Strengths

Understanding the Negativity Bias

As a human being, you might naturally concentrate on your weaknesses, while overlooking your strengths, due to what we call the negativity bias.

In the past, this focus on negative aspects served an adaptive purpose in human evolution, as it helped individuals stay alert to potential dangers and remain safe. However, in today's world, this negativity bias is not as beneficial as it once was.

The Impact on ADHD Women

For women and girls with ADHD, this bias is even more significant. Society and your family has focused on fixing your perceived weaknesses , instead of teaching you to recognize and grow your strengths. Now, your brain likely has a very strong negativity bias when it comes to viewing yourself.

Counteracting the Negativity Bias

It's crucial to begin recognizing and counteracting the negativity bias. One way to do this is by shifting your focus towards your strengths, which can help foster personal growth, resilience, authenticity, and self-confidence.

STREGNTHS

Recognizing Old Coping Behaviors

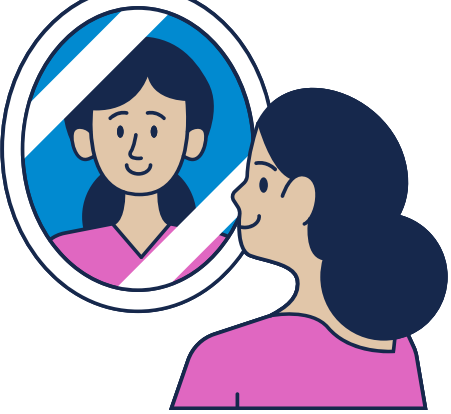
The negativity bias leads you to focus on your perceived flaws, compare yourself to the neurotypical gold standard of women, and ultimately reinforces the old coping behaviors we are working on replacing.

Remember, these old behaviors, such as hiding, silencing, self-criticism, pleasing, and perfectionism, protected you from the fear of rejection and feelings of inadequacy. While these coping mechanisms made sense at the time, they may no longer be effective.

What are the behaviors from above that you want to work on replacing with new ones?____
____
____

Building a Bridge to New Coping Skills

Connecting with your strengths can help you build authenticity, develop more truthful and honest connections with yourself and others, and let go of old coping skills that may no longer serve you.



STRENGTHS

Reducing the Self-Critical Voice

This mindset shift to a strengths lens can help reduce the self-critical voice telling you that you're not enough.

Remember, this voice comes from societal messages about a "gold standard" for women that you learned both directly and indirectly while growing up.

Overcoming these powerful false messages about your worth requires courage.

The more you build on your strengths the more courage you will have.

Reflection Questions

1. What would my life be like if I always did things I was naturally good at?

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____

_____

2.What do you think would happen in terms of happiness and stress?

_____ _____ _____

_ _____

_____

_____ _____

_ Credit to Kristy Arbon for these questions

Unveiling the Authentic Self

An authentic person is:

- aware of their inner world
- can honestly consider information about themselves
- behaves in line with their values and needs
- is genuine in their close relationships.

Authenticity means knowing yourself and acting accordingly.

Many neurodivergent women have been deprived of the opportunity to be authentic, and instead encouraged to mask.

For women with ADHD, embracing authenticity can help them to overcome challenges and improve their quality of life.

Obstacles to Authenticity

Factors that can contribute to a separation from one's authentic self include **societal structures, family dynamics, belief systems, fear of rejection**, **trauma**, and **work environments.**

