

Red and Green Activities

Strengths

Intervention

5-10 min. daily

Client

No

According to Linley (2008) a strength is “a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking or feeling that is authentic, energizing to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance” (p. 9). Among the characteristics of strengths in this definition, perhaps the most important one is that using strengths feels energising. Activities that rely on our strengths are enjoyable and feel as if our energy levels are being raised. While high performance can be the result of both strengths use and learned behaviour, the experience of increased energy most often applies when using character strengths.

Moreover, the perceived amount of energy also provides information on weaknesses. According to Linley and colleagues: “Weaknesses are the things at which you both perform poorly and find de-energising or draining. When weaknesses are used, they lead to feelings of negativity, disengagement, and lack of motivation.” (p. 68 Linley, Willars, Biswas-Diener, 2010). In this exercise, awareness of personal weaknesses and strengths is being increased by analysing daily activities in terms of the energy levels that the client experiences.

Goal

The goal of this exercise is to increase the client’s awareness of activities that rely on personal strengths or weaknesses. An advantage of this exercise is that it relies on daily reflection to increase awareness of strengths and weaknesses. Rather than relying on general post hoc reflections, daily reflection is often more specific and accurate.

Advice

- In order to clarify the concept of energy, it is advisable to inform clients that we refer to mental energy here. Activities that allow clients to use their strengths may cause them to become physically tired, but psychologically more energised than before.
- In the current form of the exercise, clients are required to record activities during the course of one week. However, the client may also decide to spread the reflections over a longer period of time. In any case, it is advisable to use multiple measurements because more measurements will provide more accurate and detailed information.
- Instead of using pen and paper, clients may also use an electronic device (e.g. a phone or tablet) to record their activities throughout the day.

Suggested Readings

Linley, A. (2008). *Average to A+: Realising Strengths in Yourself and Others*. Warwick: CAPP Press.

Linley, A., Willars, J., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2010). *The strengths book*. Coventry, United Kingdom: CAPP Press.

Tool Description

Instructions

Step 1: Introduction

A hallmark of strengths is “energy”. When we use our strengths, we feel energised and engaged. Activities that rely on our strengths are enjoyable and feel as if our energy levels are being raised.

In contrast, using weaknesses drains us. When we operate from our weaknesses, we feel negativity, disengagement, and lack of motivation. Activities that rely on our weaknesses feel as if our energy levels are being drained.

In this exercise, we call activities that rely on your strengths and provide you energy “green activities”. These are activities that:

- you truly enjoy doing
- make you feel energised
- make you forget time
- you look forward to
- you can do well even under conditions of stress or fatigue

Activities that rely on your weaknesses and deplete your energy are referred to as “red activities” These are activities that:

- you do not like doing
- make you feel depleted
- seem to pass very slowly
- you don’t look forward to
- require a lot of effort and self-control to do well

Step 2: Record Red and Green moments

During the upcoming week, record your “green” and “red” moments on a daily basis. Use the table in Appendix 1. In the first column of this table, provide a brief description of the activity. In addition, indicate energy levels per activity by registering the extent to which the activity at hand enhanced energy or depleted energy. In the second column, put a sign next to each activity to indicate the change in energy level:

- required a lot of energy
- required some energy
- 0 did not require energy but did not give energy either
- + gave me positive energy
- ++ gave me a lot of positive energy

Step 3: Strengths Reflection

After completing the reflections, closely examine your answers. Select the five activities that make you feel most energised and use the first column of the table in Appendix 2 “My Top 5 Green Activities “ to list them.

Next, use the second column of the table to indicate what strength(s) you may be using during each activity.

Step 4: Weakness Reflection

Now do the same thing for the 5 activities that depleted your energy. Select the 5 activities that make you feel most depleted and use the first column of Appendix 2 “My top 5 Red Activities “ to list them.

Next, use the second column of the table to indicate per activity which strengths you are lacking during this activity.

Step 5: Evaluation

What have you learned from this exercise?

What new discovery(ies) have you made about yourself?

How can you use your strengths more often?

Which strengths are lacking (weaknesses)?

How can you effectively deal with situations that deplete your energy? For instance, you can delegate your energy-draining areas, or can you reframe those tasks. Alternatively, you may marshal your strengths to help, or build your energy ahead of time so that you have the baseline energy you need to get through an energy-draining task.

Appendix 1: Daily Reflection Form

Date:

Green Activities

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Energy Levels</i>	<i>Note</i>

Red Activities

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Energy Levels</i>	<i>Note</i>

Appendix 2: My Top 5 Activities - Reflection

<i>My Top 5 Green Activities</i>	
<i>Activities that make me feel most energised:</i>	<i>Strength(s) that I am using during this activity:</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

<i>My Top 5 Red Activities</i>	
<i>Activities that make me feel most depleted:</i>	<i>Strength(s) that I am lacking during this activity:</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	