



# VAHTO

## Strengths Cards

Editors:

Hyvärinen, Sanna; Kangastie, Helena;  
Kari, Sofia; Löf, Jonna; Rautio, Krista;  
Riponiemi, Netta; Uusiautti, Satu

# Card categories

## Wisdom and Knowledge

Creativity  
Curiosity  
Open-mindedness  
Love of Learning  
Perspective

## Courage

Bravery  
Perseverance  
Authenticity  
Zest

## Humanity

Love  
Kindness  
Social Intelligence

## Justice

Teamwork  
Fairness  
Leadership

## Temperance

Forgiveness  
Modesty  
Prudence  
Self-Regulation

## Transcendence

Appreciation of Beauty &  
Excellence  
Gratitude  
Hope  
Humour  
Spirituality

## Extras

Ability to organise   Openness   Ambition   Sensitivity   Hard work

# Description

- **The VAHTO Strengths Cards** in your hands are intended as a tool to support guidance. They can be used to support and enhance wellbeing, self-awareness, and skills of recognising and utilising one's strengths. We hope that the cards will lead you to new insights.
- You can use the cards by yourself or in group exercises. They can be used for recognising and naming strengths and for considering opportunities for development. They also allow reflection on the meaning of one's strengths, how they manifest in various life situations (relationships, studying, working), and how they can be used and applied.
- The VAHTO cards are based on the classification of character strengths and virtues made by Peterson & Seligman (2004)\*. The cards introduce 24 strengths representing six virtues, plus five extras. In addition, the cards include questions that help discuss strengths. Feel free to familiarise yourself with the **Workbook of Strengths-Based Future Guidance** with detailed tips and exercises.
- The cards have been produced in collaboration between the Lapland University of Applied Sciences and the University of Lapland as part of the project *Developing Strengths-Based Future Guidance (VAHTO)* running from 1 August 2019 to 31 December 2021. The project has been funded by European Social Fund (ESF) and the Centre for the Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Northern Ostrobothnia (Pohjois-Pohjanmaan ELY-keskus).

**We wish you a great time with strengths-based future guidance!**

*\*Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification. American Psychological Association; Oxford University Press.*

# Publication information

University of Lapland, Rovaniemi 2021

Publication of the Developing Strengths-Based Future Guidance (VAHTO) project

Funded by: European Social Fund (ESF), the University of Lapland, and the Lapland University of Applied Sciences

English translation: VAHTO project team and Language Centre, University of Lapland

Layout and graphic design: Digi- ja mainostoimisto Höyry | Lotta Nykänen, Erika Neitola

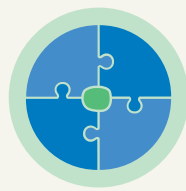
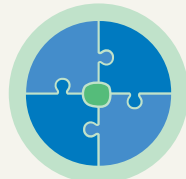
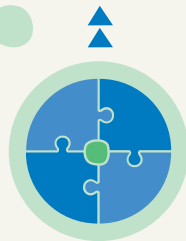
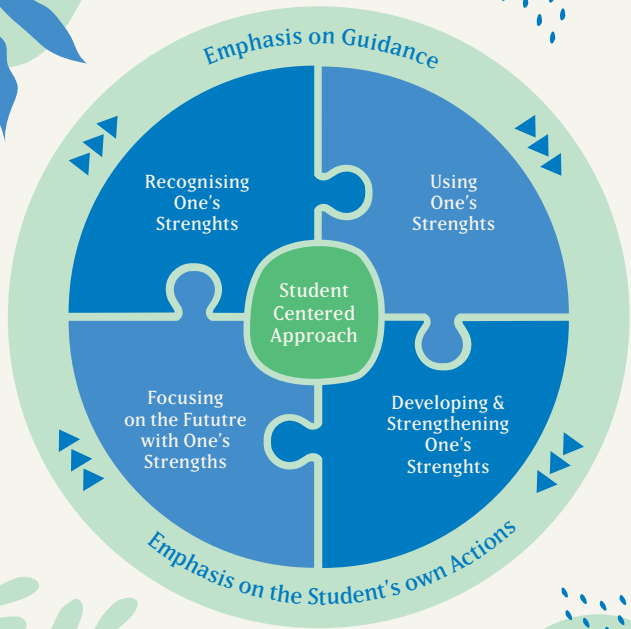
Printed by: Pohjolan palvelut oy

