

# Strengths-based development: Developing your best self for your purpose

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Leadership begins with  
you – and you will not  
succeed as a leader  
unless you have some  
sense of who you are

Goffee and Jones, *Why Should Anyone Be Led By You*

Learning Objectives:

Learn about the value of  
identifying your strengths  
and developing them

Understand the role of self-  
assessment and self-  
reflection in leadership  
learning

Discuss how strengths-  
based leadership can  
enable success

# Overview

- A bit about the facilitator
- Setting the stage – why are we here?
- Self-Awareness and Reflection
- Case for strengths-based development
- Strengths-based leadership
- Next steps for your leadership journey



# Who am I?

- Sara Reed
- Wife, Mom, Higher Education Administrator, Reserve officer
- 20 years studying and practicing leadership
- Passionate about growth of others
- My assumptions about leadership:
  - Leaders are everywhere, not based on position
  - Leaders are passionate about *something* – a place they want to see a change or make a difference
  - Leaders are developed individually and enjoy a journey each our own
  - Leadership learning is for a lifetime... you don't "arrive" at being a leader





# Setting the Stage Questions

- Name
- One thing someone wouldn't know about you
- Why did you choose to attend this session?
- What do you hope to learn?



## Strengths definition

*"A strength is a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance."*

**Professor Alex Linley (2008)**

Average to A+: Realising Strengths in Yourself and Others

One of the fundamental components of effective leadership is self-awareness or self-understanding



Self  
Awareness

# Building your pyramid: starting with self-awareness



- Definition: “self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, as well as one’s strengths and limitations and one’s values and motives” (Goleman et al.)
- Self-awareness is foundational to developing your leader identity
- Self-awareness leads to acknowledgement and understanding of strengths and values

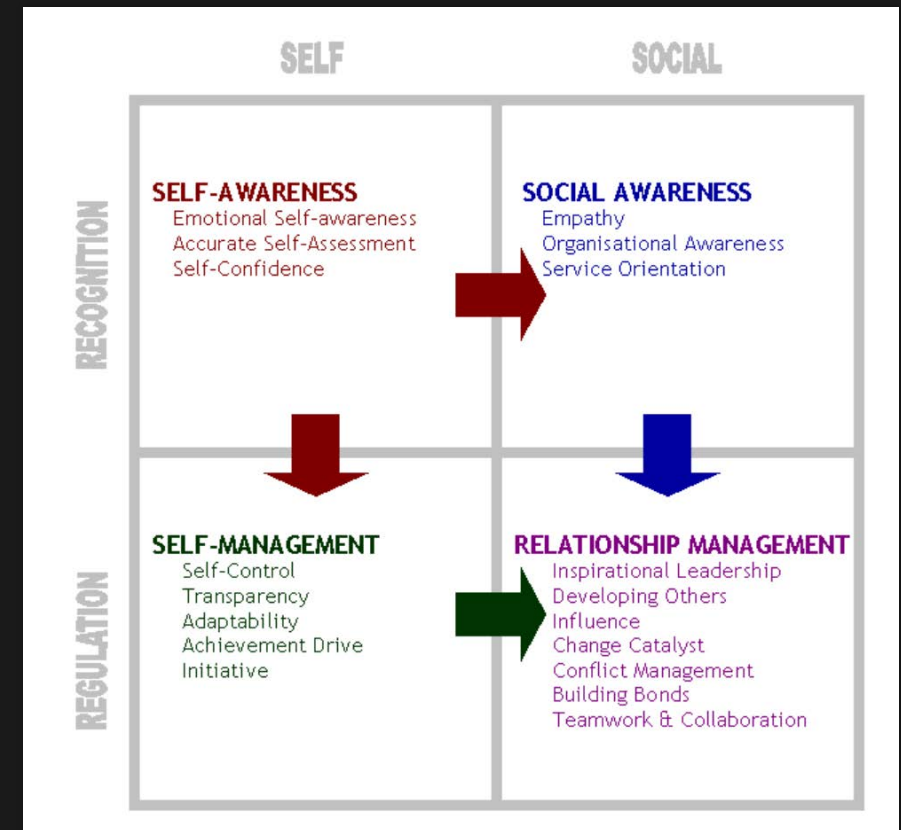
# Self-Awareness: Self-Reflection Questions

- Think about a time when you had an “ah ha” moment about yourself
- How have you changed or adapted your behavior as a result?
- If you can't think of a time when you had an “ah ha” moment, think of time you felt very accomplished or very frustrated...
  - What was the circumstance?
  - What was your role?
  - What (if anything) would you do differently? Or the same?



