversely, the students in the intervention-only group met in a quiet classroom at the same tables in the same seats for every session. Anecdotally, the students at the intervention-only site also appeared the most engaged in the activity. Often these students would arrive for their check-ins eager to discuss their progress and how they had used their strengths. Although the researcher did not facilitate or encourage these discussions, it is possible that intervention-only participants developed organic discussion groups on their own. This excitement about using strengths and desire to talk about the process suggests that discussion groups are appropriate for middle school students, and may suggest that with stable and responsive coordination the intervention paired with discussion groups could be even more successful. It is also possible that the lack of a difference in liking and using scores between the discussion and intervention-only conditions is related to this spontaneous discussion, as well as the structure of the environment at the intervention-only site.

Discussion sessions could not be recorded or analyzed qualitatively, however the anecdotal evidence collected by the researcher during data collection suggested that some students enjoyed the process of using and talking about the strengths they were assigned. Although some expressed frustration with the task of coming up with new ways to use their strengths, which may be a result of the fact that they were working on their bottom strengths many of which are very difficult to use, some seemed genuinely excited about the experience. One student in the discussion group carried his list of strengths with him all the time for the

duration of the study. Another student joined student government upon reading that leadership was one of her strengths, and at one point tried to take leadership of the discussion group to practice her strength.

The error in the calculation of strengths did bring about the interesting finding that most middle school students seemed to accept and own the strengths they were given even though these were actually the strengths on which the students scored lowest. While one would expect participants to be able to spot that something was clearly wrong with their score reports based on self-understanding, most students did not voice surprise about their reports. This may be a developmental phenomenon worth considering in future research regarding identity development in early adolescence.

Generally the older students appeared to be more engaged in the discussion groups than the younger students did, however age was not related to reported liking, number of times strengths were used, nor changes in hope or life-satisfaction scores. It seems likely that use/dosage scores were very unreliable and highly susceptible to social desirability. Almost all participants reported using their strengths multiple times per week on the report forms, however some in the discussion group admitted that they had failed to use their strengths even once over the course of any given week.

Challenges with Measurement

Working with young people brought a plethora of measurement issues that should inform future research. First, the VIA-Y proved to be too lengthy to keep the attention of most students. Some students' strengths had to be calculated using only the first 50 to 100 items because they stopped responding part way through the questionnaire or started giving suspect responses. Burnout occurred most commonly between 80 and 100 questions into the inventory and was

relatively consistent across conditions. Two students from the discussion condition, one student from the intervention condition, and three students from the somewhat larger control condition stopped responding before finishing, and about one out of every ten students who finished the inventory marked the same response for every item to at least 30 consecutive items. The extent to which other responses were genuine or thoughtful cannot be determined. Some students asked their peers for input as they took the inventory and most talked to at least one other participant while completing it. Many students also struggled with the vocabulary on the VIA-Y and helped one another define words like “enthusiasm” and “conflict.” This too was consistent across conditions.

The problems with the inventory were exacerbated by the limited English language skills of some participants. A member of the after-school program’s staff assisted one participant in the discussion group in reading the questions. This language barrier proved to be beneficial to the entire discussion group later in the intervention when other students stimulated discussions while trying to define the meanings of some strengths to the participants who struggled with English. The difficulties with the VIA-Y faced during this project suggest the need for continued development of the VIA-Y and research on its applicability with at-risk and lower achieving adolescents. Some language may be too difficult to understand for many California middle schoolers, and a Spanish language version of the scale would be valuable. Furthermore, a shorter version of the inventory might be useful to improve participant cooperation and morale, and make responses more accurate and valid.

Findings from the VIA-Y

Because of the large amount of problem data, VIA-Y results were used primarily to provide score reports to the participants. The only analysis conducted with VIA-Y scores

compared CHS scores with scores on the hope dimension of the VIA-Y. As previously noted, there was a robustly significant positive correlation between the variables, which speaks to some level of external validity on these scales even given this somewhat questionable data.

Although there was a good deal of missing and suspect data, the results of the VIA-Y were relatively well aligned with past findings such that temperance strengths were on average the least frequently reported, and both humor and creativity were relatively common strengths in this sample (Park & Peterson, 2006). Contrary to past findings, teamwork and other strengths of humanity were surprisingly underreported, but were more common among students in the control condition than the other conditions. Overall, the percentage of students who reported each strength was largely consistent across the conditions.