ISBN 978-952-337-305-1 VAHTO Strengths Cards (print)

ISBN 978-952-337-306-8 VAHTO Strengths Cards (PDF)

Permanent address of the publication: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-337-306-8>





# Strengths-Based Future Guidance (VAHTO) model

The cards can be used as a tool for strengths-based guidance. The VAHTO model is based on a profound understanding, identification and utilisation of human strengths. The aim is that building on their personal strengths, students can elaborate on and make positive decisions regarding their future.

The four fundamental elements of the model are (1) Recognising one's strengths, (2) Using them, (3) Developing and strengthening them, and (4) Focusing on the future with them. The essence and the driving force of the model is an empowering guidance relationship. The guidance builds on dialogue, whereby the guide and student co-create a perception of strengths-based thinking. The dialogue involves reflection that is intrinsically based on wondering, asking questions, and processing and assessing experiences.

Starting from the first level of the model, the guidance proceeds from identifying one's strengths to utilising them. As students get a deeper understanding of their strengths, the process proceeds toward future application of the discovered strengths. In the best-case scenario, guidance on development of strengths and orientation toward the future translates into spontaneous activity later in life.

Those interested in an in-depth understanding of the VAHTO model and its underlying ideology will find useful information in the **Workbook of Strengths-Based Future Guidance**, and in the final publication on the development of strengths-based future guidance and the VAHTO model at the universities of Lapland.

# Tips for using the VAHTO Strengths Cards

The cards can be used in various types of individual and group guidance. The examples below contain tips for using the cards.

## **Getting acquainted in the guidance discussion**

Students choose 1–3 cards that describe them best. They may use the card(s) to describe themselves to the counsellor. The card(s) can also be used to start up a conversation.

## **Identifying and developing one's strengths**

Students place their strengths into a 'yes' stack and the strengths they want to develop into a 'to-be-developed' stack. This activity can be useful as part of a e.g. guidance discussion. After the cards have been chosen, you may discuss the choices and how the strengths can be utilised and developed.

## **What do the strengths mean?**

A card is picked up, after which the strength and its manifestation in life, studies, or work are discussed. This can be utilised in the guidance discussion with an individual student or a student group.

# Tips for using the VAHTO Strengths Cards

## **Teaming up**

Students examine the cards and choose 1–3 cards that describe them best. They may discuss the choice(s) with their neighbour and thereafter with the whole group. Cards may also be chosen for another group member. In this case, the card that best suits the fellow student is chosen and used to describe the person.

## **Signature strengths**

Students choose 3–5 strengths that they relate to most. Next, they compare them to things that they enjoy and feel comfortable working with. This helps them recognise their signature strengths. Finally, the students arrange their strengths in their preferred order and tell the others why they picked these strengths in this particular order.

## **My strengths through the eyes of others**

Student pairs take turns to interview each other on a study-related situation where they succeeded or which they enjoyed very much. The interviewee tells why the situation caused an experience of success. The interviewer ponders what strengths the situations represent and chooses cards for the interviewee accordingly. Finally, the students discuss the selected strengths.





# CREATIVITY

---

Wisdom and Knowledge: Cognitive strengths that help us gather and use knowledge

# CREATIVITY



Imaginativeness, inventiveness, experimental mindset, expressiveness, originality

- Do you enjoy being able to solve, experiment, develop and come up with something new?
- Do you see new connections between different things?
- Do you seek new perspectives and new ways of doing things?
- Do you get bored if things always go or are done in the same way?
- Do you see a lot of opportunities and feasible ideas around you?



