



WHY YOU SHOULD USE THE VIA STRENGTHS SURVEY WITH YOUR TEAM?

By Jason Payne

A great way to introduce Mental Performance Skills into your coaching practice is to make it fun for athletes and coaches. Using the VIA strengths survey is a great way to gather valuable information, foster team togetherness, and learn about each other. The VIA (Values in Action) strengths survey is a free online (available at viacharacter.org) survey that measures the character strengths of respondents in 24 different categories. It takes 10 minutes to complete and if you sign up for a free account, they will email you a detailed summary of your results. These results rank the strengths from 1-24 based on the answers in the survey. They pay special attention to the individual's top five strengths and go into detail on their impact. This will give you a detailed report on each of your players' top strengths. There are some real benefits to knowing this information and being able to incorporate it into your coaching

What is the VIA Strengths Survey?


The VIA Strengths Survey is a positive psychology exercise that focus on the strengths of individuals over a focus on weakness. This is a significant shift for many coaches where the focus is on improving areas of weakness.

The key is not just understanding your strengths its about how you can lean on them when things get difficult.

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A close-up, low-angle shot of a hockey player's skates and lower legs as they move across an ice rink. The player is wearing white pants and black skates with yellow accents. Ice shavings are visible around the skates, suggesting recent movement. The background is a blurred ice surface.

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3 BENEFITS OF USING THE VIA SURVEY

1. Using the survey allows you to approach your athletes from the perspective of their strengths.

Learning the results of the survey will allow you to work with your players from the perspective of their strengths. It is a natural tendency to focus on what weakness your athletes possess, whether it is a deficiency of skill or a part of their character. Instead of focusing on the weakness of your players approaching them from a strength's perspective allows you to find what athletes are good at and will allow them to get better at it. You would not ask a non-shooter to take a game-winning three-point shot or a Defensemen to save a penalty shot in Hockey. Yet often athletes are placed in situations like leading or conflict resolution that is not something that plays into their strengths. It doesn't mean they should not try and lead it means they will need your support. This puts athletes in a position to succeed and leads to boosts in self-confidence which will improve performance and their commitment to the team.

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2. It strengthens your teams' culture by increasing your athletes' sense of belonging.

Taking time to go through your players' results will allow you to strengthen your bond with them. It will show that you care about who they are as people not just as athletes. It also will provide you with valuable information about who they are as people. This is an intentional act, and it will take some time to examine your players' responses, but it is a worthwhile exercise. In his book "Culture Code", author Daniel Coyle talks about how culture is a living breathing organism that needs curating. Coaches taking time to examine and discuss the findings of these surveys incorporates the three main cues that Coyle identifies as important to help people believe that they belong: energy, individualization, and future orientation (Coyle, 2018). Athletes and Coaches are both investing energy to learn about each other's strengths and that will strengthen the culture in your team. Coaches and athletes are also spending time to learn about each other as individuals which are vital to people feeling that they belong as a valued member of the team.

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3. Coaches can show some vulnerability and share their own strengths and areas for growth.

Being vulnerable is a great way to show a different side of yourself to your players. Brene Brown who is the preeminent expert on vulnerability defines it as “the feeling we get during times of uncertainty, risk or emotional exposure (Brown, 2019). Highlighting your strengths with your players shows them that you are willing to be open and vulnerable with your players. They may already understand or be able to guess your strengths, your areas for growth may not so obvious, and sharing them with your players shows a willingness to be vulnerable. Vulnerability creates a stronger sense of belonging and strengthens your team culture because it shows that your team is a safe place to be. When people on a team feel safe, they can perform their best because they don’t have to expend energy trying to fit in or assess where the next threat will come from. High-functioning teams are safe environments that allow for individuality and will always outperform those that lack security.

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