



Discover More of You

Self-Awareness Exercises

Neil Swanson Coaching
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Introduction

The exercises and surveys in this booklet can help you identify some of your usual ways of functioning and your goals for changing some of those patterns.

Information gained from these exercises will expand your self-awareness and can be useful to share with your partner, therapist, or coach. Many of these exercises are focused specifically around ADHD-related issues.

I generally ask new clients to complete most of these exercises before we begin coaching and to share the results with me. In that way, we both have this unique snapshot of how they see themselves and their coaching goals as we begin to work together.

Even prospective clients scheduling only a Free Exploratory Session are invited to share this information with me if they would like me to have it in advance of our exploring the possibility of working together.

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NOTE: Print this PDF booklet if you'd like to complete the exercises on paper. If you would prefer a digitally fillable version, please write admin@neilswansoncoaching.com, and we will happily send you a Word version at no charge or obligation.

VIA Character Strength Survey

Self-knowledge is extremely helpful in bringing meaning, harmony, and satisfaction into our lives. Clarity regarding our personal strengths is an important piece of our self-knowledge. This free online tool found at the URL below will help you identify some of your strengths. Select the ADULT version.

This survey requires only about 20 minutes of your time, since for each statement you simply check off one of five levels of applicability to you. The more candidly you can answer the questions, the more likely you are to obtain accurate feedback regarding your strengths. If some questions seem unclear or open to more than one interpretation, just take your best guess.

As a human being, you have all of the twenty-four recognized universal human strengths, but some of your strengths show up more strongly than others. This survey generates a profile showing the rank order of your strengths, beginning with the strongest. A brief description of each character strength is also included.

The VIA web site will offer you the opportunity to purchase upgraded reports, but this is not necessary. The basic free report is sufficient.

I would, however, advise you to save the password you create on the site. That will facilitate your returning to review your profile; purchasing a more in-depth report later, if you choose; and sharing your results with me or others.

Your results will not be available to me from VIA without your consent. If you wish to have your results made available to me directly, be sure you use the link below and check the survey's Consent Form box giving your consent to share results with your "consultant." I will then be alerted when you have completed the survey, and you and I will each be able to download your results.

Once you have completed the survey, the site may ask you a few quick questions to provide some demographic information to help the nonprofit that created this survey continue improving the survey's accuracy and availability.

<https://neilswansoncoaching.pro.viasurvey.org/>

On the next pages are some exercises that you will find useful if you wish to further clarify your VIA-identified strengths and explore how your strengths are showing up in your life.

Verifying Your VIA Strength Survey Results

This is an exercise to help you verify for yourself the strengths that showed up as your top 5 or 6 on your VIA Strengths Survey.

Beginning with your top strength, ponder the following questions. Then move on to do the same for your other top strengths:

Does this strength resonate as being a significant part of who I am?

Is this strength natural, easy, and energizing for me to use?

Is it recognized by others as one of my strengths?

Do I use it across settings, such as at work, home, school, social life, family, etc.?

Am I underusing this strength?

Am I overusing this strength (e.g., using it in situations where other strengths would be more appropriate)?

Additional Exercises for Better Connecting with Your Strengths

1) Think of a time when things were going very well for you, when you felt successful or empowered. Consider which character strength(s) you were using during that time. You might benefit from writing down your reflections in a journal.

2) Think of a time when someone noticed something good about you and shared that with you. Perhaps you were surprised that the person noticed this characteristic. Perhaps you felt understood, as if that person really “got” you. What character strength was being observed at that time? Reflect on that experience in your journal.

3) Continue to notice your strengths, especially your top five, as you go through your days and weeks, and write down your observations.

One-Page Life History

Write a history of your life condensed to a single page. Think of this page as a snapshot, providing a quick picture of what has shaped you to date. You might include events, experiences, or accomplishments that have been important in your life. This exercise may help you sharpen your own perspective on yourself.

This one-page history can take any form you choose. For example, it does not necessarily need to be in chronological order. You might wish to use bullet points rather than paragraphs. You may decide to group items under categories important to you. Or you may choose some other creative arrangement.

If boiling your life down to just one page feels too restrictive, go ahead and write as much as you'd like. If the writing feels like it is bringing you more clarity, by all means keep going. Then if your "history" turns out to be more than a couple of pages, see if afterwards you can also do a one-page summary.

