

Feedback Experience Linked to VIA Survey

The [VIA Survey of Character Strengths](#) is a self-assessment that provides information to help people understand their best qualities. Twenty-four character strengths make up one's personality, but in different degrees, which gives everyone a unique character strengths profile. Each strength belongs to one of six types: Wisdom, Courage, Humanity, Justice, Temperance, and Transcendence.

My Top 5	My Bottom 5
Humor (Transcendence) - recognizing what is amusing in situations, and to offer the lighter side to others.	Social Intelligence (Humanity) - being aware of the motives and feelings of themselves and others.
Perspective (Wisdom) - seeing the bigger picture in life.	Love of Learning (Wisdom) - a passion for learning just for learning's sake.
Kindness (Humanity) - being generous with others.	Humility (Temperance) - accurately evaluating your accomplishments.
Creativity (Wisdom) - thinking of new ways to do things.	Perseverance (Courage) - being hardworking and finishing what is started.
Gratitude (Transcendence) - feeling and expressing a deep sense of thankfulness in life.	Self Regulation (Temperance) - controlling your appetites and emotions and regulating what you do.

Feedback Experience

Call me "weird," but I actually appreciate receiving feedback. While it is not always easy to accept, I have grown to understand the value of getting perspectives outside of my limited and biased one.

Our graduate school cohort completed the VIA Survey during the summer of 2020. I personally don't agree with all of the rankings of my results, wondering if my survey responses were influenced by my "pandemic state of mind." Regardless, there were opportunities for learning in spite of the circumstances.

I asked my former boss, my current boss, my brother, and a sorority sister I mentored for feedback on one Top 5 and one Bottom 5 character strength. I was most curious to gain some personal insight on how others viewed my perspective, so I asked all of them, "How does *perspective* show up in my relationship and interactions with you?" Below is a summary of their responses.

- Former Boss - You have a gift for mentoring others, encouraging growth, and helping people see the bigger picture.
- Current Boss - Perspective comes through loud and clear as you research many perspectives, but it can be difficult to see your path forward.
- Brother - You view each situation from various points of view, helping you present more helpful solutions as well as see a possible vision of the desired outcomes.
- Sorority Sister - You shared points of views with me I would not have considered on my own and challenged me to push myself further than I would go ordinarily.

For feedback on my Bottom 5 character strengths, I asked each person the same question, but gave them a different strength based on our relationship, looking for guidance on how I might grow in these areas. The feedback did not reveal as much as I would have liked.

- Former Boss: Self Regulation - Learn to say “no” to avoid over-commitment so you can get through the "stuff" of work with discipline and focus (in the face of millions of distractions).
- Current Boss: Love of Learning - I think it's very weird that Love of Learning is at the bottom for you. You clearly embrace growth, both personally and professionally. You are a learner not a knower and I am so thankful for that.
- Brother: Social Intelligence - Based on my understanding of Social Intelligence, I am a little surprised that this was in your bottom. You are very aware of the social rules of communication and you listen for understanding all the time, responding with purpose and intent.
- Sorority Sister: Social Intelligence - “I’m surprised to hear this isn’t one of your top qualities, because in my experience, it is.”

I also asked those providing feedback, “If you were to tell me the single most important thing you think I need to get better at, what would that be?” Their responses were of no surprise to me.

- Former Boss: The list of things you want to do as a professional, student, mother, and human is so long. You amaze me at the amount you pack into a day/week. I literally don't understand how you do everything you do. AND, I wonder if you would feel more focused, more in control if you were to say no more often, in order to focus on the things, people, and activities that matter the absolute most to you.
- Current Boss: Stepping into a C-suite role means that relationships will need to adjust and change, impacting friendships, and perhaps the way you process challenging issues. When your institution makes decisions that you aren't committed to, or as things happen at work that is problematic, it is key for you to have a clear safe space to process. There is never a neutral statement made as a leader and people will use your statements to suit their own purposes. I think it is key for you to find an executive coach and prioritizing that decision should be top of mind.
- Brother: You have masterfully turned your habit of procrastination into a skill. You inherited that from her. As well as you work to complete tasks in the final hours, why put that pressure and stress on yourself. I know sometimes there are no options and it is the only way, but imagine how you could take all of the amazing things you do to the next level with more prioritization and better pacing over a longer period of time.
- Sorority Sister: I hope you make time for yourself and your interests. You have so many things competing for your attention, I wonder where your own self-care lands among your priorities.

Personal Reflection

How do my strengths show up in my relationship or interactions? When I review my top 5, I noticed that I appear strong in the Transcendence (Gratitude and Humor) and Wisdom (Creativity and Perspective) types. I am actually humbled to be associated with transcendence, as I diligently work to connect people to the larger universe and find shared purpose in all we do. As my school embarks upon many changes to better define who we are as “whole child” practitioners and embrace the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work that needs to be done, I have gained a greater appreciation for systems thinking and helping others realize that we are all “actors” within our community that can either lead to success or failure.

Concerning my bottom 5, Temperance is the type that appears more than once (Humility and Self Regulation) and that gives me pause. Described as strengths that help manage habits and protect against excess, the fact that temperance is one of my weaknesses does not totally surprise me, as evidenced by my feedback. It confirms a vital area of improvement for me - creating structures to decrease becoming overwhelmed due to procrastination or over commitment (self regulation). Thinking specifically about humility, I want to better understand my role in disappointing results and be able to accurately evaluate my accomplishments. In the new year, I will begin working with an executive coach and look forward to the real time feedback I receive as I continue to grow as a learner and leader.