



STRENGTHS-BASED PARENTING

*When our children use their strengths,
amazing things happen!*

Strengths are potentials for excellence that can be cultivated through awareness, accessibility and effort. Strengths are cultivated through developing an awareness that they exist, finding ways to access them, and making the effort to both expand them and utilise them every day.

Deep inside each of our children is a remarkable capacity to be excellent in something. Some people call it their 'spark'. When our children use their strengths (or fire up their spark), amazing things happen. They feel strong and resilient, and their wellbeing increases.

This suggests a few important things that we should consider. First, strengths are intrinsic, authentic, or pre-existing. They're a part of who we are and we just need to tap into them. Second, strengths allow us to perform at a high and consistent level of competence. But there's more to it than that. Third, we feel strong when we use our strengths. They help us to feel energised, positive and passionate. This means it's more than just doing something well. It's doing something that enlivens us, lifts us up, engages us and makes us feel we are being who we were born to be!

Researchers have shown that using our strengths guards against negative psychological symptoms including lowered resilience, depression, anxiety and stress. When people use their strengths they just do better. They have higher emotional and psychological wellbeing and less stress, and they are more likely to accomplish goals. They also have higher levels of happiness and less depression, even up to six months after they have been shown how to identify and use their strengths.

Performance-based strengths focus on the ability to do things like play sport or music, or to demonstrate capacity by performing. *Character strengths* include head strengths such as wisdom, creativity, curiosity, love of learning, discernment and judgment, and perspective. *Heart strengths* including courage or bravery, love, humanity, kindness, gratitude, forgiveness, compassion or appreciation of beauty. Some people have strengths aligned with being authentic, responsible, self-controlled/ disciplined, or even having transcendence. Others have strengths in working with people, such as teamwork, fairness, helping, being a change agent, and more.

ACTIVITY 1: Talk About Strengths

Talk about strengths. Show your child pictures of various pop-culture icons, cartoon characters or other famous-ish people and have them identify their strengths. Do the same with characters in books you read to (or with) them. Focus on both performance strengths and character strengths.

ACTIVITY 2: Write a List

During dinner or on one of your family nights create a list of strengths for each member of your family together. Invite them to share their own insights about themselves and one another.

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