Transcendence strengths were by far the most common strengths across the conditions. Spirituality was an unexpectedly common signature strength, and four students responded that every statement on the spirituality subscale was “very much like” them. This finding would be interesting to investigate in terms of the cultural role of spirituality. Although all 24 of the character strengths are valued cross-culturally, it is understood that different cultures place a higher value on some strengths than others. The socio-demographic characteristics of Southern California may explain this trend, although demographic information was not collected in this study. Figure 2 shows the frequency with which each strength was reported as a signature strength when results were compiled across conditions.

Conclusion

The present study was unable to replicate Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson’s (2005) finding that asking participants to use their strengths in a new way every day brings about increased well-being over the course of a month. Although participants were mistakenly

provided with and asked to practice their bottom strengths, those in the intervention-only and discussion groups did report significant increases in hopefulness, which suggests that hope may be the underlying mechanism for past successes with a similar intervention. The finding that practicing one's bottom strengths for a month bolstered hope may be a more intriguing finding than had the intervention been conducted correctly. Likewise, it speaks to the ability of this intervention to foster agency and pathways especially when paired with facilitated discussion sessions, even if immediate effects on life-satisfaction are not seen.

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Table 1. Descriptives for life-satisfaction by condition.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	t	p
Discussion						-1.208	.250
Time 1	12	3.893	.986	1.032	1.056		
Time 2	12	4.060	.941	-.171	.058		
Intervention-only						1.177	.253
Time 1	13	3.901	1.112	-.982	1.033		
Time 2	13	4.121	1.089	-.637	.192		
Control							
Time 1	21	4.259	.740	-.797	2.313		
Time 2	21	4.109	.824	-.526	.491		
Valid N (listwise)	47						

Table 2. Descriptives for hope, wills, and ways by condition.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	t	p
Discussion						-2.938	.014**
Time 1	12	3.111	1.045	-.301	-.553		
wills		3.194	1.266	.257	.524	-2.063	.064*
ways		3.028	.989	-.005	-1.080	-3.067	.011**
Time 2	12	3.819	.903	-.534	-.884		
wills		3.917	1.267	-.376	1.244		
ways		3.722	.983	-.632	.703		
Intervention-only						-2.201	.048**
Time 1	13	3.625	.606	-.223	-.443		
wills		3.539	1.004	-.253	-.761	-1.990	.070*
ways		3.692	.552	1.027	1.444	-.928	.372
Time 2	13	3.987	.789	.257	-.084		
wills		4.051	.911	-.421	-.761		
ways		3.923	.852	.374	.711		
Control						-1.096	.286
Time 1	21	3.516	.858	.581	1.848		
wills		3.651	.792	.413	1.000	-.607	.550
ways		3.381	1.050	.581	.589	-1.388	.180
Time 2	21	3.754	.843	1.017	1.111		
wills		3.794	.986	.666	-.239		
ways		3.714	.877	.743	.558		
Valid N (listwise)	47						

Figure 1. Aggregated strengths reported to participants and practiced by the treatment groups
(n = 260).

