STRENGTHS Cards Sort – Brief User Guide

STRENGTHS – Cards Sort (© S. Rochat, 2019), images@Pixabay
Printable version – Online version

Purpose	Character strengths are positive, morally valued traits that contribute to personal flourishing and the well-being of others (APA, 2015). Their usefulness in career counseling is increasingly recognized.
Background	The STRENGTHS instrument is based on the classification of character strengths developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004). This model identifies 24 universal character strengths: love, love of learning, appreciation of beauty, teamwork, bravery, creativity, curiosity, hope, kindness, gratitude, humor, integrity, social intelligence, zest, fairness, leadership, self-regulation, modesty, open-mindedness, forgiveness, perseverance, prudence, wisdom and spirituality.
Rationale	The STRENGTHS instrument aims to support the career counseling process by helping participants to: • Identify work environments that are likely to encourage the expression of their dominant character strengths. • Understand some of the frustrations they experience in professional contexts that are poorly aligned with their strengths. • Draw on their strengths to personalize the tasks they need to undertake, making these tasks more meaningful, enjoyable or challenging. Character strengths can also be explored using a free questionnaire available at https://viacharacter.org. However, sorting cards encourages dialogue, collaboration and reflection rather than an assessment-oriented approach.
Process	With reference to the 5As model of career counseling, the STRENGHTS instrument is particularly relevant to two phases: • Activating the introspection: fostering self-awareness by exploring sources of satisfaction, energy and frustration at work. • Accompanying the planning: supporting commitment to the tasks required to implement a career plan and helping to reduce procrastination.
Content	The STRENGTHS instrument contains 24 cards, each representing a character strength and accompanied by a brief, practical definition.
Administration	1. Invite the participant to sort the cards according to how strongly they identify with the different strengths. 2. Invite the participant to rank the strengths they identify with, according to the strength of that identification. 3. Explore together the possible connections between these strengths, the participant's career aspirations, the work environments being considered and the career development tasks ahead.
Further Reading	• Les 5As du conseil en orientation (Chapters 2.3, 3.1 and 5.3). • Mapping career counseling interventions (Chapters 5.5 and 5.6). • Vaincre la procrastination (Chapter 3).
References	American Psychological Association. (2015). *APA dictionary of psychology*. Author. Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. Oxford University Press.