



## **AW facilitator resource kit.**

### CHARACTER STRENGTHS

#### **purpose.**

Like Story, the use of Character Strengths in AW programs is both as a standalone process and as an interwoven tool underpinning program delivery. Deriving from the [VIA Institute on Character](#), AW uses Character Strengths in all of its programs to grow a common vocabulary and understanding amongst participants of their own strengths and also the strengths of others. The ability to recognise one's own strengths is attributed to wellbeing and positive character, which aligns with what AW aims to achieve through its program delivery.

#### **positive psychology.**

The VIA Character Strengths are underpinned by Positive Psychology Theory, a relatively new psychological field, founded by Dr Martin Seligman. Positive Psychology Theory is defined by the Positive Psychology Institute as *"the scientific study of human flourishing, and an applied approach to optimal functioning. It has also been defined as the study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals, communities and organisations to thrive."*

To learn more about Positive Psychology, you can watch Dr Seligman's TED Talk [here](#).

It is a fundamental aim of all AW programs to connect participants to their strengths and challenge them to discover how to use those strengths to better their respective communities. This is why Positive Psychology plays an important role in informing AW program design and delivery.

#### **positive education.**

Building on the research and work done by Seligman, the [Positive Education Schools Association](#) (PESA) was founded in Australia in 2012 with a vision for the *"science of wellbeing and Positive Psychology to be integrated throughout the education system, enabling all students, schools and communities to flourish."* AW strongly believes in the principles of Positive Education and regularly seeks opportunities to connect with PESA member schools.

#### **delivery.**

CHARACTER STRENGTHS AS A PROCESS

[LAYER 1: Introduction to Character Strengths](#)

[LAYER 2: Finding my own strengths.](#)

[LAYER 3: Navigating Transition - The Past and the Present](#)

[LAYER 4: Navigating Transition – The Future and Goal Setting](#)

[Character Strengths as a Tool](#)



## LAYER 1: Introduction to Character Strengths

(this is sometimes done during an in-school workshop before camp)

### Equipment:

- Character Strengths Cards

### Step One: Prime the group

Energise the group with a game of BANG! progressing up to compliment BANG!

### Step two: What are they and why do they matter?

- Lay out character strengths on the ground invite participants to have a look/read. *What do you think these are?*

### Clarify:

*Character Strengths are the core personality traits that define us. These 24 strengths are within us all but depending on who we are as a person and what we value these strengths show up differently in all of us. Some of these strengths would come naturally to you and these would most likely be your signature strengths, your top 5 or so that make you, you.*

*When we bring awareness to these strengths, we can lead a life where we feel authentic, alive and engaged in our lives. Research shows learning about your strengths and how to express them can make you happier, less stressed, more productive and better connected to others.*

### STEP TWO: Explore

With the Character strength cards in a circle, invite students to pick one and read the description, then find a partner and share the strength in their own words. Hear your partners.

### Role models:

Invite students to sit in a circle around the character strength cards.

*I'd like you to consider a role model, someone who inspires you, who you might look up to. Someone who's strengths or traits you admire and wish to display yourself.*

*Take a moment to bring this person to mind and think about who they are as a person.*

*Now draw your attention to the character strength cards, note 3 strengths your role model holds, how do they display these and how does that impact others, such as yourself?*

*Find a new partner and share who your role model is, why they inspire you, their 3 strengths, how they display them and how that impacts others.*

### Step Three: De-brief

Once you have run the above process, the facilitator can de-brief using the questions below:

1. Why do you think understanding strengths in others is important?
2. Do you think there could be benefit learning our own strengths?



## LAYER 2: Finding my own strengths.

(this can be done alongside layer 1 depending on time and engagement of group, also sometimes done in-school before camp.)

### Equipment:

- Character Strengths Cards
- Character Strength classification sheets
- Paper and pens/pencils

### Step One: Prime the group

Display the Character Strength cards and ask students what do they remember from last time about these?

### Step Two: Awareness

Invite the group to get comfortable in their seat, gently close their eyes and bring awareness inwards, to yourself.

