

## Lockdown Lounge #1 – Know Your Strengths

In the first Lockdown Lounge curated by the [Guildhall Coaching and Mentoring Faculty](#), eleven Loungers convened to discuss a range of ways to rethink, reframe and review the experience of lockdown.

[Jane](#), [Jo](#) and [Chris](#) were our conversational bartenders, on hand to skilfully blend the cocktail of opinions and stir the distinctive spirits that the Loungers brought to the room. The atmosphere was lively and respectful.

### Make yourself comfortable...

Jo was our principal mixologist for the afternoon, and her role was to guide our thinking, delving into our personal strengths, our resourcefulness and to bring out the diverse insights of the members of this first ever Lounge.

The lockdown has brought unforeseen challenges, but we can still be alive to the potential opportunities that this once-in-a lifetime (we hope) moment can offer.

Lockdown Lounge was started in order to finesse models and concepts from the world of coaching to bring about stimulating and open discussions.

We began, of course, with welcomes, introductions, and with agreements and expectations. We asked for confidentiality and unconditional positive regard.

### What's your book?

Jo started by inviting the Loungers to cast their minds back to the start of March. What was going on for us then? And what has been happening since then? What has the journey been?

And then the main topic to inspire the conversation:

***If you were to write a book about your journey over the last seven weeks, what would it be called?***

And then the Lounge was truly in session. Three breakout rooms, each with their own host, began a thought-provoking and lively exchange that wandered playfully beyond the suggested starting point.

The contents of those discussions are, of course, confidential, but one of the insights that fascinated me was those artists who have been used to working alone – either for reasons of preference or through personal circumstance.

Now the rest of the world has come to join them, and their reflections on the changes of attitudes that they'd seen were intriguing. A new type of communication was emerging – what was the future for that?

- ***Take a moment to think about your journey since lockdown***
- ***What's the title of your book?***
- ***What was the end of the last chapter? Was it a cliffhanger or a happy ending?***

We were ready for our second shake of the conversational cocktail.

Jo already had the ingredients lined up on the bar.

## **Find Your Strengths**

Jo chatted briefly about the principles of Positive Psychology.

This phrase, chosen by [Martin Seligman](#) as his theme when Chair of the American Psychological Association, takes the traditional use of psychology – to find out what's 'wrong' with people's mental health, or to find what 'needs fixing' – and turns that inside out.

How can we make life better? How can we be happier?

One of the outcomes of Seligman's work was to research into whether there was a universal concept of character strengths. Jo was determined that there should be more talking by the Loungers than delivery of content, so she went straight to pouring the next round.