The Relationship Between Authenticity and Happiness

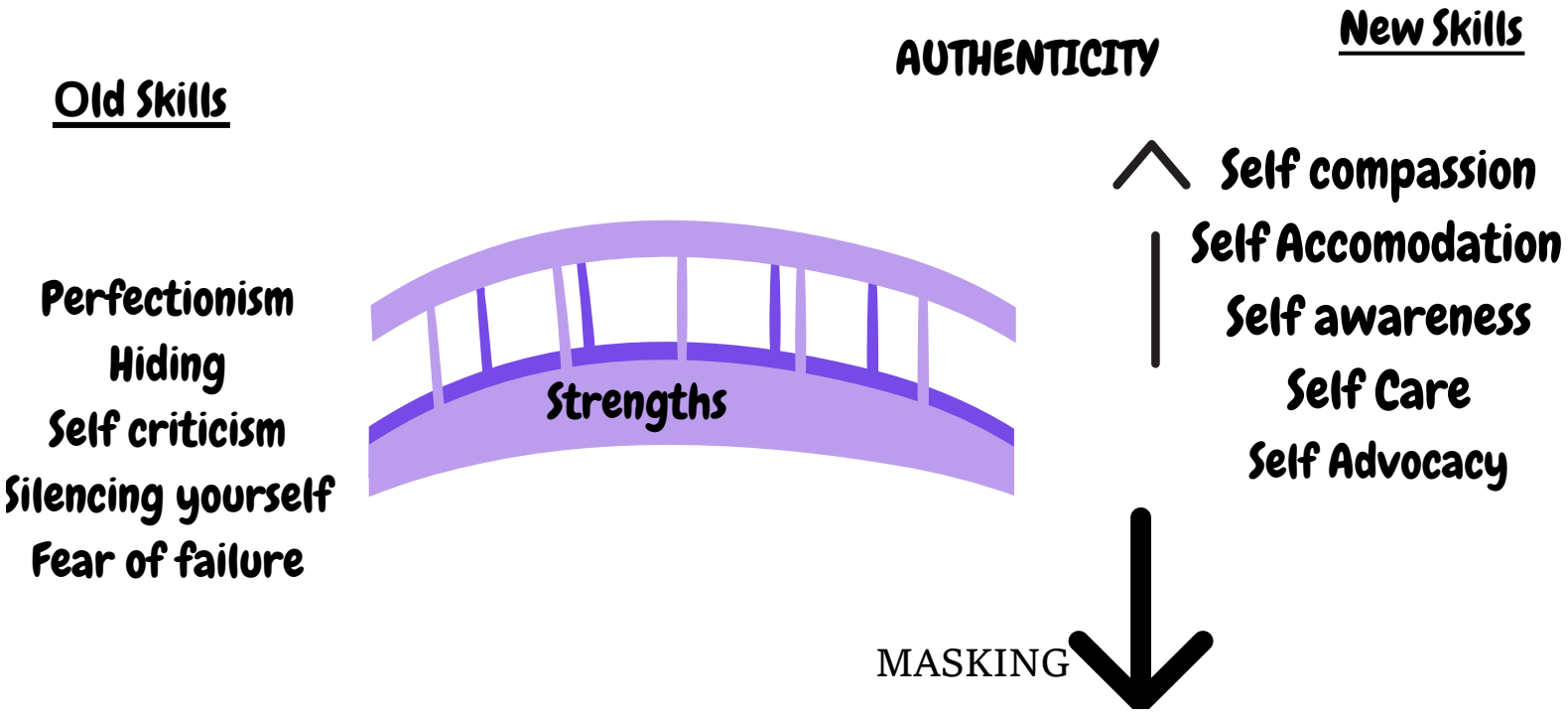
Research shows authenticity is tied to happiness and satisfaction, serving as a buffer against anxiety and depression.

We will talk more about authenticity in our values unit.

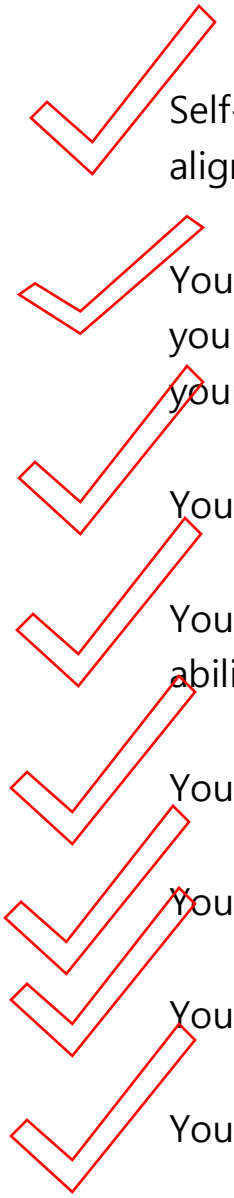
STRENGTHS

Building Strengths as a Bridge

Focusing on personal strengths can help ADHD women bridge the gap between old coping skills and new, more authentic ways of living. The old coping skills drive in authenticity and masking while the new coping skills build authenticity.



Benefits of Strengths Based Living



- Self-awareness and self-trust improve as you make decisions more aligned with what works for you.
- You may naturally start to shed people from your life who criticize you and instead start to draw people into your life who appreciate your strengths.
- You feel more empowered and in control.
- You can set and achieve goals that are aligned with your unique abilities
- You feel more capable of handling challenges and setbacks.
- You better cope with stress and adversity.
- You feel more able to form authentic connections with others.
- You can continually move towards growth rather than feeling stuck.