Have fun with this! There is no need for this history to be anywhere near perfect. If perfectionism or self-consciousness is something that often tends to get in your way, try making this an opportunity to experiment with letting go of a little of that tendency. Forget about spelling and grammar. If it helps, even forget about logic, consistency, and making sense. If necessary, decide in advance to write this only for your eyes – not to be shared with even a nonjudgmental coach. After all, the primary purpose of the exercise is to increase your self-awareness.

If letting go proves difficult and this exercise seems too hard for you right now, that's fine. Your challenge maybe to accept that this is where you happen to be in relation to this particular task. Can you permit yourself to see this as "OK?" If you can, that may be a major step forward for you.

Once again, have fun!

Challenge Rating Scale

Below are some challenges folks with ADHD often experience. Put an “X” in the box in front of the ones that seem to be impacting you. Add others if necessary. After you have considered all of them, list your top five challenges below in order of significance.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lateness | <input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Procrastination | <input type="checkbox"/> Learning difficulties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disorganization | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty waking/getting up in the AM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inattention | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty falling asleep at night |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tiring easily | <input type="checkbox"/> Low motivation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pessimism | <input type="checkbox"/> Low concentration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgetfulness | <input type="checkbox"/> Quickness to anger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blaming others | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty getting started |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hyperfocusing | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty finishing tasks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moodiness | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating unhealthy foods |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restlessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Misreading social cues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indecisiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Low motivation to exercise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Losing things | <input type="checkbox"/> Speaking impulsively |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daydreaming | <input type="checkbox"/> Acting impulsively |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hypersensitivity | <input type="checkbox"/> Being easily frustrated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionism | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty prioritizing tasks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty with transitions | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

My Top Five Challenges

1.

2.

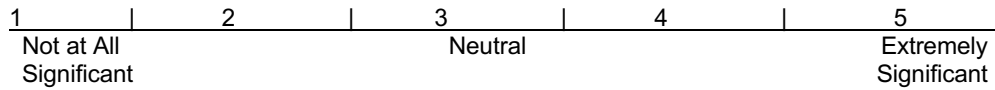
3.

4.

5.

Coaching Goal Areas

Give each of the following issues a rating reflecting how much you would like it to be a focus of your personal growth – with or without the help of a coach:



Self

- Personal Hygiene
- Self-Advocacy (asking for what you need)
- Friends/Emotional Support
- Spiritual Needs
- Medical/Dental Care

Work

- Time Management (e.g., turning things in on time)
- Organizational Skills (systems for papers, etc.)
- Energy Level (enough energy when needed)
- Goals and Objectives
- Job Matches Skills/Talents/Interests

Social

- Friends
- Holidays/Vacations
- Social Skills
- Community Activities (volunteering, etc.)
- Communication Skills

Money/Finances

- Savings
- Spending Habits (impulsive or planned)
- Money Management (bills, etc.)
- Income

Family/Home Environment

- Relationships with Immediate Family Members (spouse, children)
- Relationships with Extended Family (siblings, parents, etc.)
- Inside the Home (organization/privacy/space)

Health

- Nutrition & Weight
- Fitness & Exercise
- Stress Management

Any Additional Goals

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Systems Checklist

Please place an "X" in the box before any system that you would like to implement or improve.

- keeping track of my daily schedule and appointments
- keeping track of paper so I can find something quickly when I need it
- de-cluttering on a regular basis
- handling my mail and email
- paying my bills on time
- handling tasks and projects without procrastinating
- doing my laundry
- making sure I am eating healthy, nutritious foods
- exercising at least three times a week for 30 minutes each time
- getting out of the house on time in the morning with everything I need
- developing an evening routine to set me up for success in the morning
- creating a routine for getting to sleep at a consistent time each night
- sticking to my schedule
- monitoring frequently whether I am on task
- taking medication on time

Any other systems you would like to implement or improve:

1.

2.

3.