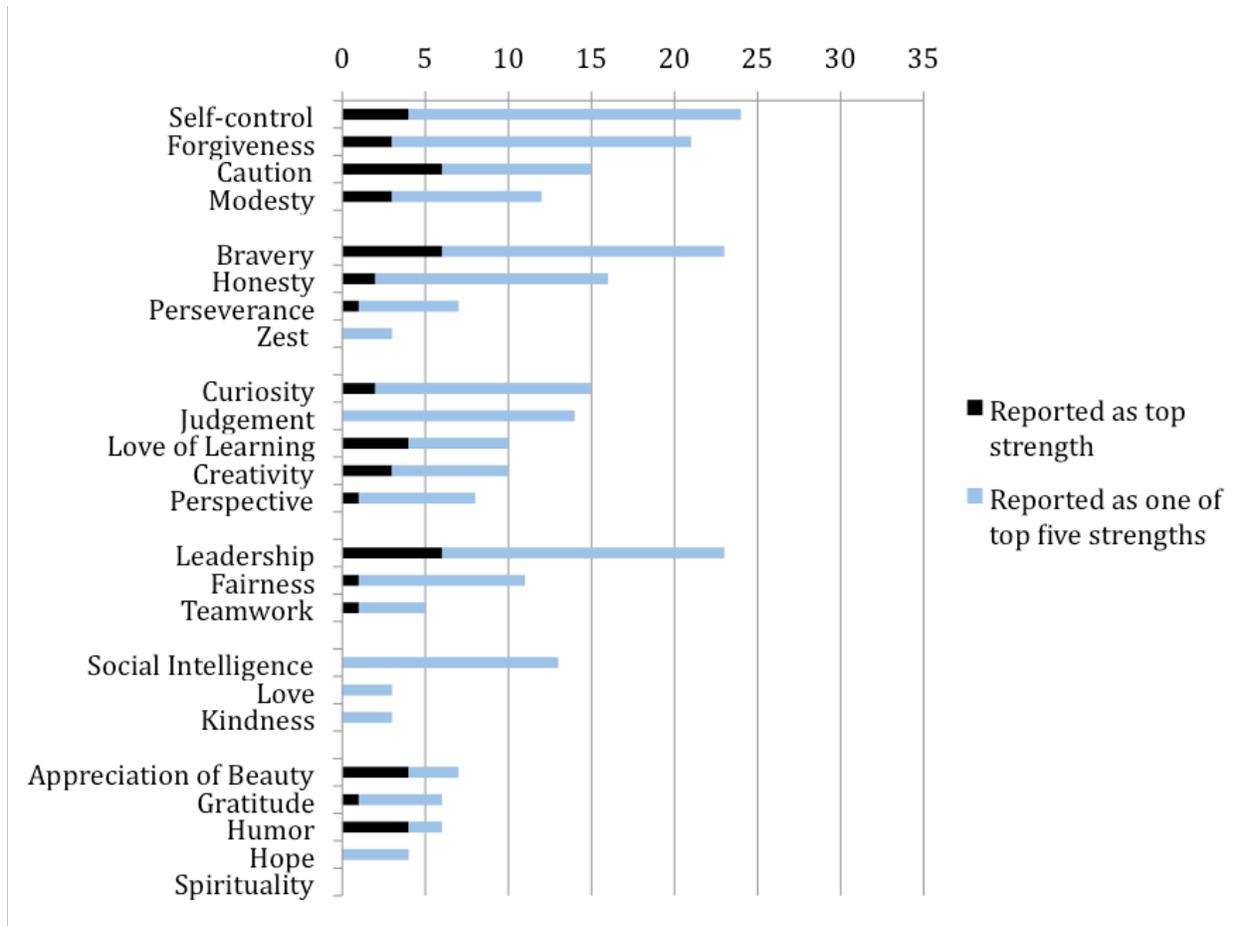
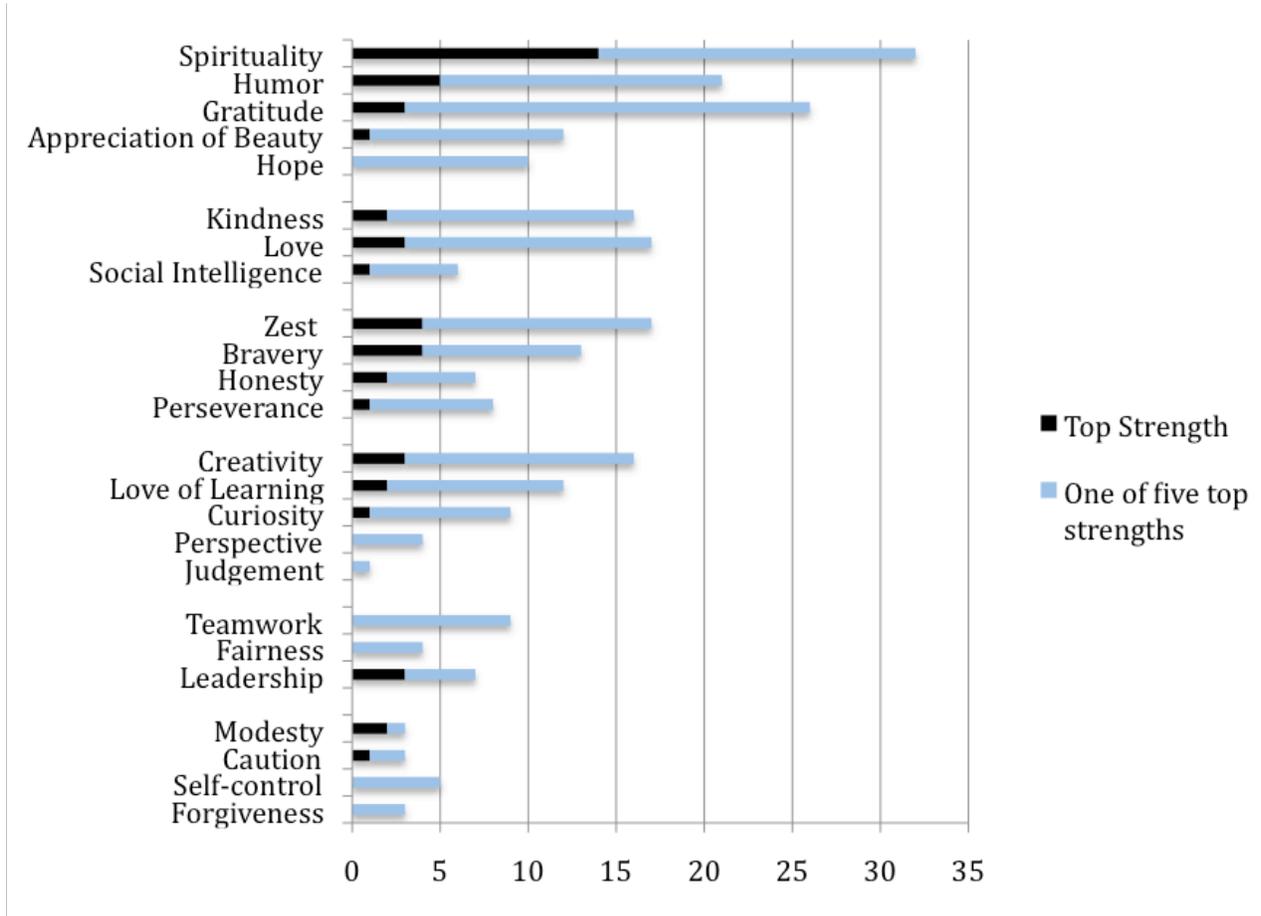