The Flourish Empowerment Model and Strengths

Strengths and Self Awareness

Focusing on strengths requires you to use self-awareness skills to approach and think of life differently, structuring it in a way that utilizes your best self. It also requires you to pay attention to signs in your body and mind that you may not be utilizing your strengths. In situations where you can't use your strengths, self- accommodation can help you adapt and manage those tasks effectively.

Strengths and Self-Compassion

You can use self-compassion to accurately see and feel for yourself the years you spent feeling inadequate, with your authentic self unrecognized and your special talents unappreciated. You can be motivated to alleviate that for yourself and want to build a different life centered around your strengths.

Strengths and Self-Accommodation

With a focus on your strengths, you will be more readily able to implement strategies to support your abilities, even when you're forced to do tasks that are not friendly to your brain. Self- accommodation plays a crucial role in these situations.



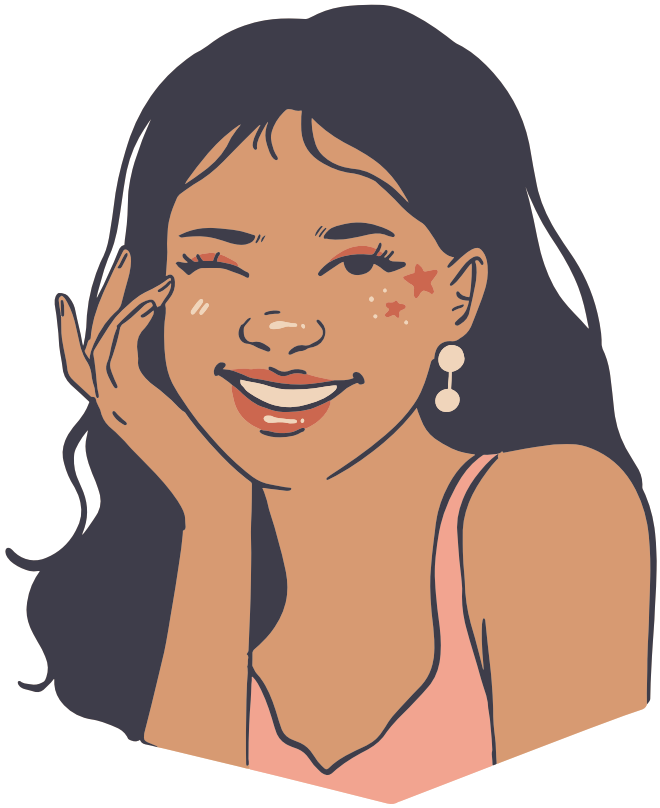
The Flourish Empowerment Model and **Strengths**

Strengths and Self-Advocacy

A strengths-based approach enables you to effectively advocate for yourself, as you can clearly communicate what you need in order to focus on and create a life built more around your strengths. You may need to delegate or make arrangements in order for this to happen.

Strengths and Self-Care

When focusing on your strengths, you may feel freer to choose different self-care activities that are more enjoyable, rejuvenating, and effective.



Uncovering Your Stregnths

Some strengths are obvious, while others can go unnoticed. Discover hidden strengths by considering the following:

- Reflect on moments when you felt energized, experienced joy, or received compliments from others.
- Identify tasks or activities that you find enjoyable, satisfying, and where you feel most proficient.
- Examine your significant accomplishments and the strengths that contributed to them.
- Determine which aspects of your personal or professional life you consider most meaningful and gratifying.
- Look for themes or patterns in your interests, passions, or hobbies that suggest specific strengths.
- Consider your most important values and how they align with your strengths.
- Identify when others typically seek your guidance or help.
- Reflect on attributes or skills that distinguish you from others in your personal or professional life.
- Think about activities you have been consistently attracted to since childhood.
- Contemplate how you can leverage your strengths to positively influence your life and the lives of others.

Strengths of the ADHD Mind

Research and information suggest that ADHD people tend to have certain strengths. These may or may not be true about you as they are just generalizations.

Creativity and Divergent Thinking

✔ Research shows that individuals with ADHD often excel at thinking outside the box and coming up with creative solutions to problems.

Hyperfocus

✔ When something captures their interest, people with ADHD can focus intensely and be highly productive.

Resilience and Adaptability

✔ Living with ADHD helps people build resilience and adaptability, allowing them to handle challenges and stress effectively.

Risk-taking and Entrepreneurial Spirit

✔ ADHD is linked to higher risk-taking, which can be a strength, especially in entrepreneurship where taking calculated risks leads to success.