EXECUTIVE SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

**The next three pages are based on the work of Peg Dawson and Richard Guare.
 (“Executive Skills” are so named because they are skills involved in executing actions
 and do not necessarily refer to a business “executive.”)**

Rate each item by entering a number in the first column based on how well it describes you, using the rating scale below. (Please be alert to the potential confusion created by negative phrasing in some statements.) Then total the three ratings in each section and enter that total in the second column.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Tend to disagree	Neutral	Tend to agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Items	Ratings	Totals of Each Three Ratings
1. I don't jump to conclusions.		
2. I think before I speak.		
3. I don't take action without having all the facts.		
.....		
4. I have a good memory for facts, dates, and details.		
5. I am very good at remembering the things I have committed to do.		
6. I seldom need reminders to complete tasks.		
.....		
7. My emotions seldom get in the way when I'm performing on the job.		
8. Little things do not affect me emotionally or distract me from the task at hand.		
9. I can defer my personal feelings until after a task has been completed.		
.....		
10. No matter what the task, I believe in getting started as soon as possible.		
11. Procrastination is usually not a problem for me.		
12. I seldom leave tasks to the last minute.		
.....		
13. I find it easy to stay focused on my work.		
14. Once I start an assignment, I work diligently until it's completed.		
15. Even when interrupted, I find it easy to get back and complete the job at hand.		
.....		



Items	Ratings	Totals of Each Three Ratings
16. When I plan out my day, I identify priorities and stick to them.		
17. When I have a lot to do, I can easily focus on the most important things.		
18. I typically break big tasks down into subtasks and timelines.		
.....		
19. I am an organized person.		
20. It is natural for me to keep my work area neat and organized		
21. I am good at maintaining systems for organizing my work.		
.....		
22. At the end of the day, I've usually finished what I set out to do.		
23. I am good at estimating how long it takes to do something.		
24. I am usually on time for appointments and activities.		
.....		
25. I take unexpected events in stride.		
26. I easily adjust to changes in plans and priorities.		
27. I consider myself to be flexible and adaptive to change.		
.....		
28. I routinely evaluate my performance and devise methods for personal improvement.		
29. I am able to step back from a situation in order to make objective decisions.		
30. I "read" situations well and can adjust my behavior based on the reactions of others.		
.....		
31. I think of myself as being driven to meet my goals.		
32. I easily give up immediate pleasures to work on long-term goals.		
33. I believe in setting and achieving high levels of performance.		
.....		
34. I enjoy working in a highly demanding, fast-paced environment.		
35. A certain amount of pressure helps me to perform at my best.		
36. Jobs that include a fair degree of unpredictability appeal to me.		
.....		

ENTER THE ABOVE 12 TOTALS ON NEXT PAGE IN "RATINGS" COLUMN

Your Executive Skills Profile

Highest Ratings Equal Strongest Skills

Items Ratings

- 1-3** **Response Inhibition:** The capacity to think before you act – this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows us the time to evaluate a situation and how our behavior might impact it.
- 4-6** **Working Memory:** The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future.
- 7-9** **Emotional Control:** The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.
- 10-12** **Task Initiation:** The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion.
- 13-15** **Sustained Attention:** The capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.
- 16-18** **Planning/Prioritization:** The ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what's important to focus on and what's not important.
- 19-21** **Organization:** The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.
- 22-24** **Time Management:** The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important.
- 25-27** **Flexibility:** The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information or mistakes. It relates to an adaptability to changing conditions.
- 28-30** **Metacognition:** The ability to stand back and take a birds-eye view of oneself in a situation. It is an ability to observe how you problem solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills (e.g., asking yourself, "How am I doing?" or "How did I do?" or "How did what I did affect other people?").
- 31-33** **Goal-Directed Persistence:** The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of the goal, and not be put off by or distracted by competing interests.
- 34-36** **Stress Tolerance:** the ability to thrive in stressful situations and to cope with uncertainty, change, and performance demands.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

I hope you have found these exercises fun and useful and that they have prompted you to step back and take a look at your strengths and challenges and goals! You might want to repeat some or all of the exercises after a period of time to see how you have changed and grown.

If you find yourself desiring some help in focusing some of your time and attention on your personal growth, you might be interested in scheduling a free Exploratory Conversation of up to 45 minutes with me. It would be my pleasure to spend that time with you. We might find that together we could create a great coaching partnership that could transform your life!

Please click [here](#) to let me know you'd like to schedule a time to talk.

Meanwhile, I send you my very best wishes!

Neil

