

VIA Character Strengths and Counselor Dispositions Reflection

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Character Strengths and Growth Areas

Completing the VIA Character Strengths assessment again allowed me to compare how I viewed myself at the beginning of the counseling program with how I view myself now. My newest top three strengths are kindness, curiosity, and social intelligence. My previous top three were love, curiosity, and social intelligence. Two of my strengths remained the same, while kindness moved into the top position and love moved farther down the list. I do not think this means I have become less loving. Instead, I think kindness may now better describe how I regularly show care through helping, supporting, and doing things for other people.

When I completed the assessment the first time, I was mainly reflecting on my experiences as a teacher, family member, and friend. Since then, I have completed additional counseling coursework, including Individual Counseling and Group Counseling. These courses allowed me to observe my strengths in actual counseling situations. I was not only imagining how I might respond as a counselor; I was practicing listening, leading groups, receiving feedback, and supporting classmates through emotional conversations. Because of these experiences, I now have a more realistic understanding of how my strengths may support me and how they could also create challenges.

Kindness

Kindness is now my highest-ranked character strength. Looking back, this strength has been visible throughout my personal and professional life. As a special education and general education teacher, I often became a trusted adult for students, including some who were not assigned to my classes. I wanted students to feel noticed

and supported, especially when they were struggling emotionally or academically. I also tend to show care by offering practical help. Whether I am checking in with someone, helping prepare for an event, or listening when a person needs support, kindness often comes through my actions.

My counseling classes have helped me understand kindness in a more complicated way. During Group Counseling, I realized that people sometimes try to protect one another from uncomfortable emotions. I saw how quickly group members, including myself, could apologize, reassure someone, or try to make a difficult feeling disappear. Those responses may come from kindness, but they can also interrupt the therapeutic process. Sometimes people need space to experience and name their emotions instead of being rescued from them.

Kindness can support my success as a school counselor because students need adults who are approachable, dependable, and genuinely concerned about their well-being. A student may be more willing to ask for help when they believe the counselor will respond with patience rather than judgment. Kindness can also help me collaborate with families, teachers, administrators, and community providers. Even during disagreements, I hope to communicate in a way that respects each person's dignity.

At the same time, kindness could become a hindrance if I begin to confuse helping with fixing. I tend to want people to feel better, which can lead me to move too quickly toward reassurance or solutions. It could also make it difficult to maintain boundaries if I take too much responsibility for a student's emotional state. To use this strength effectively, I will need to remember that being kind does not always mean

making discomfort go away. At times, kindness means listening, remaining present, setting a boundary, or allowing a student to work through difficult feelings.

Curiosity

Curiosity remained my second-highest strength. This has been part of my personality for most of my life. My father encouraged me to explore different interests and introduced me to activities such as boating, skateboarding, and watersports. I have continued to enjoy learning through travel, outdoor recreation, and interactions with people whose experiences differ from my own. I am naturally interested in how people think, what shapes their choices, and what may be happening beneath the surface of a problem.

My Individual Counseling course strengthened this trait by teaching me to ask open-ended questions instead of immediately giving advice. I found that I enjoyed helping clients explore their experiences and identify patterns for themselves. I also became more interested in Motivational Interviewing because it relies on thoughtful questions that help clients recognize their own reasons for change. Curiosity supports the counseling process because it allows me to approach students without assuming that I already understand their situation.

As a school counselor, curiosity could help me gather information, understand different perspectives, and explore the factors affecting a student's academic, emotional, and social functioning. Instead of labeling a student as unmotivated or difficult, curiosity encourages me to ask what may be contributing to the behavior. It can also support multicultural competence because it reminds me that my own experiences are not universal.

However, curiosity can become a hindrance if I ask too many questions or move deeper into a topic before a student is ready. Counseling is not an investigation, and students should not feel pressured to disclose more than they feel comfortable sharing. My trauma coursework has also reminded me that asking for unnecessary details can overwhelm a client. I will need to balance curiosity with patience, respect, and careful attention to verbal and nonverbal cues.