*What are you good at?*

*What comes naturally to you?*

*What skills do you have?*

*What makes you unique?*

*What are your hopes and dreams?*

*Gently think about a time where you were at your best, when things were going really well for you, or you were successful at something, or you overcame challenge. A time you were displaying the best version of you. Just take a moment to think about that time in your life.*

*Gently opening your eyes to join us back here.*

In a moment you're going to share this story with a partner, take turns as the partner who is sharing and the partner who is listening.

Now the partner who is listening, your role is to listen carefully and mentally note the strengths you hear described in your partner's story, using the character-strengths classification sheet. The partner sharing isn't directly stating strengths, you're just describing a time when you were at your best, what was happening for you and around you at that time.

When they have shared their story, share the strengths you noted and write them down if you wish, we will come back to these after. Then swap roles.

### Step three: Exploration

After partners have listened and shared:

*Now consider the strengths that were noted to you, do they feel like you?*

*Do they feel they come naturally?*

*When you use these strengths do you get a sense of energy or uplift?*

*Looking at the strengths what's missing, what would you add?*

*I want you to settle on 5 top strengths. Ask yourself are these strengths essential to me?*

Gather in groups of 4 and tell your groups about your strengths, what do they feel and act like? How do you use them?

### Step four: Share and debrief

Invite some or all students to share their strengths identified.

Once you have run the above process, the facilitator can de-brief using the questions below:

1. Why is it important to understand what our strengths are?
2. Having this knowledge now of your strengths, how could they support you?
3. How could you use your strengths every day?
4. How could you use your strengths to better your community?
5. How does it benefit us to have a diverse range of strengths in a group?



### LAYER 3: Navigating Transition - The Past and the Present

#### Equipment:

- Character Strengths Cards
- [The Strengths Zone handouts](#)
- Child/Adult Behaviour Model
- [Character Strength Classification handout](#)
- Paper and pencils

#### Step One: Prime the group

Energise the group with a game of compliment BANG! Or [Geared-Up](#)

#### Step Two: Remembering:

*Who remembers their identified strengths from our last session?*

*Has anyone started to notice strengths in others or other strengths showing up in themselves?*

*The more we know our strengths, our signature strengths as well as the ones we may underuse we can support ourselves to navigate life in a more meaningful and positive way.*

#### Step Three: Underusing and Overusing strengths, comparing with Child/Adult Behaviour Model

Hand out the Finding the Golden Mean sheets and read through the underuse, optimal use and overuse guidelines. Invite small groups or pairs to look over the handout and consider, how could overuse/underuse serve as a problem to ourselves/to others?

Once groups/pairs have discussed invite for some to share with the group:

- How could overuse/underuse serve as a problem to ourselves/to others?
- *Have you ever seen any of the strengths overused or underused by someone? How did that impact you or others?*

#### Step Four: Exploring and reflecting:

Divide the group into small groups.

Hand out the child/adult behaviour model and invite the groups to choose one behaviour/thought to evaluate. Have them consider and discuss the following:

*Looking at the child side, what strength is being underused or overused here to create this behaviour/thought? Would the optimal use of the strength counteract the behaviour/thought into the healthy adult side?*

*How does the underuse/overuse of a strength here impact others? Ourselves? Are there any benefits to staying here?*

Ask for some reflections from the groups.

Have students pair up and *reflect on a time where you overused/underused a strength, what impacts did that have? What could you/did you learn from this?*

#### Step Five: Gathering wisdom and navigating the in-between space

*Understanding our strengths and the strengths we may underuse, or overuse can help us to reflect, further understand ourselves and then make informed decisions about moving forward. We can use them to navigate transitioning into an adult.*

Invite students to take some paper and a character strength classification sheet, to then find a quiet spot alone bear you so they can hear you.