# CURIOSITY

---

Wisdom and Knowledge: Cognitive strengths that help us gather and use knowledge

# CURIOSITY

Thirst for knowledge, inquisitiveness



- Do you seek out situations where you gain new experiences?
- Are you curious to explore and discover things?
- Are you excited about new tasks?
- Are you curious about the reasons behind things and why they happen?
- Are you interested in new people and their experiences?

The background is a vibrant yellow-green color with stylized green leaves and red lightbulbs. The lightbulbs are glowing and have short lines radiating from them, suggesting ideas or inspiration. The leaves are simple, rounded shapes on thin stems. The overall style is clean and modern.

# OPEN- MINDEDNESS

Wisdom and Knowledge: Cognitive strengths that help us gather and use knowledge

# OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Critical mindset, attentiveness, prudence,  
thoroughness, precision

- Do you approach things from different perspectives?
- Do you consider different options before deciding?
- Are you analytical in evaluating ideas, opinions, and facts?
- Do you weigh all aspects objectively in making decisions including arguments that conflict with your convictions?



The background is a vibrant yellow with stylized green leaves and pink lightbulbs. The lightbulbs have orange filaments and are connected to orange wires that loop across the page. The text is centered in a bold, orange, serif font.

# LOVE OF LEARNING

Wisdom and Knowledge: Cognitive strengths that help us gather and use knowledge

# LOVE OF LEARNING

Intrinsic motivation, thirst for knowledge



- Do you want to constantly learn and master new skills and topics?
- Have you got a passion for learning and desire to develop yourself?
- Are you motivated to acquire new levels of knowledge?
- Do you aim to search and understand also the backgrounds of things and aim to learn more about them?



The background is a vibrant yellow-green color with stylized green leaves and red lightbulbs. The lightbulbs are glowing with white lines radiating from them. The word 'PERSPECTIVE' is written in a bold, red, serif font in the center. Below it is a short red horizontal line.

# PERSPECTIVE

Wisdom and Knowledge: Cognitive strengths that help us gather and use knowledge

# PERSPECTIVE

Consistency, ability to find compromises, holistic thinking, perspectival ability

- Can you see the bigger picture in life?
- Do you give advice to others by considering different and relevant perspectives?
- Are you often using your own experiences and knowledge to clarify the big picture?
- Do you look at things from several different perspectives?
- Do you easily find compromises in challenging situations?
- Do you bring new ideas to the discussions?





# BRAVERY

---

Courage: Strengths that help us exercise  
our will and face adversity

# BRAVERY

Tolerance of insecurity,  
desire to move forward

- Do you have the courage to throw yourself into new or exciting experiences?
- Do you have the courage to disagree with others?
- Do you act on your convictions?
- Do you have the courage to take risks and try again despite past failures?
- Do you stand by your words and actions?





# PERSEVERANCE

---

Courage: Strengths that help us exercise  
our will and face adversity

# PERSEVERANCE

Resilience, long-term thinking,  
goal-orientation, stamina, endurance

- Are you hardworking and always finish what you have started?
- Are you able to set long-term goals that you are moving towards step by step?
- Do you receive pleasure from completing tasks and projects?
- Are you looking for new solutions to achieve your goal, even if the task is difficult?
- Do you persist toward your goals despite obstacles, discouragements, or disappointments?