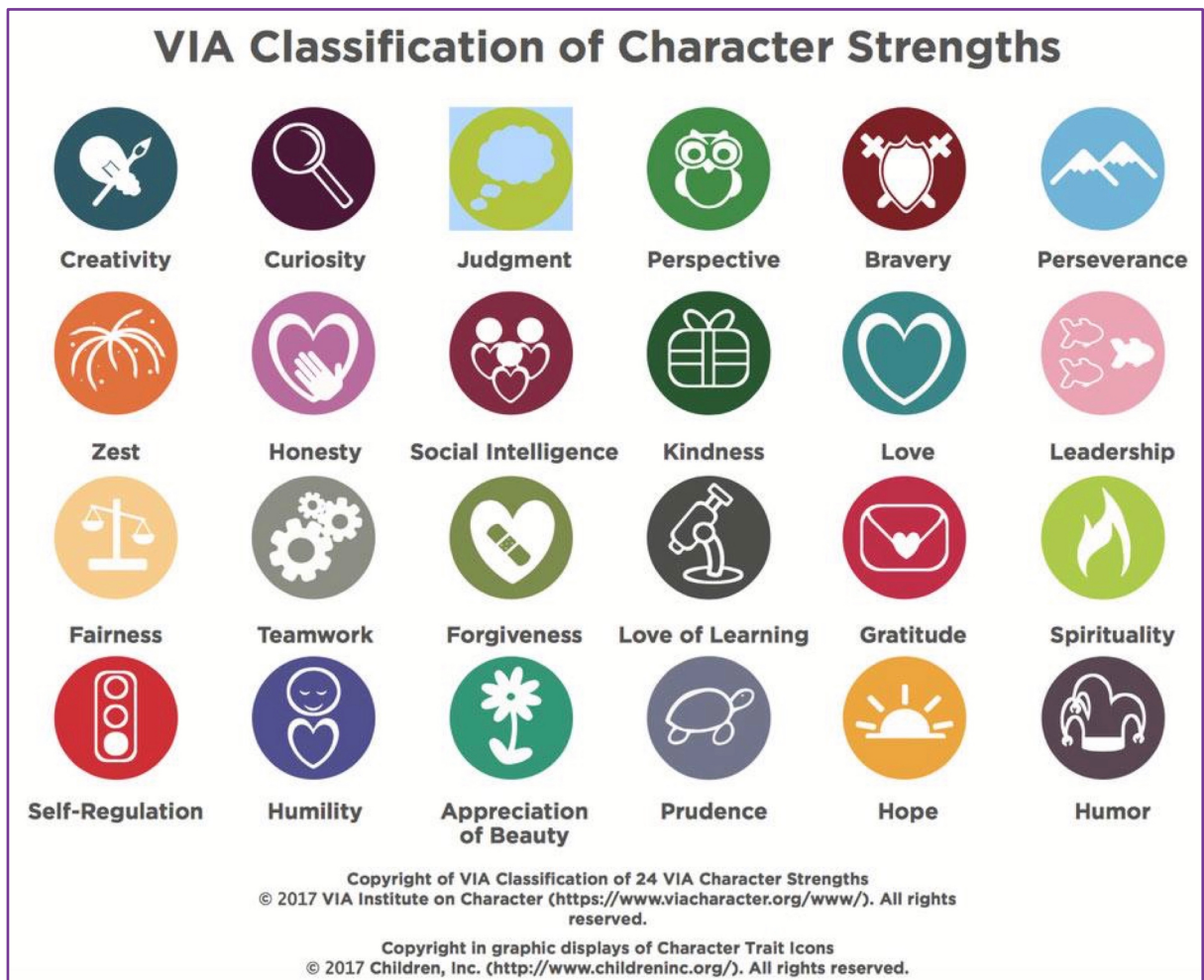
## **24 Character Strengths**

A group of positive psychologists brought together by Seligman created a world-wide survey that tried to pin down those natural faculties we use when we think, feel and behave in a way that makes us shine.

***What are we using when we are at our best?***

These positive psychologists (it makes me happier just typing that) decided on a set of 24 aptitudes that were cross-cultural, transcended barriers of age, class and gender and could be used as a defining set of character strengths.

(A free test to determine your own 5 signature strengths, and to rank these strengths in order is available at the [VIA \(Values In Action\) website](https://www.viacharacter.org/)).



Jo invited everyone to briefly consider what they thought might be their top 5 character strengths.

(As an aside, before the meeting I first guessed what my top 5 would be, then took the test... I was right on 4 of them!)

- **What would you expect to be your top five character strengths?**
- **Are they the ones you would want?**
- **What strengths do you use the most?**

## Where's your flow?

Jo gave a quick summation of the work of [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#) (who worked with Martin Seligman on the Character Strengths project), and of his concept of 'flow' (his [Ted Talk on Flow](#) is well worth a watch).

Then she encouraged us all to bring to mind a moment when we've been in flow...

- so absorbed that we don't notice time passing
- facing a meaningful challenge
- sustained and focussed effort
- the activity is rewarding in its own right
- we feel in control yet at the same time lost in ourselves
- we're fully present in the moment

***... and to consider which of our character strengths we were using at that time.***

## What's your next book?

Once more the bartender allowed the Loungers to do what came naturally in the Lounge: to talk. We went off into our breakout rooms with a set of suggested areas for discussion.

- What do you want to be happening in the next few months and which of your strengths will be helpful in that journey?
- What could be happening if you used your chosen strength, or what character strength could you use in a new and different way?
- What benefit(s) would that have?

***If the next part of your story is as good as it could be, what will the sequel to your first book be called?***

Once again, the chat wandered over a range of subjects but the room that I was in seemed most fascinated by the idea of flow. Permission to give oneself space for self-care came up.

As a final summation, before we all left the Lounge for our different worlds, Jo asked us to consider which character strength you could challenge yourself to use more in the coming weeks. Remember to make a note of successes – they're all too easily forgotten in the challenges we face.

And we all put on our metaphorical coats and scarves and left the warmth of the Lounge, knowing that it would be open every Wednesday at 4pm.

- ***What will the title of your sequel be called?***
- ***What would be helpful to you in writing the next chapter?***
- ***What strengths could you make more use of?***

Lockdown Lounge is run by the Guildhall Coaching Faculty. To book a place at the second **Lockdown Lounge** meet up on Zoom on May 20th (16:00 to 17:30 UK time), send an email to:

[coachingandmentoring@gsmd.ac.uk](mailto:coachingandmentoring@gsmd.ac.uk) headed 'Lockdown Lounge'

Please note that numbers will be limited.

**Lockdown Lounge** will be offered fortnightly. If you're not available for this session but you'd like to join in next time then please let us know. The third session will be on June 3rd.