

## Developing Character

*"Peterson and Seligman's endeavor to focus on human strengths and virtues is one of the most*

*important initiatives in psychology of the past half century."* Howard Gardner, Hobbs Professor of Education and Cognition  
Harvard Graduate School of Education

Character strengths are the psychological ingredients for displaying human goodness and they serve as pathways for developing a life of greater virtue. While personality is the summary of our entire psychological makeup, character strengths are the positive components— what's best in you. The 24 Character Strengths identified by Peterson and Seligman are universal across all aspects of life: work, school, family, friends, and community. The character strengths fall under six broad virtues (wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence) and encompass our capacities for helping ourselves and others.

The **PERMA Model** was developed by respected positive psychologist, Martin Seligman, and was widely published in his influential 2011 book, "Flourish."

"PERMA" stands for the five essential elements that should be in place for us to experience lasting well-being. These are:

### 1. **Positive Emotion (P)**

For us to experience well-being, we need positive emotion in our lives. Any positive emotion such as peace, gratitude, satisfaction, pleasure, inspiration, hope, curiosity, or love falls into this category – and the message is that it's really important to enjoy yourself in the here and now, just as long as the other elements of PERMA are in place.

### 2. **Engagement (E)**

When we're truly engaged in a situation, task, or project, we experience a state of flow : time seems to stop, we lose our sense of self, and we concentrate intensely on the present.

This feels really good! The more we experience this type of engagement, the more likely we are to experience well-being.

### 3. **Positive Relationships (R)**

As humans, we are "social beings," and good relationships are core to our well-being. Time and again, we see that people who have meaningful, positive relationships with others are happier than those who do not. Relationships really do matter!

### 4. **Meaning (M)**

Meaning comes from serving a cause bigger than ourselves. Whether this is a specific deity or religion, or a cause that helps humanity in some way, we all need meaning in our lives to have a sense of well-being.

### 5. **Accomplishment/Achievement (A)**

Many of us strive to better ourselves in some way, whether we're seeking to master a skill, achieve a valuable goal, or win in some competitive event. As such, accomplishment is another important thing that contributes to our ability to flourish.

Resources:

Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK6K\\_N2qe9Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iK6K_N2qe9Y) & [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RI8yX\\_8LVnc&list=PLCI-Ug-AfaL1I6Cs\\_AT3EPRTlbBHRTFAK&index=10](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RI8yX_8LVnc&list=PLCI-Ug-AfaL1I6Cs_AT3EPRTlbBHRTFAK&index=10)

Audio Book: Seligman, M. E., Boggs, J., & Simon & Schuster Audio (Firm). (2011). *Flourish*. New York: Simon and Schuster Audio.

Seligman, M. E. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York: Free Press.

Peterson & Seligman M.E. (2004), *Character Strengths & Virtues*. Oxford University Press. pdf document: <http://teachingpsychology.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/character-strengths-and-virtues.pdf>

## 24 Character Strengths

1. **Grit**
2. **Hope**
3. **Self-Control**
4. **Curiosity**
5. **Social Intelligence**
6. **Gratitude**
7. **Zest**
8. **Integrity**
9. Citizenship and Teamwork
10. Love of Learning
11. Open-Mindedness
12. Love
13. Kindness
14. Creativity
15. Fairness
16. Leadership
17. Forgiveness and Mercy
18. Bravery
19. Modesty and Humility
20. Spirituality
21. Perspective
22. Humor
23. Discretion
24. Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence

Identified as significant to academic success.

Success in life.