# Benefits of Self-Awareness & Reflection

- **Growth in Emotional Intelligence** - your ability to work well with others and build and lead teams is contingent on knowing *yourself* first
- **Development of yourself as an Authentic Leader** – knowing, reflecting, and understanding your self will help you develop as an authentic leader
- **Knowledge of your passions** – understanding your passions can help you find your purpose
- **Habit of self-reflection can build confidence in yourself**



Daniel Goleman: Four elements of emotional intelligence

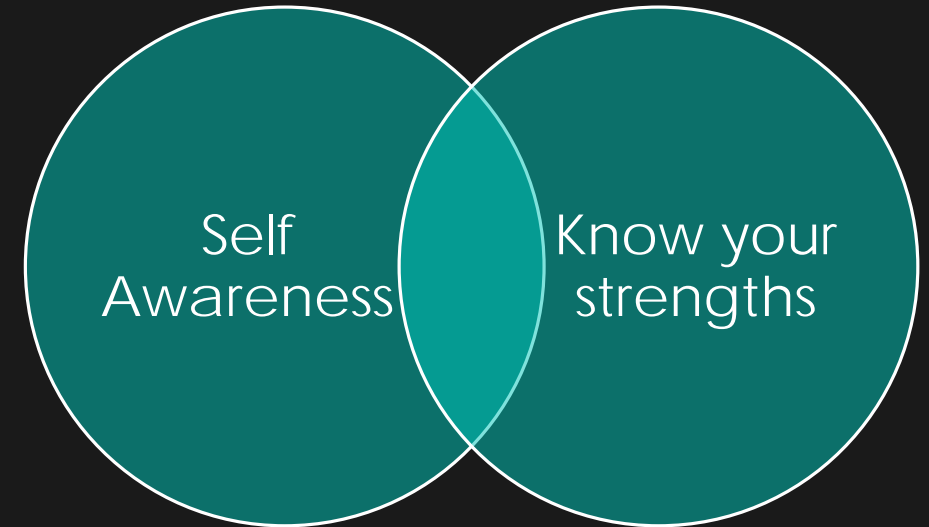
# So – how do I GAIN more self awareness?

- Consider your emotions, feelings, and reactions to situations
- Complete self assessments and consider how they may influence how you do things
- Ask others for feedback to gain a broader sense of others' perspectives of you
- Maintain a journal – take time to reflect on situations (both positive and difficult) to gain insights on your feelings and reactions

**“Be More of yourself – with skill”**

**“Attempts to imitate others, even the most successful leaders, are doomed to failure”**

*Why Should Anyone Be Led by You?*

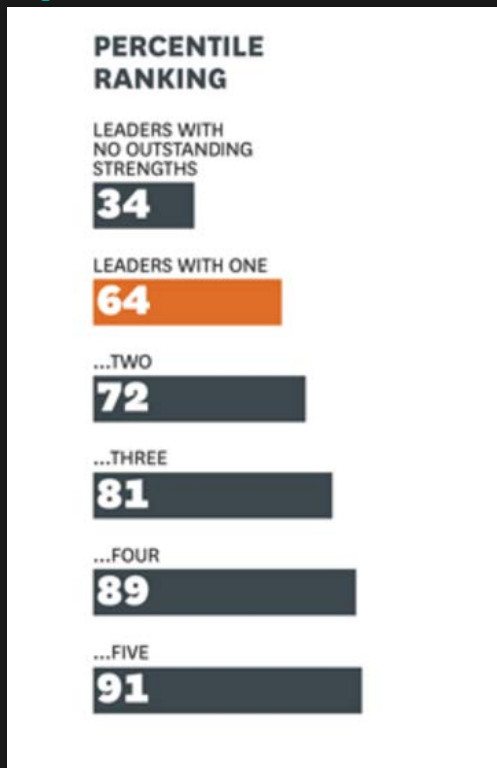


# Small Group Discussion

- Why focus on your strengths?
- What difference is there in focusing on strengths instead of weaknesses?



# A case for strengths-based development



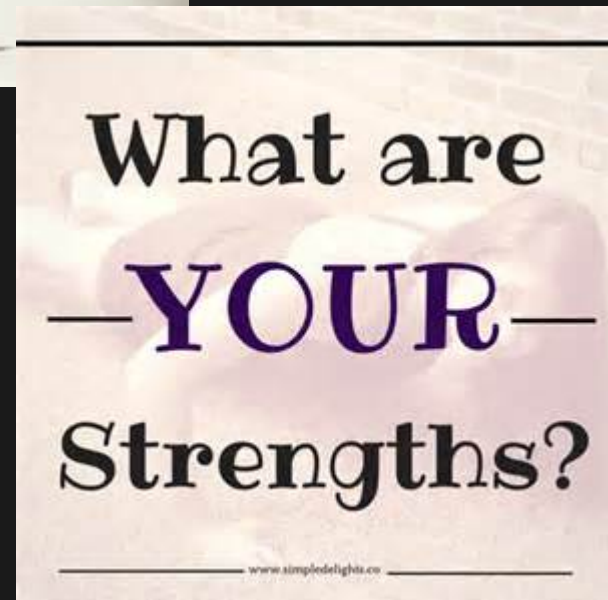
Source: Making Yourself Indispensable

- Research is showing that focusing on your strengths & the strengths of others makes everyone more happy & engaged at work
- 38% of people are more likely to be productive
- 44% more likely to earn high customer satisfaction scores