# AUTHENTICITY

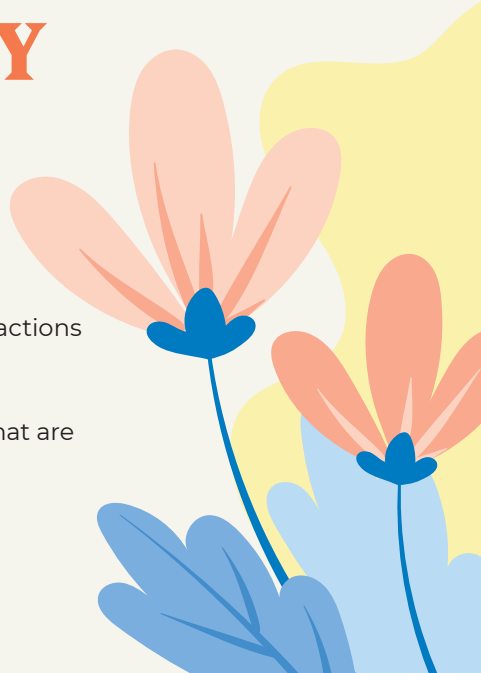
---

Courage: Strengths that help us exercise  
our will and face adversity

# AUTHENTICITY

Genuineness, truthfulness, sincerity,  
fairness, reliability

- Are you honest to yourself and to others?
- Do you tend to present yourself and your reactions accurately to each person?
- Do you take responsibility for your actions?
- Are you also telling the truth about things that are unfavourable to yourself?
- Do you do what you promise?
- Can you admit you were wrong?
- Is it important for you to act in good faith?







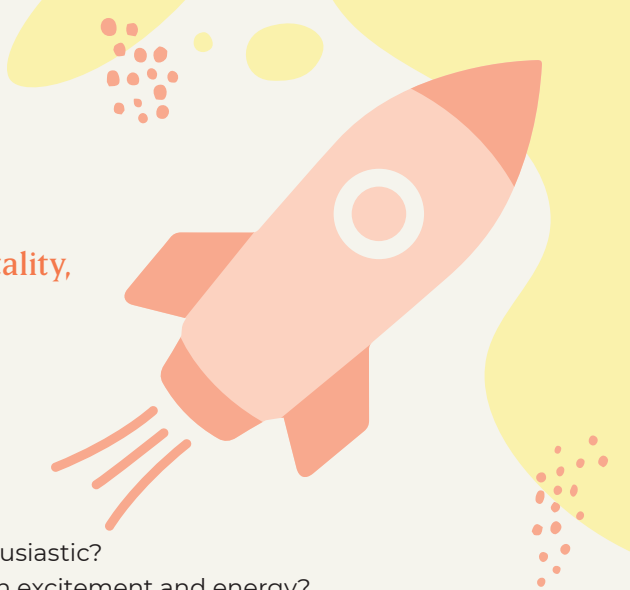
# ZEST

---

Courage: Strengths that help us exercise  
our will and face adversity

# ZEST

Life contentment, vigour, vitality,  
enthusiasm



- Do you often feel vital and enthusiastic?
- Do you approach situations with excitement and energy?
- Is it easy for you to find relevance and energy for what you do?
- Are you mostly ready for new challenges?
- Are you energetic and getting a lot done?



# LOVE

---

Humanity: Strengths that manifest in caring relationships with others

# LOVE

Care, caring, compassion, empathy

- Do you value close relationships with people?
- Do you accept others as they are?
- Does it bring you joy when you do things for others?
- Do you take care of the needs of others?
- Do you contribute to closeness in a warm and genuine way?





# KINDNESS

---

Humanity: Strengths that manifest in caring relationships with others

# KINDNESS

Helpfulness, generosity, altruism,  
thoughtfulness

- Do you approach people with an open mind?
- Do you see the good sides in others and think positively about them?
- When you act, do you take others into account?
- Are you generous to others?
- Do you often help others without waiting for something in return?





# SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

---

Humanity: Strengths that manifest in caring  
relationships with others

# SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE



Humaneness, ability to understand the feelings and intentions of others, ability to understand the motives of others

- Do you feel comfortable in different social situations?
- Do you quickly learn the social rules of various situations?
- Are you a good conversationalist and listener?
- Do you sense the moods of others?
- Do you have a positive effect on the atmosphere?
- Are you aware of your own motives and feelings?