Figure 2. Aggregated true top and top five strengths for participants in all conditions. (n = 260).



Appendix A

Values In Action Inventory of Strengths for Youth

Directions: Please choose one option in response to each statement. All of the questions reflect statements that many people would find desirable, but we want you to answer only in terms of whether the statement describes what you are like. Please be honest and accurate! We cannot rank your strengths until you answer all of the 198 questions.

1. I love art, music, dance, or theater.
2. I stick up for other kids who are being treated unfairly.
3. I like to think of different ways to solve problems.
4. I don't have many questions about things.
5. In a group, I give easier tasks to the people I like.
6. I can still be friends with people who were mean to me, if they apologize.
7. I complain more often than I feel grateful about my life.
8. I always keep my word.
9. No matter what I do, things will not work out for me.
10. People often tell me that I act too seriously.
11. I keep at my homework until I am done with it.
12. I make good judgments even in difficult situations.
13. When my friends are upset, I listen to them and comfort them.
14. When people in my group do not agree, I can't get them to work together.
15. I always feel that I am loved.
16. I am excited when I learn something new.

17. I think that I am always right.
18. I am very careful at whatever I do.
19. If I have money, I usually spend it all at once without planning.
20. In most social situations, I talk and behave the right way.
21. I often feel that someone "up there" in heaven watches over me.
22. If my team does not choose my idea, I don't want to work with the team.
23. I usually know what really matters.
24. I am very enthusiastic.
25. When I see beautiful scenery, I stop and enjoy it for a while.
26. I don't stand up for myself or others.
27. It is difficult for me to come up with new ideas.
28. I am interested in all kinds of things.
29. Even when my team is losing, I play fair.
30. Even if someone hurts me, I forgive them if they apologize.
31. I can find many things to be thankful for in my life.
32. I lie to get myself out of trouble.
33. I think good things are going to happen to me.
34. I rarely joke with others.
35. If a task is hard, I give up easily.
36. When I make a decision, I consider the good and the bad in each option.
37. When I hear about people who are sick or poor, I worry about them.
38. I'm not good at taking charge of a group.
39. I love my family members no matter what they do.

