

# The Four Most Powerful Questions Tool For Building A Meaningful Life: Young Adult Version

## Purpose

To enable you to begin thinking through how to craft an engaging or meaningful life that you will enjoy and be fulfilled by..

## Perspective

Parents, guardians, relatives and friends, often try to influence young adults to pursue what they believe is a “good life”. While well intended their advice is often based on their perspectives, interests and experiences rather than yours. This tool will help you understand your interests and discuss them with parents, guardians, teachers, friends and other folks who you respect.

There are in fact three kinds of lives we can lead. They are:

- The Pleasant Life - the pursuit of pleasant activities. Reading a good book. Enjoying a movie or play. Listening to music. Relishing a great meal and a glass of fine wine.
- The Engaged Life – where we have the opportunity to use our signature strengths [see below]
- The Meaningful Life – where we have the opportunity to use our signature strengths in service of a greater purpose.

While there is nothing wrong with the Pleasant Life it has no lasting value in terms of fostering our well-being. Further, as we habituate to pleasant activities we can seek greater and greater heights of pleasantness. This can lead to greater expense, substance abuse and thrill seeking.

For young adults the Pleasant Life is often most available. Although the sources of pleasure can be destructive, i.e. unprotected and/or promiscuous sex; drinking, binge drinking and substance abuse.

Another important perspective to maintain is that we are not trying to help you decide on your future. With life expectancy continuing to extend, today’s you can expect to have a minimum of three careers. You can also expect to have several generations of families and relationships. It’s important to keep the conversation focused on exploring what interests you now without creating the sense of a lifelong commitment.

## Signature Strengths

The VIA Strengths were developed by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania. They summarize the characteristics of psychological health [vs. psychological illness].

They were constructed through a three step process:

1. Study of cultures and traditions over last 3,000 years

2. Development and validation of survey assessments
3. Completion by more than 3mm people across the world

There are 24 Universal Strengths organized in six categories:

- Wisdom & Knowledge
- Courage
- Humanity
- Justice
- Temperance
- Transcendence

Your top five strengths are referred to as your Signature Strengths. When you use these strengths in any aspect of your life you are more likely to enter the state of “flow”. Flow is the feeling that time has stopped, what you are doing is effortless and rewarding in itself.

### **Instructions**

#### Identifying Your Signature Strengths

Begin by taking the Brief Strengths Test [if you are 17 or under you should take the VIA Strengths Survey For Children – try not be offended by the label “Children”].

1. Go to this website:  
<https://www.authentic happiness.sas.upenn.edu/user/login?destination=node/504>
2. Click on Register [on left side of page towards the bottom]
3. Set up your account
4. The system will take you to a list of available self-assessments
5. Scroll down until you see Brief Strengths Test or VIA Strengths Survey For Children
6. To the far right click on “Take Test”
7. You should complete the test in 15 minutes
8. The system will generate a personal report. It will list the 24 strengths in order of power. So the first five strengths listed are your signature strengths.
9. Review your signature strengths and their definitions. Does this make sense? Do they fit for more? Discuss these together.

#### The Four Most Powerful Questions For Building A Meaningful Life

Please complete the form on the two [2] pages following these instructions.

Across the first row you will see four areas of your life:

- Career – careers or occupations
- Family – there is no “typical” family. You should have a definition that fits you and the life you want
- Community – the group you wish to be a member of and to serve
- Health – your physical, emotional or spiritual well-being and growth

Down the first column, you will see four questions:



Helping Professionals Thrive Under Pressure

- What am I interested in now?
- What am I doing to experience more of this or learn more about it?
- How is that working?
- What is my plan to experience more of this interest and see if I want to pursue it?

Answer each of these questions with respect to each of the four areas of your life.

Then think about your answers over time. Discuss them with people you respect. Remember this is not a test – it is a guide to help you plot your course. Your answers will most likely change over and over again. That’s okay. As we live life our interests and goals change.

### **For Further Information**

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	<b>Career</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Health</b>
<p>What am I interested in now? [in each of these four life areas]</p> <p><u>Advice:</u> Remember – you are not trying to make a lifelong commitment. You just want to plot a course for the near and short-term.</p>				
<p>What am I doing to experience more of this or learn more about it?</p> <p><u>Advice:</u> Be honest. If you haven't done anything or don't even know why you are interested that's ok. That's what this process is for.</p>				



	<b>Career</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Health</b>
How is that working? [Is what I am doing getting me closer to understanding my interest?]				
What is my plan to experience more of this interest and see if I want to pursue it?  <u>Advice</u> Think broadly and creatively to find ways to explore your interests. Are there ways to learn more using your Signature Strengths?				