# TEAMWORK

---

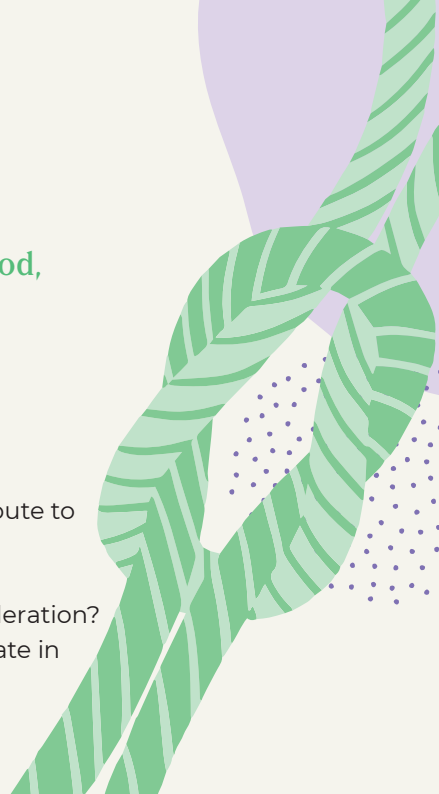
Justice: Strengths that help us connect in community or group-based situations



# TEAMWORK

Considerateness, reciprocity, common good,  
ability to collaborate, responsibility

- Do you enjoy working with others?
- Do you act responsibly in the group and contribute to the joint output?
- Are you willing to work for the common good ?
- Is it important for you to take others into consideration?
- Are you able to make compromises and negotiate in group situations?







# FAIRNESS

---

Justice: Strengths that help us connect in  
community or group-based situations



# FAIRNESS

*Justness, equity, tolerance, integrity*

- Do you accept diversity?
- Do you think all people are equal?
- Do you make sure that justice is done?
- Do you defend the weak?
- Can you also be flexible when needed?
- Do you give credit for success to those to whom credit is due?







# LEADERSHIP

---

Justice: Strengths that help us connect in  
community or group-based situations



# LEADERSHIP

Ability to manage groups of people, influencing, bearing responsibility, trailblazing

- Do you tend to organise and encourage a group to get things done?
- Do you take charge and guide groups to meaningful goals?
- Do you ensure good relations among group members?
- Do you make sure that teamwork is completed successfully?
- Can you see the strengths of others?
- Do you create conditions for others to show off their skills?





# **FORGIVENESS**

---

Temperance: Strengths that help us  
manage habits and protect against  
excess

# FORGIVENESS

Mercifulness, gentleness, gracefulness



- Do you look for an opportunity to reconcile things and often take the first step?
- Have you got the ability to let go of painful feelings associated with an offense?
- Do you think that no one is perfect?
- Can you be gentle with your own mistakes and those of others?
- Do you think everyone deserves a second chance?





# MODESTY

---

Temperance: Strengths that help us  
manage habits and protect against  
excess

# MODESTY

Unassumingness, humbleness

- Do you evaluate your accomplishments accurately?
- Do you see your strengths and talents yet being humble, not seeking to receive recognition?
- Are you content without being the centre of attention?
- Do you think that deeds speak for themselves?
- Do you often share the credit for your accomplishments with others?





# PRUDENCE

---

Temperance: Strengths that help us  
manage habits and protect against  
excess

# PRUDENCE

Contemplativeness, attentiveness, rationality, carefulness, moderation, cautiousness

- Are you precise and careful in your actions?
- Do you make considered decisions and weigh different options?
- Are you looking for advice and information to find the right solutions?
- Are you prepared for the risks and come up with alternative plans?
- Do you choose your words with care and do you always try to give an appropriate answer?





# SELF-REGULATION

---

Temperance: Strengths that help us  
manage habits and protect against  
excess

# SELF-REGULATION



Willpower, self-control, self-management ability

- Is it easy for you to identify and deal with your own feelings?
- Do you often put a long-term goal ahead of instant gratification?
- Do you have the willpower to control the moods or whims of the moment?
- Do you adjust your activities according to the available time frame?
- Is it easy for you to say no when necessary?
- Do you stick to what has been agreed?



# APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE

Transcendence: Strengths that help us connect  
to the larger universe and provide meaning

# APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE

Visual mindset, aesthetic mindset, sensuousness

- Do you notice the beauty and skillful performances around you?
- Do you feel influenced by the things you see around you?
- Do you appreciate excellence and talent in all domains of life?
- Do you have an eye for detail?
- Do you appreciate different sensory pleasures?