40. I learn things only when someone makes me.
41. Even when I am really good at something, I don't show off about it.
42. I often do things without thinking.
43. I get things done that need to get done, even when I don't feel like doing them.
44. I always know what to say to make people feel good.
45. I don't believe in God or a higher power.
46. I work really well with a group.
47. People often say that I give good advice.
48. I always feel tired.
49. I get bored when I look at art or watch a play.
50. I have the courage to do the right thing even when it is not popular.
51. I like to create new or different things.
52. I am curious about how things work.
53. When I work in a group, I give an equal chance to everybody.
54. I easily forgive people.
55. When someone helps me or is nice to me, I always let them know I am grateful.
56. I tell the truth, even if it gets me in trouble.
57. I give up hope when things do not go well.
58. I am good at making people laugh.
59. Whenever I do something, I put all my effort into it.
60. If I like one option, I don't think about other possibilities.
61. I am very concerned about others when they have problems.
62. I am good at organizing group activities and making them happen.

63. I don't have someone to talk when I need to.
64. When there is a chance to learn new things I actively participate.
65. If I have done something good, I tell everyone about it.
66. I avoid people or situations that might get me into trouble.
67. If I want something, I can't wait.
68. I know what to do to avoid trouble with others.
69. I believe that someone in heaven will guide me to do right thing.
70. When I work with a group, I am very cooperative.
71. I am not good at finding solutions to conflicts.
72. I am always excited about whatever I do.
73. I often notice pretty things.
74. When I see someone being mean to others, I tell them that is wrong.
75. I always have lots of creative ideas.
76. I always want to know more.
77. I do favors for the people I know, even if it is not fair to others.
78. When people say they are sorry, I give them a second chance.
79. I am a grateful person.
80. I often make excuses.
81. I believe that things will always work out no matter how difficult they seem now.
82. People say that I am not playful.
83. I keep trying even after I fail.
84. I always listen to different opinions before I make up my mind.
85. I rarely help others.

86. When there is a group project to do, other kids want me to be in charge.
87. It is difficult for me to make new friends.
88. When I am reading or learning something new, I often forget how much time passed.
89. I don't act like I am better than anybody else.
90. I often make mistakes because I am not careful.
91. Even when I get really angry, I can control myself.
92. I am good at getting along with all sorts of people.
93. When I pray, it makes me feel better.
94. If it is helpful, I am always willing to do more work for our team.
95. Before my friends make an important decision, they often ask my opinion.
96. I always feel full of energy.
97. Seeing pretty pictures or listening to beautiful music makes me feel better.
98. When I see someone being picked on, I don't do anything about it.
99. I think that I am very creative.
100. I am not curious about things.
101. Even when I don't like someone, I treat them fairly.
102. Even when someone says they are sorry, I stay mad at them.
103. I don't feel grateful that often.
104. People can always count on me to tell the truth.
105. I am very positive about the future.
106. People say that I am humorous.
107. I don't put things off for tomorrow if I can do them today.
108. I make decisions only when I have all of the facts.

109. If I am busy, I don't stop to help others who need it.
110. I am a leader that others trust and look up to.
111. Even when my family members and I fight, I still love them.
112. I get bored when I read or learn things.
113. I don't feel comfortable getting all the praise just for myself.
114. Before I do things, I always think about consequences.
115. Even when I really want to do something right now, I can wait.
116. I often make other people upset without meaning to.
117. I believe that all things happen for a reason.
118. I listen to others in our group when we make decisions.
119. People say that I am very wise.
120. I am always very active.
121. I really appreciate beautiful things.
122. I speak up for what is right, even when I am afraid.
123. I often come up with different ways of doing things.
124. I ask questions all the time.
125. Even if someone is not nice to me, I still treat them fairly.
126. Even if people have hurt me, I don't want to see them suffer.
127. When good things happen to me, I think about the people who helped me.
128. I lie to get what I want.
129. I will achieve my goals.
130. I often make jokes to get others out of a bad mood.
131. People can count on me to get things done.

132. Before I make a final decision, I think about all the possibilities.
133. I am always kind to other people.
134. When I play with other kids, they want me to be the leader.
135. It is hard for me to get close to people.
136. I love to learn new things.
137. Even if I am good at something, I give other kids a chance at it.
138. I usually don't make the same mistake two times in a row.
139. I can wait for my turn without getting frustrated.
140. I usually understand how I feel and why.
141. I have a faith.
142. If I don't agree with the group decision, I don't go along with it.
143. I often come up with solutions to problems that make everybody happy.
144. I am not often that excited about things.
145. When I see art or listen to music, I often forget how much time passed.
146. I do what is right even if others tease me for it.
147. I always like to do things in different ways.
148. I always have many questions about many things.
149. I treat everyone's opinion as equally important.
150. When someone does something mean to me, I try to get even with them.
151. I often feel grateful for my parents and family.
152. If I make a mistake, I always admit it even if it is embarrassing.
153. I am always hopeful no matter how bad things look.
154. I am good at bringing smiles to people.

