



Learn and Flourish LLC

Where Happiness Meets Success®

Executive Function Coaching
Special Education Advocacy
College and Career Planning

Summary from *Unleash Your Kid's Genius Masterclass Series* with Jean Harville: Sherri Fisher, Director of Learn & Flourish, talks about parenting and strengths.

1. Tell us a bit about your story and how you came to be doing what you do now.

Teaching was supposed to be my temporary career! Early on I worked in a boarding school. There I met bright kids, some of whom had made it to high school with limited skills and who struggled to read and write. They inspired me with their resilience and creativity. There were academic solutions, but more importantly, I knew there were social-emotional strengths that led to student flourishing. Later, when there was a field that researched how people are able to thrive even though life can offer up so many challenges, I was hooked. Now I am a learning specialist who applies this Positive Psychology research in all aspects of my life and work.

2. What is Positive Psychology?

It's the scientific study of what helps people to thrive in relationships, life and work. That includes school for kids. It includes what in my books and practice I call the POS-EDGE®:

- Positivity (Happiness)
- Optimism and Resilience (Accurate Thinking)
- Strengths (Character)
- Emotional Intelligence (Self-awareness; Relationships)
- Decision-Making and Change (Self-regulation; Habits)
- Goal-setting, Grit and Growth Mindset
- Engagement and Exercise (Embodied Thriving; Mindfulness)

3. How can parents uncover their strengths so they can begin to parent from those strengths?

There is a validated strengths questionnaire, the Values in Action Survey. We call it the VIA (vee-uh). You can find and take it at www.viacharacter.org. You can take the test for free. The website has helpful pages with research study findings as well as opportunities for in-depth reports about your strengths and ways to use them in your life. That's important since a key

research study found that people who learn to use their strengths in new ways are lastingly happier. Some strengths are related to school success. And strengths are buildable with targeted practice.

Get started by registering to take the test. Then answer questions about yourself. The 24 strengths of character are in order according to how strengths “show up” in your life.

4. Can children take the VIA to find their strengths?

Yes! There are two versions: One for adults, and one for kids aged 10-17 called the VIA Youth. You will need to register for your minor child, and then they can take the VIA Youth Survey themselves.

5. How can parents use the understanding of their own strengths and the strengths of their child to better connect with them...to build their confidence & self-esteem?

One of my favorite things about strengths is that they are all potentially good things about a person. The original research that led to the 24 strengths was based on careful sifting of 3000 years of culturally valued aspects of people: Love, kindness, bravery and the like.

However, not all strengths are equally useful in the same setting. If your child struggles to love learning and persevere, they will find school challenging. If they find it easy to be brave and funny, they might find it easy to be the class clown. Either scenario can mean trouble--or can be used with other “easier” strengths for success. Learning to use strength super powers for good is valuable for both parents and kids. And remember--There are 24 of them, and they are buildable.

6. How can parents practice using the 24 different strengths to better understand themselves and their kids?

Start by being a **strengths-spotter**. Say “I love the way you _____.”

| | |
|--|----------------|
| ...stuck with things even when it was hard for you. | [perseverance] |
| ...told the truth when others wanted to keep the secret. | [honesty] |
| ...noticed I was feeling sad and gave me a hug. | [kindness] |
| ...used your imagination to figure out a solution. | [creativity] |
| ...passed to your teammate so they could score. | [teamwork] |

Helpful Links:

www.viacharacter.org

www.learnandflourish.com

[*SMART Strengths: Building Character, Resilience and Relationships in Youth*](#)

[*Unleash Your Epic Self: The Guide to Crushing it at School, Work and Life*](#)

[*Character Strengths Matter: How to Live a Full Life*](#)

