

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