

VIA Character Strengths & Counselor Dispositions Reflection

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Section 1: Character Strengths and Growth Areas

Taking the character strengths assessment sparked an interesting and reflective conversation between my wife and me. As I worked through the assessment, she observed and occasionally chimed in. When I reached a question about being "careful," she quickly said, "You're not careful." I paused because I had always seen myself as someone who was aware, maybe even overly cautious, like my mom. But as we talked more, I realized that while I may be aware due to my ADHD, my lifestyle choices, such as skiing, mountain biking, and car racing, don't exactly align with what most would define as "careful."

This moment led to a deeper reflection on how self-perception and external feedback can sometimes conflict. It also raised an important question for me: How can I be an effective counselor if I don't even fully understand my character traits? But that question was quickly followed by something my wife reminded me of: therapy is not something done to a client; it is a shared process. Counselors don't need to have everything figured out; they need to be willing to grow and engage authentically.

My top three strengths were Love, Curiosity, and Social Intelligence. My wife, Rachel, affirmed them, saying, "You're curious and a great listener. You like helping people dig deeper to find the root of their stress and anxiety. You pick up on people's emotions even when they don't verbalize them."

Looking back, I can see how these traits developed over time. My mom was a naturally loving and social person. She hosted gatherings and had a strong presence in any room. My dad, on the other hand, nurtured my curiosity and adventurous spirit. He introduced me to hobbies like boating, skateboarding, and watersports. After my parents

divorced, I learned about new social dynamics and developed adaptability by spending time with my step-siblings and navigating two households. My stepmom's professional connections gave me experience in formal social situations, while my stepbrothers and I explored nature, fueling my imagination and sense of wonder.

That said, these strengths have also presented challenges. My Social Intelligence sometimes led me to insert myself into social circles that were unhealthy for me and had negative influences. I also entered romantic relationships at a young age that occasionally distracted me from my own development. My love trait and desire to be needed sometimes clouded my judgment.

Two areas I want to strengthen are perspective and self-regulation. Perspective is vital for counselors because it enables us to offer insights that make sense to clients and help them reframe their situations in a more meaningful way. This is an area for growth because, while I can be empathetic, I sometimes struggle with offering objective and wise counsel immediately. Developing this trait will help me step back from situations and view them with greater clarity and perspective.

Self-regulation is another key area. I tend toward impulsivity, whether it's impulsive spending or being overly optimistic about others. As a counselor, it's essential to model emotional regulation and recognize my limits. To preserve my well-being, improving this skill will enhance my effectiveness and protect my mental health.

Section 2: Connection to CUW Counseling Dispositions

Several of my strengths align with the School Counseling Dispositions of Concordia University Wisconsin. My social intelligence closely relates to the dispositions

of interpersonal communication and flexibility/adaptability. Being attuned to others' feelings allows me to adapt my communication style to meet their emotional needs. My curiosity aligns with a flexible and adaptive disposition, as I am always eager to explore multiple perspectives and approaches.

I naturally demonstrate congruence and genuineness, as well as setting professional and personal boundaries. I value honesty and transparency in relationships, which helps foster trust. In my previous role as a special education teacher, I learned how emotionally draining the work could be. To maintain my mental health, I had to set clear boundaries between work and personal life. These practices will carry into my counseling career as I strive to support others without compromising my well-being.

One area where I aspire to grow is self-awareness and multicultural competence. I recognize that I come from a place of privilege. My parents were successful, and I had access to many resources growing up. While I try to be mindful of that privilege in conversations, I am aware that there are times when my experiences may unintentionally come across as out of touch. I aim to grow in this area by deepening my understanding of diverse backgrounds and learning how to support students whose lived experiences differ from my own.

My character traits both support and, at times, challenge my ability to meet Concordia's counseling dispositions. For example, my strength in social intelligence allows me to build trust, read emotional cues, and communicate effectively, traits that directly support the dispositions of interpersonal communication and flexibility/adaptability. Likewise, my strength in love fosters genuine care for others,

which naturally aligns with congruence/genuineness, and respect for integrity, as well as acceptance of myself and others.

However, some of these same traits can also present challenges. My deep empathy and desire to be supportive can sometimes blur the boundaries between professional and personal relationships, making it essential for me to remain mindful of my approach to professional boundaries. Similarly, my impulsivity, linked to lower self-regulation, can sometimes challenge the expectation of self-awareness and my emotional stability, especially when faced with emotionally charged situations. Recognizing these dynamics enables me to reflect more intentionally on how to utilize my strengths wisely while developing strategies to avoid potential pitfalls.

In conclusion, this reflection helped me better understand how my character traits shape my professional identity. It also clarified where I need to grow to meet the high standards of the counseling profession. With intention and self-awareness, I believe I can continue developing into a compassionate and effective school counselor.