Social Intelligence

Social intelligence remained my third-highest strength. I have often been able to notice changes in people's moods, recognize tension in a room, and adjust how I communicate based on the situation. My experiences growing up in two households after my parents' divorce required me to understand different family rules, personalities, and expectations. My teaching experience also strengthened this ability because I worked with students, parents, teachers, administrators, and support staff across many different situations.

This strength became especially noticeable during Group Counseling. I learned to pay attention not only to what one person was saying but also to how the rest of the group was responding. I noticed when some members naturally took leadership roles, when quieter members needed more space, and when the group began moving away from the purpose of an activity. When I co-led the final session, I felt comfortable redirecting the group while my co-leader helped create pauses and invited deeper reflection.

Social intelligence can help me build relationships with students and recognize concerns that may not be directly stated. Students do not always say when they are

anxious, grieving, overwhelmed, or experiencing conflict. A counselor needs to notice changes in tone, behavior, participation, and body language. This strength may also help me adapt my communication when working with students of different ages and with families from different cultural backgrounds.

The challenge is that accurately noticing another person's emotions does not mean I fully understand their experience. I could mistakenly assume that I know what someone is feeling or become overly confident in my interpretation. Social intelligence may also contribute to people-pleasing if I focus too much on keeping everyone comfortable. As a counselor, I will need to check my perceptions by asking rather than assuming and remain willing to hear that my first interpretation was incorrect.

Growth Areas

Two strengths I would like to develop are self-regulation and perseverance. Self-regulation was also an area of growth in my previous paper, and it remains near the bottom of my current assessment. In my earlier reflection, I connected it to impulsive spending, overcommitting, and being overly optimistic about others. Since then, I have become more aware of how self-regulation affects my ability to stay emotionally present.

During counseling practice, I learned that I can become nervous, speak quickly, or feel pressure to come up with the right response. I also learned that I need to become more comfortable with silence. Improving self-regulation would help me slow down, manage my own reactions, and avoid allowing my anxiety to control the direction of a session. It would also help me maintain boundaries and manage the emotional demands of counseling without becoming overwhelmed.

As a school counselor, self-regulation will be especially important during crises, conflicts, or emotionally intense meetings. Students and families will look to the counselor for stability. This does not mean hiding emotions, but it does mean responding thoughtfully rather than reacting impulsively. I can strengthen this area by practicing mindfulness, preparing before difficult conversations, allowing pauses, seeking supervision, and noticing when I need to regulate myself before responding.

Perseverance is another area I would like to strengthen. I am capable of working hard, but I sometimes become distracted, overwhelmed, or discouraged when a task feels repetitive or takes longer than expected. My ADHD can make it difficult to remain focused on long-term projects, especially when I am balancing several responsibilities. At the same time, completing difficult assignments in the counseling program has shown me that I can follow through when I create structure and remain connected to the purpose of the work.

Perseverance will matter in school counseling because change often happens slowly. A student may continue struggling despite repeated support, a family may not respond immediately, or a schoolwide initiative may take months to develop. Counselors must continue showing up even when progress is not obvious. Strengthening perseverance would help me remain patient, complete documentation, follow up on referrals, and maintain consistent support for students. I can work on this by breaking larger tasks into smaller steps, using organizational systems, setting realistic deadlines, and recognizing progress rather than focusing only on completion.

Connection to Counseling Dispositions

My character strengths connect closely with several CUW School Counselor Dispositions. Kindness and social intelligence align most directly with interpersonal communication. Both strengths help me build relationships, recognize emotional needs, and work collaboratively with others. Curiosity also supports interpersonal communication because it encourages me to ask questions, listen carefully, and seek understanding before reaching conclusions.

I believe I naturally demonstrate congruence and genuineness. Honesty ranked fifth in my current results, and I value sincerely presenting myself. I do not want students to experience me as distant or overly clinical. My goal is to be professional while still allowing my personality and humanity to be present in the counseling relationship. Humor, which is also ranked highly, can help students feel comfortable and can reduce tension when used thoughtfully. However, I will need to make sure humor fits the situation and never minimizes a student's feelings.

