

Playing to Your Strengths

Notes and exercises

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Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure;
Where your treasure, there your heart;
Where your heart, there your happiness.

--St. Augustine

A strength is something that makes you feel stronger.

Think spinach for Popeye.

People:

Places:

Music:

Foods:

Activities (things I like to do, things I'm good at doing):

Things that come easily for me:

Skills I've discovered or developed:

Situations that bring out the best in me:

Personality traits or qualities:

A weakness is something that makes you feel weaker.

Think Kryptonite for Superman.

People:

Places:

Music:

Foods:

Activities (things I dislike doing, or think I'm no good at doing):

Things that are always a struggle for me:

Situations that bring out the worst in me:

Personality traits or qualities:

Once you've made this list, think about whether there is a hidden strength in here somewhere or a purpose that this weakness might serve.

Goals

Cue Spice Girls: tell me what you want, what you really, really want and I'll tell you what I want, what I really, really want!

Brainstorm 10-20 goals for the coming year.

Big things, little things, serious things, silly things.

Write fast. Go!

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

13.

14.

15.

16.

17.

18.

19.

20.

Fool's Gold or the Real Deal?

Something you really should get around to one of these days is not a good goal.
Something you don't actually want to do is not a good goal.
Something other people think you should do is not a good goal.

A good goal makes your eyes light up. It makes you think, Oh YEAH, baby!
It might scare you a little- but that's OK.

Are your goals spinach or kryptonite?
Go back through your list and just notice whether the idea of this goal makes you feel stronger or weaker; expanded or contracted.

Pick a few that feel expansive and try them on with each of these phrases:

I'd like to...
I want to...
I intend to...

Which of these beginnings resonates most strongly?

Pick one goal that resonates as an intention to focus on for the rest of these exercises.

Write it here:

How will you feel when you've reached this goal?

What will be different in your life externally?

What will be different internally?

From Intention to Action

Identify 3-5 steps towards reaching this goal. Use VERBS.

| Action | Support |
|--------|---------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |

Which of the strengths you listed above could help you with each of these steps?
How could you use one or more of the resources you already have to move you forward?

What stumbling blocks can you imagine might come up as you pursue this goal?

| Obstacle | Resource |
|----------|----------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |

Which of the strengths you listed above could help you navigate around this block, or move through it with as little difficulty as possible?

Combine one goal and one of your strengths into a slogan of sorts...

Write it here:

What is the very first step you could take? (It can be a teeny, tiny one.)

When will you take it?

How will you remind yourself to take this step and hold yourself accountable?

Congratulations! You're on your way to making 2010 the year you Play to Your Strengths!

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

--Howard Thurman

Follow up exercises

Take the goals you listed in your brainstorming and make some different lists:

For instance:

Things I really want in 2010

Things I'll be happy to be done with

Things I really oughta do one of these days

Things someone else wants me to do

Things I don't really care if I ever do

You can then choose how to interact with these various lists. Maybe you toss the last one in the trash-giving yourself permission to never do these things.

For some of the other lists (things you'll be happy to be done with, for instance) you can brainstorm ways to use some of your strengths to make these as painless as possible. Or find someone to collaborate with. Someone has strengths you don't. Someone likes doing things you find tedious or overwhelming.

Maybe you put one of the "things I'll be happy to be done with" or "things I really oughta do one of these days" on your calendar for next month.

Maybe you'll ask yourself if those things that someone else wants you do to really need to be done? Do they need to be done by you?

Enjoy the freedom to think about these things!

For your REAL goals, ask the same questions. Rinse and repeat.

How will you feel when you've reached this goal?

What will be different in your life externally?

What will be different internally?

Identify 3-5 steps towards reaching this goal. Use VERBS.

What of the strengths you listed above could help you with each of these steps?

How could you use one or more of the resources you already have to move you forward?

What stumbling blocks can you imagine might come up as you pursue this goal?

What of the strengths you listed above could help you navigate around this block, or move through it with as little difficulty as possible?

What is the first step you could take?

When will you take it?

How will you remind yourself to take this step and hold yourself accountable?