

FINDING THE GOLDEN MEAN

The Golden Mean is using character strengths in a balanced way (optimal use). It is when you apply the right combination of character strengths, to the right degree, in the right situation. The chart below shows the underuse, overuse and optimal use of character strengths.

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

UNDERUSE

OPTIMAL USE

OVERUSE

A common phenomenon in which we are not bringing forth one of our strength capacities in a particular situation, and there is a resulting negative impact on ourselves or others.

Finding the balance among minor or major extremes and applying the right combination of character strengths to the right degree and in the right situation.

Using a strength so much that it is having a negative impact on oneself or others and can no longer be considered a positive strength – it has become something else – such as a harmful habit.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Creativity | Conforming; plain/dull | Uniqueness that is practical; original | Eccentric; odd; scattered |
| Curiosity | Bored; uninterested; apathetic | "Explorer," intrigued, open | Nosy; intrusive |
| Judgment | Illogical; naïve; closed-minded | Analytical, open-minded, logical | Narrow-minded; cynical; rigid |
| Love of Learning | Smug; uninterested | Information-seeking; lifelong learner | Know-it-all; elitist; overwhelming |
| Perspective | Shallow; superficial | Sees and offers the wider review | Overbearing; arrogant |
| Bravery | Cowardly; unwilling to act | Facing fears; confronting adversity | Risk-taking; foolish; overconfident |
| Perseverance | Lazy; helpless; giving up | Task completer; persistent | Stubborn; struggles to let go |
| Honesty | Phony; dishonest; inauthentic | True to oneself, sincere | Self-righteous; rude |
| Zest | Sloth-like; passive; sedentary | Happy; active; energized | Hyper; overactive; annoying |
| Love | Isolating; cut-off from others | Genuine, reciprocal warmth | Emotional overkill; touchy-feely |
| Kindness | Indifferent; selfish; meanspirited | Caring; compassionate; friendly | Intrusive; overly focused on others |
| Social Intelligence | Clueless; disconnected | Tuned in, then savvy; empathic | Over-analytical; self-deception |
| Teamwork | Self-serving; individualistic | Participative; loyal; collaborative | Dependent; loss of individuality |
| Fairness | Prejudice; complacency | Champions equal opportunity for all | Detached; uncaring justice |
| Leadership | Follower; compliant; passive | Positively influencing others | Bossy; controlling |
| Forgiveness | Vengeful; merciless | Letting go of hurt when wronged | Permissive; doormat |
| Humility | Arrogant; self-focused | Focuses attention on others; modest | Self-deprecation; limited self-image |
| Prudence | Reckless; thrill-seeking | Wisely cautious; goal-oriented | Stuffy; prudish; passive |
| Self-Regulation | Impulsive; undisciplined | Mindful; disciplined | Constricted; obsessive |
| Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence | Oblivious; stuck in autopilot | Seeing the life behind things | Snobbery; perfectionistic |
| Gratitude | Entitled; self-absorbed | Connected; appreciating positives | Contrived; repetitive |
| Hope | Negative; past-oriented | Positive expectations; optimistic | Unrealistic; blind optimism |
| Humor | Overly serious; flat affect | Laughter/joy with others; playful | Tasteless/offensive; giddy |
| Spirituality | Unaware of core values | Connecting with the sacred | Preachy/proselytizing; fanatical |