# Strengths-based focus has multiple models

- Gallup strengths (aka Strengthfinders)
- "Making Yourself Indispensable"
- *The Leadership Challenge*
- Self-monitoring identification
- Overall – there are multiple ways to learn about and to consider your strengths



# Example: Strengthfinders

- Based on research conducted by Dr. Clifton
  - Timed assessment tool that you can't "overthink" and with no "right" or "wrong" answers
  - Results in your top 5 strengths
  - Results include action plan and ways to develop your strengths
  - NOTE: There are multiple models or methods; the goal is for *you* to choose to develop yourself in a way that develops your strength
- Example: Sara's Strengths
    - **Learner**: Absorbs knowledge; enjoys the process of gaining knowledge
    - **Futuristic**: Envisions what is possible
    - **Individualization**: Help others gain knowledge and skill
    - **Activator**: Generate ideas; inspire others to initiatives
    - **Command**: prepare people to withstand adversity; help others grow stronger

# Identifying your strengths

- Identify your talents – “any recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied”
- Monitor your *spontaneous, top-of-mind reactions* to the situations you encounter
  - Examples – keen sense of observation, find humor, precision and details, take charge of a situation, include others, empathy, ability to juggle many variables within a situation
- *Yearnings* – things you crave or desire (discipline, schedule, people)
- *Rapid Learning* – learning something new very quickly
- *Satisfactions* - it feels good when you perform this action

# What focusing on your strengths isn't

- Ignoring weaknesses
  - Definition of weakness: anything that gets in the way of excellent performance
- Ways to manage your weaknesses:
  - Work to get a little better
  - Create a support system
  - Use a strength to counter a weakness
  - Work with others who are complementary to you
- **Bottomline: The intent is not to focus on your strengths and ignore your weaknesses. Instead focus on your strengths and find ways to manage your weaknesses**

# Your life: Reflection Activity

- Consider a time when you felt excited or accomplished,
  - What were the circumstances?
  - Who was involved?
  - What was your role?
  - What talent or strength of yours can you identify?



“If you focus on people’s weaknesses, they lose confidence.” At a very basic level, it is hard for us to build self-confidence when we are focused on our weaknesses instead of our strengths.”

— Tom Rath, *Strengths-Based Leadership*



# Small group discussion: Strengths-Based Leadership

- Why would a leader want to focus on the strengths of others?
- How do you think a strengths-based approach to teams might affect team dynamic?
- What organizational impacts do you think focusing on strengths instead of weaknesses?

# Why focus on the strengths of others?

- Brings optimism to a team or workplace
- Creates an environment of helping each other reach potential
- Builds confidence in individuals and in teams
- Raises engagement in the work or team
- Creates a happier work environment
- Increased productivity



Focus on  
**Strengths**

# Next Steps...using our session

- Consider completing the Strengthfinders 2.0 or Strengths-based leadership assessment, utilize tools to develop your leadership development plan
- Conduct the “**Reflected Best Self**” exercise
- Read a book or article or watch a TED/YouTube
- Utilize your **development plan** to find opportunities to hone and to develop your skills (Sample attached as Page 4 of your handout)
- Create a **leadership reflections journal** – what do you see in others that you like? Why? What situations do you feel were wonderful? Why? Where have you been frustrated by someone else’s leadership – why? How would you have handled a situation?

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A leader needs to know his or her strengths as a carpenter knows his tools, or as a physician knows the instruments at her disposal. What great leaders have in common is that each truly knows his or her strengths – and can call on the right strength at the right time. This explains why there is no definitive list of characteristics that describes all leaders.

- Dr. Donald Clifton

Questions?



# Additional Resources

- Marcus Buckingham: Case for Strengths <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n9eWIKBkyM>
- Marcus Buckingham: How to build on your strengths: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJ5t8g3MCyk>
- Buckingham & Clifton. *Now, Discover Your Strengths* (Book)
- Goffee & Jones (2015). *Why Should Anyone Be Led by You?* (Book)
- Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Rath & Conchie: *Strengths based Leadership* (Book)
- Roberts, Spreitzer, Dutton, Quinn, Heaphy & Barker. "How to Play to Your Strengths" (Article)
- Zenger, Folkman, & Edinger. "Making Yourself Indispensable" (Article)