I also believe I demonstrate openness to feedback more strongly than I did when I began the program. Individual and Group Counseling required me to receive feedback from professors, observers, clients, and classmates. At first, I sometimes felt nervous about how I was being evaluated. Over time, I began to see feedback as useful information rather than proof that I had failed. I became more comfortable identifying what went well and what I would change next time. This shift has increased my confidence because I no longer expect myself to be perfect before I begin practicum.

Curiosity and judgment support flexibility and adaptability. Curiosity helps me remain open to new approaches, while judgment encourages me to examine information from multiple perspectives. School counselors regularly face changing

schedules, crises, different student needs, and unexpected responsibilities. These strengths can help me adjust without immediately assuming there is only one correct response.

Multicultural competence remains an important area of growth. In my previous paper, I acknowledged that I grew up with financial and educational resources that many students do not have. I was concerned that some of my experiences could unintentionally make me appear out of touch. That concern is still present, but my understanding has become broader. My worldview has been shaped by travel, interactions with different cultures, and a willingness to learn from people whose lives differ from mine. However, openness alone does not guarantee competence. I need to continue examining my assumptions and learning how culture, race, socioeconomic status, family structure, disability, gender, religion, and access to resources affect a student's experience.

Professional and personal boundaries are another disposition that will require continued attention. Kindness can make me want to provide extra help, while social intelligence can make relationships form quickly. These qualities can support trust, but they may also make it harder to recognize when I am becoming too involved in a student's problem. My earlier teaching experiences taught me that helping professions can become emotionally draining without clear boundaries. My counseling courses have reinforced that I can care deeply while still recognizing the limits of my role, using supervision, making referrals, and allowing clients to take responsibility for their own growth.

Self-control and maturity connect directly to my growth area of self-regulation. I have grown in my ability to tolerate emotional conversations, but I still want to become more comfortable with silence, conflict, and uncertainty. During Group Counseling, one of my strongest realizations was that counselors should not rush to remove uncomfortable emotions. Maturity requires trusting the counseling process while still monitoring safety and providing structure. It also means recognizing when my own desire to help may be influencing the session.

My strengths in teamwork, honesty, and kindness support professionalism. I have experience collaborating with school staff, families, and outside professionals, and teamwork ranked fourth in my current results. As I move into practicum, professionalism will require more than being dependable and respectful. It will also involve confidentiality, documentation, ethical decision-making, preparation, appropriate communication, and awareness of my limitations. My lower score in perseverance reminds me that professionalism includes following through on responsibilities even when the work is not exciting or immediately rewarding.

Comparing my current results with my earlier paper shows that my central qualities have remained fairly consistent. Curiosity and social intelligence continue to shape how I interact with others. The shift from love to kindness may reflect the way my understanding of helping has become more action-oriented through counseling training. I am learning that care is not only an emotion or a close relationship. In counseling, it can involve asking a difficult question, maintaining a boundary, allowing silence, challenging a client respectfully, or connecting someone with additional support.

My areas for growth have also become more specific. Previously, I discussed self-regulation mostly in terms of impulsivity and personal habits. I now understand how it affects pacing, silence, emotional reactions, boundaries, and decision-making during counseling. I previously identified perspective as a lesser strength, but it has moved higher in my current profile. This may reflect the growth I have experienced through coursework, personal reflection, and listening to different viewpoints. At the same time, perseverance has become a clearer concern as I prepare for the long-term demands of practicum and professional counseling.

My strengths support many of the dispositions expected of a school counselor, but they do not automatically guarantee that I will meet those expectations. Kindness can become rescuing, curiosity can become intrusive, and social intelligence can turn into assumption or people-pleasing. Self-awareness allows me to recognize these risks and use my strengths with greater intention. As I begin practicum, I want to continue developing into a counselor who is caring, curious, genuine, adaptable, and willing to receive feedback. I also want to strengthen the self-regulation and perseverance necessary to provide students with consistent, ethical, and effective support.