155. I am a hard worker.
156. I always keep an open mind.
157. When I see people who need help, I do as much as I can.
158. When I am in charge, I am good at making my group follow what I ask them to do.
159. I share my feelings with my friends or family.
160. I love to learn how to do different things.
161. I don't brag about my accomplishments.
162. I don't do things that I might later regret.
163. Even if I want to say something, I can keep it to myself.
164. I am good at knowing what people want without asking.
165. I don't pray, even when I am by myself.
166. Even if I do not agree, I respect the opinion of others in my team.
167. I often make poor choices.
168. I think that life is exciting.
169. I don't enjoy going to see art exhibits or performances.
170. I stand up to kids who are acting mean or unfair.
171. I do not enjoy creating new things.
172. I am always curious about people, places, or things I am not familiar with.
173. If I like someone in a group, I let them get away with things.
174. I often feel lucky to have what I have in my life.
175. Once I make a commitment, I keep it.
176. I am confident that I can overcome difficulties.
177. I like to tell jokes or funny stories.

- 178. When I have responsibilities at school or home, I don't always do them.
- 179. I usually don't think about different possibilities when I make decisions.
- 180. I don't help others if they don't ask.
- 181. I am good at encouraging people in my group to complete our work.
- 182. I often tell my friends and family members that I love them.
- 183. When I want to learn something, I try to find out everything about it.
- 184. Rather than just talking about myself, I prefer to let other kids talk about themselves.
- 185. I often do things that I shouldn't be doing.
- 186. I am very patient.
- 187. I often get in arguments with others.
- 188. I feel that my life has a purpose.
- 189. I am very loyal to my group no matter what.
- 190. I am good at helping my friends make up after they have an argument.
- 191. I am always cheerful.
- 192. Even if they are my friends, I ask everybody to follow the same rules.
- 193. I am good at making a boring situation fun.
- 194. Once I make an exercise or study plan, I stick to it.
- 195. I often do nice things for others without being asked.
- 196. When I have a problem, I have someone who will be there for me.
- 197. Even when I have done something nice for others, I don't always tell people about it.
- 198. I often lose my temper.

This scale is rated: very much like you, mostly like you, somewhat like you, a little like you, or not like you.

Appendix B

Student Life Satisfaction Scale

Directions: We would like to know what thoughts about life you have had during the past couple weeks. Think about how you spend each day and night and then think about how your life has been during most of this time. Here are some questions that ask you to indicate your satisfaction with your life overall. Circle the words next to each statement that indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

It is important to know what you *really* think, so please answer the questions the way you really think, not how you should think. *This is not a test. There are no right or wrong answers.*

1. My life is going well
2. My life is just right
3. I would like to change many things in my life
4. I wish I had a different kind of life.
5. I have a good life
6. I have what I want in life.
7. My life is better than most kids.

This scale is rated: strongly agree, moderately agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, moderately disagree, strongly disagree.

Appendix C

Children's Hope Scale

Directions: The six sentences below describe how children think about themselves and how they do things in general. Read each sentence carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are in most situations. Circle the words that best describe you. For example circle "None of the time," if this describes you. Or, if you are this way "All the time," circle those words. Please answer every question circling one answer. *There are no right or wrong answers.*

1. I think I am doing pretty well.
2. I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.
3. I am doing just as well as other kids my age.
4. When I have a problem I can come up with lots of way to solve it.
5. I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.
6. Even when others want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.

This scale is rated: none of the time, a little of the time, some of the time, a lot of the time, most of the time, all the time.

Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Grade:

Male or Female (circle one)

Appendix E

Character Strengths and Synonyms as Presented to Students

Students will get a report with a list and description of only their top five strengths. Reports will be produced from this list.

Creativity, ingenuity, and originality

Thinking of new ways to do things is an important part of who you are. You are never happy with doing something the usual way if there is a better way.

- pick some object in your room and try to come up with a new (but safe!) use for it.
- make a gift for a friend: paint a picture, knit a scarf, or make a mix cd
- sign up for photography, creative writing, dance, or art class

Curiosity and interest in the world

You are curious about everything. You are always asking questions, and you find all subjects and topics interesting. You like exploration and discovery.