# GRATITUDE

---

Transcendence: Strengths that help us connect to the larger universe and provide meaning

# GRATITUDE

Noticing the good, awareness

- Do you naturally pay attention to the good things in your life?
- Do you find opportunities to learn from each of your experiences?
- Do you feel a deep sense of thankfulness in life, and express thankfulness also to others?
- Do small things and successes bring you joy?
- Do you think things should not be taken for granted?





# HOPE

---

Transcendence: Strengths that help us connect  
to the larger universe and provide meaning

# HOPE

Belief in the future, optimism,  
future orientation

- Are you positive and optimistic about the future?
- Do you trust people and feel confident things will turn out well?
- Can you believe in the good even when facing challenges?
- Do you inspire hope in other people?





# HUMOUR

---

Transcendence: Strengths that help us connect to the larger universe and provide meaning

# HUMOUR

Situation awareness, cheerfulness,  
ability to observe situations from a distance,  
playfulness

- Is it easy for you to lighten and uplift the mood?
- Is it natural for you to find a new, brighter perspective on things?
- Can you laugh at yourself, too?
- Do you find humour also in difficult and stressful times?
- Do you have an eye for the comic in the everyday?





# **SPIRITUALITY**

---

**Transcendence: Strengths that help us connect to the larger universe and provide meaning**

# SPIRITUALITY

Having a world perspective, believing in a cause, idealism

- Is it important to you to live by a certain value?
- Do you enjoy acting in line with your worldview?
- Do you consider it important to reflect on the meaning of life?
- Do you see your place in the grand scheme of the universe and find meaning in everyday life?
- Do you believe in a sense of purpose or meaning in your life?







# ABILITY TO ORGANISE

---

Extras: These are examples which  
combine several strengths

# ABILITY TO ORGANISE

Orderliness, analysing parts and wholes, coordination  
Combines: open-mindedness, leadership, teamwork

- Are you able to grasp wholes and the order in which things are best done?
- Are you good at scheduling and dividing a large task into sub-goals to get it done?
- Are you able to keep all aspects of the job under control and to coordinate the big picture?
- Are you good at sharing tasks with others?



# OPENNESS

---

Extras: These are examples which  
combine several strengths

# OPENNESS

Unprejudiced stance

Combines: perspectival ability, social intelligence, curiosity

- Do you easily form new relationships?
- Are you open to new ideas and experiences?
- Can you look at things without prejudice from new perspectives?
- Do you dare to express your own feelings?
- Do you think things broadly and flexibly?
- Is it easy for you to change your opinions or become aware of your preconceived notions?





# AMBITION

---

Extras: These are examples which  
combine several strengths

# AMBITION

Striving for excellence, exceeding oneself

Combines: perseverance, appreciation of beauty and excellence

- Are you constantly motivated to improve?
- Is your goal to move forward on your own merits?
- Do you always aim for maximum effectiveness?
- Do you get pleasure when you know you have given your all?



The background is a deep purple color. It features several stylized yellow flowers with dark purple centers. There are also several wavy, horizontal lines in a lighter shade of purple, some of which are filled with small, white, teardrop-shaped patterns. The overall aesthetic is modern and graphic.

# SENSITIVITY

---

Extras: These are examples which  
combine several strengths

# SENSITIVITY

Emotional intelligence, ability to identify the feelings of others, ability to sense the moods of others, ability to empathise with others  
Combines: love, social intelligence

- Do you easily sense the feelings and moods of others?
- Are you able to empathise with another's position?
- Is it natural for you to listen to and hear others?
- Do you weigh the meaning of your words and their timing?
- Do you pay attention to the voice tones and gestures of others, and do you consider their significance?







# HARD WORK

---

Extras: These are examples which  
combine several strengths

# HARD WORK

Vigour, work-oriented mindset, assiduity  
Combines: perseverance, zest, self-regulation

- Are you willing to put in your best effort to achieve things?
- Do you keep yourself busy?
- Can you stay motivated to achieve your goals?
- Do you think that by doing and being active you will achieve more?