High Energy and Enthusiasm

✔ ADHD's energy can be a positive force when directed toward projects that require enthusiasm and sustained effort.

Strengths of the ADHD Mind

Sensitivity to Stimuli

✔ ADHD individuals are often more aware of their surroundings, which can enhance their ability to notice details others might miss.

Spontaneity and Improvisational Skills

✔ Spontaneous, quick thinking is common in ADHD individuals, which can be beneficial in fast-paced situations.

Enhanced Problem-Solving in Crisis Situations

✔ Many people with ADHD report that they perform best under pressure, focusing better in high-stress situations.

Conclusion:

All these strengths are backed by research, showing that ADHD can be an asset in many ways when understood and harnessed properly.

Are any of these strengths for you?

If you don't know your strengths that's okay. On the following pages we will do some strengths exercises to help you identify what your strengths are.

List of Strengths for Activities and Reflections

Adaptability
Ambition
Analytical thinking
Assertiveness
Attention to detail
Authenticity
Bravery
Calmness
Collaboration
Commitment
Communication
Compassion
Confidence
Conflict resolution
Creativity
Critical thinking
Curiosity
Decisiveness
Dedication
Dependability
Determination
Diligence
Discipline
Empathy
Emotional intelligence
Enthusiasm
Flexibility
Focus
Forgiveness
Friendliness
Generosity
Gratitude
Honesty
Humility
Humor
Imagination
Initiative
Integrity
Intuition
Kindness
Leadership
Listening
Logical reasoning
Loyalty
Mindfulness
Motivation
Negotiation
Open-mindedness
Optimism



Organization
Patience
Perseverance
Persuasiveness
Positivity
Problem-solving
Proactivity
Public speaking
Punctuality
Resilience
Resourcefulness
Respectfulness
Responsibility
Self-awareness
Self-confidence
Self-discipline
Self-motivation
Self-regulation
Sense of humor
Sincerity
Social intelligence
Spirituality
Strategic thinking
Teamwork
Time management
Tolerance
Trustworthiness
Vision
Work ethic

Find Your Strengths

Uncover Your Strengths Exercise
This exercise will help you uncover some of your strengths. Follow the steps below to gain meaningful insights about yourself.

Instructions:

Reflect on Your Experiences:
Take some time to think about three moments in your work or personal life where you felt truly authentic, accomplished, or completely in your element.

These moments might have:
- Brought you joy
- Made you laugh
- Given you a sense of achievement or satisfaction

Title Each Moment:

Give each moment a title.

Identify and Describe:

For each of these moments, write three sentences that describe what happened.

Reflect on your behaviors, actions, and emotions during each moment.

Find Your Strenghts

Moment 1

Title: _____

Description of the Event (3 Sentences):_____ _____ __
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____
_____

Behaviors, Actions, and Emotions During the Moment:_____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_ _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _ _____

Moment 2

Title: _____

Description of the Event (3 Sentences):_____ _____ __
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____
_____

Behaviors, Actions, and Emotions During the Moment:_____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_ _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____

Find Your Strengths

Three Moments Reflection Worksheet

Moment 3

Title: _____

Description of the Event (3 Sentences):_____ ___ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____
_____ __ _____ ____ ____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____ _
_____ _____ _____ _
_____

Behaviors, Actions, and Emotions During the Moment:

_____ __ _____
_____ ____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
___ _____ _____ _____
_____ _____ _____
_____
__

Find Your Strengths

After you've completed your three moments, look for common threads or themes between them.

For example, if you had a moment where you were playing with your grandchild and another where you were hanging out with your friends a strength might be connection.

Are there any **strengths** or **characteristics** that emerge across the moments?

Embrace and celebrate your strengths, and look for opportunities to use them in your personal and professional life.

Uncovering Your Strengths

What would your lives be like if you were always doing things you were naturally good at?_____ _____ ____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

What does it feel like to imagine a life like that?_____ _ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

How significantly would your life improve in terms of stress, emotional regulation, and happiness if you focused on tasks that aligned with your natural abilities and strengths?_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ __

Remember, you are not alone in your experiences as an ADHD woman, and this group is here.

Discover your Strengths: VIA STREGNTHS

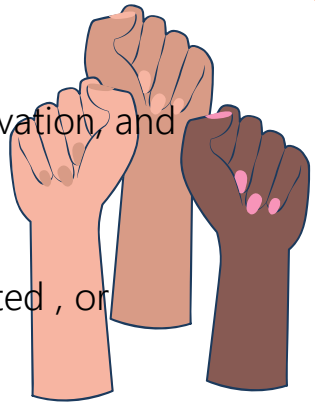
You may not know about your strengths enough begin to shape your life to focus more on them. We will do some exercises so that you can discover them. Once you become aware of them your life will begin to shift in many ways, and you will even notice your executive functioning improving.