- take a class on something you know nothing about
- try a food you have never tried before
- be a tourist in your own town, learn about local history and resources

Judgment, critical thinking, and open-mindedness

Thinking things through and looking at them from all sides are important parts of who you are.

You do not jump to conclusions, and you depend only on solid evidence to make your decisions.

You are able to change your mind.

- in a conversation try to argue the stance opposite to what you normally would.

-think about an opinion you feel very strongly about and try to think of reasons why that might be wrong or how someone else might see it.

-talk to someone who believes something very different than you and try to understand his or her position.

Love of Learning

You love learning new things, whether in a class or on your own. You have always loved school, reading, and museums-anywhere and everywhere there is an opportunity to learn.

-read something for class that is recommended but not required or ask your teacher for a suggestion of something to read more in depth on a topic you're interested in.

-learn a new word every day (check out dictionary.com) and try to use it.

-read a nonfiction book.

Perspective (wisdom)

Although you may not think of yourself as wise, your friends think you are. They value your ideas on things and turn to you for advice. You have a way of looking at the world that makes sense to others and to yourself.

-think of the wisest person you know and try to live a day like you are him or her.

-if someone asks you for advice think very hard and give the best advice you can

-learn conflict management tricks and try to help friends or family resolve a disagreement

Bravery

You are a courageous person who does not shrink from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain. You speak up for what is right even if there is opposition. You act on your beliefs.

-speak up for an unpopular idea

-if you see something unfair, try to figure out who would be the right person to talk to about making it right and talk to that person.

-do something that scares you a little bit

Perseverance, industry, and diligence

You work hard to finish what you start. No matter the project, you get it done. You do not get distracted when you work, and finishing things makes you feel good.

-make a list of things you'd like to do, and try to do one of those things every day

-finish a big project for school before it's due

-work on your homework for a long time without getting distracted by things like tv or playing on the internet

Honesty, authenticity, and genuineness

You are an honest person, not only by telling the truth but by living your life in a genuine and authentic way. You are down to earth and real.

-go a whole day without telling any white lies (even fake compliments)

-make list of things that you really believe/value and pick one a day to use as your "motto to live by"

-when someone asks you why you did something answer them in the most genuine way you can

Zest, enthusiasm, and energy

No matter what you do, you do it with excitement and energy. You never do anything halfway or halfheartedly. For you, life is an adventure.

-go to bed one night early enough that you can wake up the next morning without an alarm and start the day with a smile

-try to say “why not?” three times more than you say “why?”

-do one thing every day because you want to, not because you need to.

Capacity to love and be loved

You value relationships with others, especially relationships where you and the other person both share with and care about each other. The people you feel closest are the same people who feel closest to you.

-accept a compliment without squirming or stuttering, just say “thank you”

-write a note to someone you care about just to let them know that, and hide it somewhere he or she will find it during the day

-do something with your best friend that he or she really likes doing

Kindness and generosity

You are kind and generous to others, and you are never too busy to do a favor. You enjoy doing good deeds for others, even if you do not know them well.

-visit someone in a hospital or nursing home

-when you're walking or biking, wait for a car to go first when you're crossing the road

-secretly do something nice for someone you know.

Social intelligence

You are good at telling how other people are feeling and why they are acting the way they are.

You know what to do to fit in to different social situations, and you know what to do to make people feel better.

-help make someone feel better who is upset or sad

-notice when friends or family do something that is hard for them and compliment them on it

-when someone does something that really annoys you, try to think about why they did it instead of getting mad or trying to get them back.

Teamwork, loyalty, and citizenship

You work well in groups. You are a loyal and dedicated teammate, you always do your share, and you work hard for the success of your group.

-think about a team you are on or group you are in and spend a day trying to be the best member of that team you can be.

-pick up trash when you see it on the ground around school and put it in the garbage can

-find a place to volunteer in your community

Fairness, equity, and justice

Treating all people fairly is important to you. You do not let your personal feelings change your decisions about other people. You give everyone a chance.

-admit when you have made a mistake and take responsibility for it

-when someone you don't really like does something well, give them credit for it

-hear people out without interrupting them

Leadership

You are good at being a leader. You can encourage a group to get things done and to get along and you make everyone feel included. You do a good job organizing activities and making sure that they happen.

-organize an activity or get-together for your friends

-take responsibility for part of a project or a chore that no one wants to do and make sure it gets done

-go out of your way to make a new student or someone new in a club feel welcome.