Read aloud:

*I'd like you to consider younger you, this could be you from the start of the year, last year or the child you once were. And I invite you to reflect on the following:*

- *How well did you function in the past as young you?*
- *What strengths supported you in the past? How so?*
- *What strengths did you overuse or underuse? How did that assist you back then? Does it still support you now?*
- *How might this inform you going forward as you begin to mature, take on more responsibility and step into adulthood?*

*Now bring your awareness to who you are today.*

*Right now, you are in the in-between phase of childhood and adulthood, we are exploring both and bringing your awareness to both so that you can support yourself and navigate yourself positively through the rest of high school and into adulthood. Now this in-between phase might feel icky, it might be frustrating, it might feel overwhelming. Or you might not feel much, maybe you're enjoying cruising along and not considering things too much. Where you lie in this in-between phase is ok.*

*If you embrace your feelings and emotions, during this time you will find it easier to move through them and continue this transition. There is no butterfly without a caterpillar or its cocoon.*

*Take a moment to journal what has been coming up for you lately in this in-between phase of your life.*

*Now thinking about your top strengths that we've been exploring, which of these do you need to support you through this transition? What other strengths may you require to move forward and come through the other side?*

*What support do you need from those around you do you need?*

*After some quiet time to reflect Invite everyone to come back into a seated circle.*

*Would anyone like to share what came up for them just now?*



## LAYER 4: Navigating Transition – The Future and Goal Setting

(To be done after delivery of [Visioning](#))

### Equipment:

- Character Strengths Cards
- Paper and pencils
- Visioning SOP

### Step One: Envisioning Future Self

The IA Visioning Process is a tool for students to envision their future self, past the in-between phase they are currently in. This can bring about a sense of hope, curiosity and possibly confidence as they imagine what could be possible.

Please follow the Visioning SOP for this step.

### Step Two: Goal Setting

*Take a moment to journal/write down this future you just saw for yourself.  
(Pause here and give students some time to journal their vision)*

*Now I'd like you to consider if this vision were a goal, what is? What is the goal you wish to achieve for your future self?*

*What can you control to bring this vision to a reality? How do you get there?*

*What strengths do you need, in order to make this future a reality? Consider your top strengths you've learnt about during our time together; will these help you achieve this vision? Or do you need to lean other strengths to support you in achieving this goal or vision for yourself?*

*Take some time now to consider those and not anything down.*

### Step Three: Affirming this Goal

*Find a partner and share your goal and how you might achieve this with them. By speaking our desires, we bring life to them, reinforcing us to take action.*

### Step Four: Debrief

In a circle together invite anyone who'd like to, to share.

- What kind of person are they working to become?
- What do they need from themselves, peers, and adults around them to get there?



## CHARACTER STRENGTHS AS A TOOL

All Into Adulthood facilitator kits have Character Strength cards in them and there are many opportunities in any AW program to use them. Below are some ideas for when and how to pull them out:

- De-briefing an activity – as a tool for familiarising participants with Character Strengths, the facilitator can use the cards as a way of de-briefing an activity. They can ask questions such as:
  - What strengths did you need to use to overcome the challenge?
  - What strengths did you see in others during this challenge?
  - Are there any strengths which would have been useful to overcome this challenge that you didn't see this time around?
- Pre-briefing an activity – it can sometimes be helpful to encourage participants to think about the strengths they might need to draw on to overcome different challenge activities.
- Honouring – on shorter programs and/or activity programs, the Character Strength cards can be a useful tool for honouring participants. The facilitator can lay them down and invite participants to take turns choosing a card that represents a strength they have seen in someone else. They can then share with the group what they saw in that person.
- Values Discussion – a facilitator might choose to use the Character Strength cards to support a conversation about the qualities/strengths the group wants to value over the course of a program.

### **resources.**

Below are some links to the resources used in AW programs and to inform program design:

1. [VIA Character Strengths](#)
2. [PERMA Model](#)
3. [PESA](#)

### **success looks like.**

- ✓ Participants demonstrate increased vocabulary and understanding of Character Strengths
- ✓ Quality of sharing about Strengths is high and insight about the Strengths of others is demonstrated
- ✓ Participants are engaged in the process or activity and show signs of fun/enjoyment
- ✓ Facilitator can reduce the use of the Cards through the program as participant awareness and vocabulary grows