The most popular and well regarded tool for measuring strengths is THE VIA Classification of Strengths and Character.

You can take the strengths survey online for free here:
https://www.viacharacter.org/

The VIA Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues is a framework developed by psychologists Martin Seligman and Christopher Peterson to identify and classify universally valued positive traits. The classification consists of six core virtues, and under each virtue, there are several character strengths.

Executive Functioning and Strengths



Let's think about how using your strengths can impact your attention, motivation, and energy in different situations

Exercise:

1. Bring to mind an activity that makes you feel particularly good, motivated , or proud.

a. What unique strengths were present in that activity?_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

b. How did it make you feel?_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

c. How much energy did you have during the activity?_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

d. How motivated were you?_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

e. How was your attention during the activity?_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

f. How did your ADD-related traits impact the activity? Did you feel emotionally disregulated, stressed or self critical?_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Executive Functioning and Strengths

Can you use self- compassion to help yourself, acknowledging that your ADHD-related traits might have contributed to the challenge you faced? _ _____
_ _____ _____
_ _____ _____
_ __ _____ _____
__ _____ _____
__ _____

Consider writing a brief statement of self-compassion and understanding, celebrating your own unique strengths and recognizing how you haven't been able to our encouraged to realize them and how this has impacted you. Use this as a reminder of your strengths and unique traits as you move forward in life

._____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

The key to understand is that when you use your strengths and engage in activities your brain naturally excels at, your motivation and executive functioning improve. You don't struggle as much because your brain and nervous system work differently from those of neurotypical people. Recognizing this difference can help you thrive.

Your Interest- Based Nervous System and ADHD

William Dodson's concept of an interest-based nervous system suggests that individuals with ADHD perform at their best and maintain focus when they find a task genuinely interesting, enjoyable, or personally meaningful. According to Dodson, people with ADHD have a nervous system that is primarily driven by engagement and interest rather than a more conventional approach based on importance or consequences.

In other words, individuals with ADHD can improve their performance and focus by tapping into their strengths and interests. This can lead to **increa sed motivation**, **improved executive functioning**, and a **greater sense of accomplishment.**

So executive functioning and motivation issues improve when you use your strengths.

The following activity is based on his idea of the interest based nervous system, building a manual based on your strengths and interests it's for you to do in your free time, if you are interested.

Craft a Personal Success Guidebook



Individual Activity between Sessions

Introduction: This activity is based on William Dodson's concept of an interest-based nervous system, which suggests that individuals with ADHD perform at their best and maintain focus when they find a task genuinely **interesting, enjoyable,** or **personally meaningful**. In this exercise, you'll create a personal success guidebook to help you identify your strengths and the strategies that worked well for you, counteracting the negativity bias and fostering confidence, self- awareness, and personal growth.

Instructions:

Reflect on a recent task or activity that you completed successfully on a day when you felt particularly good._____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Identify the factors that contributed to your success or positive experience. These could include your strengths, interests, or specific strategies you used.__

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Craft a Person Success Guidebook al



Individual Activity between Sessions

Acknowledge and appreciate these positive factors, and consider how you can use them to your advantage in the future._____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Create a guidebook, either physically or digitally, to document your successes and the strategies that work best for you. You can organize this guidebook in a way that resonates with you - using categories, themes, or simply listing your successes and strategies chronologically.

Make Your Own Success Guidebook



Make a habit of updating your guidebook whenever you complete a task or have a good day. Reflect on what went right and how you can replicate that success in the future.

Refer to your guidebook as needed to remind yourself of your strengths and the strategies that have helped you succeed in the past.

By focusing on your successes and the strategies that work best for you, you can counter the negativity bias and create a more balanced , strengths-based perspective on your abilities and experiences. This will help you fully embrace and leverage your neurodivergent strengths to build a more fulfilling and authentic life.

Note: This idea is credited to William Dodson and David Giwerc.

Group Activity



Group reflection Questions

Encourage each other to embrace and celebrate your strengths, and offer support and encouragement to each other.

Do you notice your strengths you have are those not typically developed or encouraged in our world?_____
_____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____

Do you feel like you were encouraged more to fix your perceived "weaknesses" than develop your strengths?_____
____ _____
_____ _____
_____ _____