

8 STRENGTHS OF CHARACTER: Assets Needed for a Flourishing Life

1. Lifelong learner and critical thinker

- Strives to acquire the knowledge that characterizes an educated person
- Approaches learning as a lifelong process
- Demonstrates skills of critical analysis
- Takes seriously the perspectives of others
- Seeks expert opinion and credible evidence
- Makes connections and integrates knowledge
- Generates alternative solutions
- Demonstrates willingness to admit error and modify thinking.

2. Diligent and capable performer

- Strives for excellence; gives best effort
- Demonstrates initiative and self-discipline
- Knows standards of quality and creates high-quality products; takes pride in work
- Sets personal goals and assesses progress
- Perseveres in the face of difficulty.

3. Socially and emotionally skilled person

- Possesses a healthy self-confidence and a positive attitude
- Demonstrates basic courtesy in social situations
- Develops positive interpersonal relationships that include sensitivity to the feelings of others and the capacity for "confrontation"
- Communicates effectively
- Works well with others
- Resolves conflicts fairly
- Demonstrates emotional intelligence, including self-knowledge and the ability to manage emotions.

4. Ethical thinker

- Possesses moral discernment, including good judgment, moral reasoning, and ethical wisdom
- Has a well-formed conscience, including a sense of obligation to do the right thing
- Has a strong moral identity defined by moral commitments
- Possesses the moral competence, or "know how," needed to translate discernment, conscience, and identity into effective moral behavior.

5. Respectful and responsible moral agent committed to consistent moral action

- Respects the rights and dignity of all persons
- Understands that respect includes the right of conscience to disagree respectfully with others' beliefs or behaviors
- Possesses a strong sense of personal efficacy and responsibility to do what's right
- Takes responsibility for mistakes
- Accepts responsibility for setting a good example and being a positive influence
- Develops and exercises capacity for moral leadership.

6. Self-disciplined person who pursues a healthy lifestyle

- Demonstrates self-control across a wide range of situations
- Pursues physical, emotional, and mental health
- Makes responsible personal choices that contribute to continuous self-development, a healthy lifestyle, and a positive future.

7. Contributing community member and democratic citizen

- Contributes to family, classroom, school, and community
- Demonstrates civic virtues and skills needed for participation in democratic processes
- Appreciates the nation's democratic heritage and democratic values
- Demonstrates awareness of interdependence and a sense of responsibility to humanity.

8. Spiritual person crafting a life of noble purpose

- Considers existential questions ("What is the meaning of life?", "What is happiness?", "What is the purpose of *my* life?")
- Seeks a life of noble purpose
- Formulates life goals and ways to pursue them
- Cultivates an appreciation of transcendent values such as truth, beauty, and goodness
- Pursues authentic happiness
- Possesses a rich inner life
- Pursues deep, meaningful connections—to others, nature, a higher power, and so on.

—from Thomas Lickona and Matthew Davidson,
Smart & Good High Schools (2005)
(www.cortland.edu/character)