

Strengths in Significant Moments

Strengths

Exercise

10-20 min.

Client

No

Although positive moments can be experienced on a daily basis, some moments in our life stand out in terms of the impact they have on our future. In hindsight, we realise that these moments were significant; they were turning points that shaped our lives for the better. Examples include quitting your job, asking the love of your life for dinner, or taking singing lessons. Note that these moments themselves may not be dramatic or extraordinary. Their impact, however, is.

When these moments happened because we took action in some way, they can reveal important information about our personal strengths. Rather than resulting from passive waiting, these moments occurred because we took action in some way. This action often reflects one or more of our defining strengths at work. Perhaps our bravery allowed us to move beyond our fear and quit our job, or our love for learning encouraged us to start taking singing lessons. Whatever strength is used, it allowed the event to transcend the ordinary. By carefully analysing crucial times like these in our life, we can increase our knowledge of our own personal strengths.

Goal

The goal of this exercise is to increase awareness of personal strengths by analysing crucial moments in life.

Advice

- Note that this exercise may take some time, because some clients may find it difficult to identify significant moments in their life. Although the exercise can be guided by the practitioner, it can also be homework for the client. This option has the advantage that the client can take sufficient time to think of one or more moments that are considered Significant.
- This tool can be applied to the client's life in general, but also to a specific domain of the client's life. For instance, a client may recall significant moments at work or during romantic relationships.
- In order to make sure that clients understand the concept of a significant moment, it is advisable for the practitioner to provide some concrete examples.
- Note that some significant moments may initially be perceived as negative, but turn out to be life lessons in retrospect. Examples of these significant moments include trauma, stress, and hardship. This exercise can therefore also be considered useful in the context of post-traumatic growth and benefit finding.
- Doing this exercise can have several potential benefits for clients, including:
 - refreshing the client's memory about meaningful events
 - savouring the past and cherishing memories
 - building self-efficacy by enabling clients to connect with internal strengths that may have been otherwise forgotten or never identified



Suggested Readings

Harzer, C., & Ruch, W. (2015). The relationships of character strengths with coping, work-related stress, and job satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology, 6*, 165.

Helgeson, V. S., Reynolds, K. A., & Tomich, P. L. (2006). A meta-analytic review of benefit finding and growth. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 74*, 797–816.

Tedeschi, R. G., & Calhoun, L. G. (1995). *Trauma and transformation: Growing in the aftermath of suffering*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Tool Description

Instructions

Step 1: Identifying a significant moment

In this exercise I would like to ask you to think of a time when you took action which resulted in a positive outcome. Although the moment does not have to be life-changing, it should have had an important impact on your life.

Step 2: Linking strengths

Think about what personal strengths you drew upon to take action. List all the strengths that were used. Provide concrete behavioural examples about how those strengths were expressed.

Step 3: Linking identity

Reflect on how the moment or the event shaped who you are today. Explore how the moment or event affected how you view yourself.

Step 4: Identifying patterns

Some personal strengths are at the core of our identity. Consider the strengths that you used in the significant moment you identified in step 1. Can you think of other important situations in your life when you used the same strengths? Describe these situations and the ways in which your strengths were used