Forgiveness and mercy

You forgive those who have done you wrong. You always give people a second chance. You do not try to get revenge.

- let go of a grudge you have been holding
- when you feel annoyed with someone, even if you have a good reason to, try to let it go rather than talking about that person behind his or her back
- write a letter to someone forgiving that person for something but do not send it.

Modesty and humility

You do not like to be in the spotlight and would rather let your accomplishments speak for themselves. You do not regard yourself as special, and others recognize and value your modesty.

- don't talk about yourself at all for a whole day
- wear something covering that doesn't call attention to your body
- think about something that a friend does much better than you do and compliment him or her on it.

Caution and discretion

You are a careful person, and your choices are usually safe ones. You do not say or do things that you might later regret.

- be very thoughtful of everything you say all day, remember to say please and thank you, and try not to say anything you might regret.
- when you're biking, be extra careful to wear your helmet and obey all the traffic laws
- keep a record of everything you eat for one day and try to avoid sweet treats.

Self-control and self-regulation

You really think about what you feel and what you do. You are in control of your wants and your emotions, they are not in control of you.

- plan out an exercise program and try to eat five servings of fruits and veggies
- go a whole day without gossiping or saying mean things to anyone
- when you're about to lose your temper, stop and count to ten until you calm down

Appreciation of beauty and excellence

You see beauty and excellence all around you, from nature to art to mathematics to science to everyday experience.

- visit an art gallery or museum or an art display at school
- start a "beauty journal" where you write down what the most beautiful thing you see every day
- stop to notice the beauty in nature, watch the sunset, listen to a bird singing, or smell a flower

Gratitude

You notice the good things that happen to you, and you never take them for granted. Your friends and family members know that you are a grateful person because you always take the time thank them.

- count the number of times you say "thank you" in a day and try to increase that number
- start a gratitude journal where you write down three things you are grateful for at the end of everyday
- write and send a thank you letter someone (for anything, even just for being a great friend)

Hope, optimism, and future-mindedness

You expect the best in the future, and you work to achieve it. You believe that the future is something that you can control.

- think of something in the past that didn't go right at the time, that ended up opening up a new opportunity for you.

- write down your goals for the next week, next month, and next year and make a plan for how you will achieve these goals

- notice when you are being negative/pessimistic; try to challenge those negative thoughts and replace them with optimistic ones

Humor and playfulness

You like to laugh and tease and make other people smile. You try to see the light side of all situations.

- make at least one person smile or laugh every day

- learn a magic trick and do it for your friends

- when you do something embarrassing or silly, try to laugh at yourself instead of getting upset

Spirituality, sense of purpose, and faith

You have strong beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of the universe. You know where you fit in the big picture. Your beliefs shape your actions and are a source of comfort to you.

- think about the purpose of your life, write about it if you'd like

- learn how to mediate and try it

- go to a religious service or event for a faith you don't know much about.

Appendix F

Questions Used For Discussion Groups in Session 1

- 1) What were your top strengths? Do you think they sound about right? Did anything surprise you? Are there any strengths you expected to show up that didn't? Can you give an example of how you show that strength in your everyday life?
- 3) Do you have any questions about this activity? What do you think of this activity? Do you think it is going to be easy or hard? Fun or boring?
- 4) What do you think of the suggestions we gave you for using your strengths? Are you going to use them or come up with your own?
- 5) What are some other ways you could use your strengths?
- 6) Do you think there are going to be any parts of this activity that are hard? Any problems that you can see coming?

Appendix G

Questions Used For Discussion Groups in Sessions 2-4

- 1) How did it go using your strengths this week? What strengths did you use? Did you use a new one every day or the same one? Did you *try* to use your strengths every day?
- 2) Was it easier or harder than you thought? Did you enjoy it? How did it feel?
- 3) What worked well? Did you use a strength in a way that really made something more fun? Did you try something new you'd never tried before?
- 4) What are some things that made it hard? Was it hard to come up with new ways to use strengths every day? Did you forget?
- 5) What are you going to do the same, or differently next week? How are you going to try to use your strengths?
- 6) Is there anything anyone shared that you think you could use? Do you have any suggestions for the group of things that worked well for you?

Appendix H

Weekly Check-In Survey

1) How many days this week did you try to use one of your strengths?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2) How much do you like/dislike using your strengths in new ways?

really like kind of like don't like or dislike kind of dislike really dislike