



ME AT MY BEST

Take the VIA Strengths test and take a look at your top five strengths. Think of a time or period in your life when you had a “peak” experience, made a difference, succeeded at something important, or others told you they admired how you had done something specific. Think of the ways in which your strengths played a role in this experience and write a few paragraphs about it, singling out each one and where you see its role.

I’ll use myself as an example of how to use this exercise:

My top five strengths are:

- Love and Be Loved
- Creativity
- Zest
- Bravery
- Wisdom

I realized that when I wrote my first book, *My Name is Caroline*, the first book by a survivor of bulimia, that I’d used all of my strengths because **I loved myself and others** enough to want to save my own life and give hope to others for the same; it took **creativity** to write the book in a compelling format; my **zest** is some of the joie de vivre that helped me thrive in recovery and share it with others; it was **brave** to break the silence around this illness; and as a result of the difficulties I overcame, I had **wisdom** that others drew strength from.

It is helpful to come up with several examples of your “best” self, including how they have emerged in relationships, professionally or when you’ve pursued a favorite hobby. The more we become familiar with our own strengths and when they sparkle, the more we begin to identify the people, places, situations and emotions that stimulate our strengths to emerge in optimal ways for optimal outcomes. We also get better at spotting strengths in others!

The overuse of these same top strengths can be weaknesses, and some situations or people could cause honesty to become mean feedback, kindness can become obsequiousness, and bravery can become recklessness.