

Play to Your Strengths

INTRODUCTION:

In addition to encouraging students to take assessments that help them identify potential careers (such as the Myers-Briggs or Strong Interest Inventories), it's also important that they recognize their unique combination of skills and talents in order to make informed judgments about appropriate careers. Students should be able to identify their own strengths and abilities that they have utilized in the past and could apply again in the future.

This activity could be used in any class (e.g., math or English) or circumstance (e.g., counseling session or student government) where the educator wants to help students become more aware of their personal strengths and abilities, thus strengthening self-esteem. This activity also gives students practice in active listening and effective note taking.

PURPOSE:

- To have students identify past accomplishments
- To have students identify the skills and talents used to create each past accomplishment
- To improve students' listening and note-taking skills
- To have students list possible careers that would utilize their personal skills and talents
- To strengthen self-esteem

DIRECTIONS:

1. Discuss the concept of “playing to your strengths.” Explain that each of us has a unique set of skills or personal talents that we have used in the past to create positive outcomes and experiences. Conclude the discussion by pointing out that we can call upon these same strengths to help us be successful in the future.
2. Distribute the handout "Playing to Your Strengths" and have students do Step A: "List below 10 experiences you've had in the past when you feel you did something well and enjoyed doing it." To model the activity, you may wish to provide examples of your own accomplishments (in addition to those on the handout).
3. Have students do Step B on Handout: "Now prioritize your top five experiences and identify what Dependable Strengths of yours allowed you to have the experience." Once again, you may find it valuable to model the activity by sharing the personal qualities or skills you used to create the accomplishments that you identified in Step 1 above.
4. Divide the class into trios. Designate each member of the group as X, Y, or Z. "X" shares his/her top 5 accomplishments one at a time. "Y" listens carefully and identifies aloud the Dependable Strengths present in each of X's accomplishments. "Z" records the skills and abilities identified and then hands that sheet to "X." Rotate roles until each student has played each part. This small group work is very important and seems to enhance the student's sense of him/herself.
5. Ask groups to discuss/brainstorm what careers each member might excel in given the dependable qualities or skills they have identified. Then have them complete Step C on the

handout.

6. Lead a class discussion, exploring what students have discovered about the relationship of their Dependable Strengths and possible career choices. Where possible, expand on the possibilities for individual students.

Students emerge with a much clearer sense of who they are and what their natural gifts are. This activity seems to get to the heart of the matter and students leave the class with a natural high from having recalled their best accomplishments. They learn a lot about each other along with learning to analyze how to use and apply personal skills.

Playing to Your Strengths

A. List below 10 experiences you've had in the past when you did something well and enjoyed doing it. Examples might be: leading a fundraising project for community service, writing an 18-page research paper, designing the interior of a bedroom, learning to ride a bicycle, resolving a conflict, winning a basketball game, or caring for your younger brother/sister.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

B. Now prioritize your top five experiences and identify what strengths or skills of yours allowed you to have that experience. Examples of personal qualities or skills include: athletic ability, troubleshooting, leadership, design expertise, organizational skills, research abilities, communication skills, intelligence, good people skills, etc..

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

C. Now, brainstorm a list of any careers or jobs you think would best utilize your strengths. If you don't know the name of a particular career, then make lists of qualities, such as "working with people", or "managing a big project."