

LESSON 2

Exploring Identity and Acknowledging Strengths

Approximate
time required:

🕒 60 min

LEARNING GOALS

We are learning:

- To identify personal interests, roles, goals, and strengths.
- How identified assets/strengths connect to decision making and personal well-being.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Co-develop success criteria with students using the following questions: “How will we know we are achieving our learning goals? What will it look like/sound like?”

For example:

- I can identify some of my personal strengths.
- I know/understand the connection between my interests, strengths and my post-secondary pathway

BIG IDEAS

- Developing social emotional skills of knowing ourselves (self-awareness) and our strengths can help you make informed careers choices.
- We all have strengths and skills as individuals and knowing about them can help contribute to our overall mental health now and in the future (in our personal lives, in our relationships with others, in school and at work).

CONSIDERATIONS

- Students with low mood or mental health struggles may have difficulty identifying strengths. They may need explicit help discovering what they are good at (or may need suggestions).
- Remember that students' diverse experiences, culture, ethnicity and background shape who they are and contribute to their strengths.
- Be mindful of your/students biases that may inadvertently influence how students' strengths, interests and passions are perceived and validated. It is essential to provide unbiased validation and support to empower students' self-awareness journeys without judgement or limitation in this learning.

MATERIALS / HANDOUTS**Student Notebook**

- 2.1 – I AM
- 2.2 – My Strengths
- 2.3 – Extension
- 2.4 – Challenge
- 2.5 – Reflection

PowerPoint Slides

- Exploring Identity and Acknowledging Strengths

ADDITIONAL TEACHER REFERENCES & RESOURCES

- [Adjectives about me - Self-awareness and sense of identity - Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource - Secondary - A Daily Mental Health Resource \(smho-smso.ca\)](#)
- Examples of [Strengths \(and Skills\) to List in a Resume](#) (Indeed.com)

INTRODUCTION

Slide 1: Introduction slide

Slide 2: We are learning...

- » To identify personal interests, roles, goals, and strengths.
- » How identified assets/strengths connect to decision making and personal well-being.

MINDS ON**Warm Up Activity****Slide 3: Group brainstorm**

Teacher prompt: “Part of our identity is composed of, and shaped by our **strengths (or qualities), which is defined as a good or beneficial quality or attribute of a person** and our skills, **which can be defined as the ability to do something well after learning and practicing it.**”

As a group, we are going to start thinking about personal strengths and skills. There is no right or wrong answer when it comes to listing strengths. We all have different experiences, cultures, faiths, backgrounds and other factors that may influence what we consider strengths. Things we are good at and enjoy will change many times throughout our lives and it is important to be kind to ourselves and patient as we discover our ever-evolving identity.”

To help generate new and creative ideas to help students identify their strengths and skills, encourage them to brainstorm some ideas as a class. Consider doing a ‘Word Cloud’ activity when generating ideas as a class.

Show the following questions one at a time and ask students to give some suggestions (you can select to show them all or only a few):

- » What are things people like/enjoy doing?
- » What are some strengths, gifts, talents people have? How do you know?
- » Do you think any of these can be applied or transferred to a career?

Optional: You can also use *Career Cruising* or *MyBlueprint* surveys depending on your board.

Slide 4: Transferable strengths and skills

Teacher prompt: “Here are a few strengths and skills that can be transferable within the workplace:

- » critical thinking and problem solving
- » innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship
- » self-directed learning
- » collaboration
- » communication
- » global competence
- » technological fluency”

Teacher prompt: “Can you see yourself in any of these transferable skills? Are there any skills you want to learn or improve on?”



Slide 5: Debrief the activity

- » What were some takeaways from this reflection?
- » Do students think that strengths can easily be used as a skill in their future job/career?

Teacher prompt: “There are many skills that we each have and many that we may notice in the people around us that inspire us to learn more. The great thing is that skills can be developed. As well as skills, we each have strengths and interests, that can help us to explore options for our future jobs and careers. That’s why in today’s lesson, we’ll be thinking about our personal interests, strengths, and exploring our goals.”

ACTION TASK (Consider self, others, careers) 25 min**Individual Strengths and Skills****Slide 6: Notebook activity: Self-Reflection**

Teacher prompt: “To get us started, we are going to take a moment so you can reflect upon and articulate some of your interests, passions and things you are good at.”

Ask students to complete the [‘I AM’ handout 2.1](#) in their notebook to capture their ideas. Students can choose to write or draw their answers in the table provided.

NOTE: *The Notebook is not for submission. It is for personal reflection only.*

Encourage them to consider:

- » what they are passionate about
- » what they are good at
- » what they are interested in”

Optional: Once students are done completing the **I AM** table, you can invite them to share anonymously on a jamboard or a sticky note – 1 strength or 1 thing they enjoy.

Slide 7: My strengths & skills

Teacher prompt: “We all have days when we feel down, uncomfortable, anxious, or like nothing is going right. That is a part of life. If we focus on our weaknesses, it’s easy to get caught up in feeling negative. And that can make us feel sick, tired, sad, and disconnected.

The good news is that if we focus on our individual strengths (bravery, kindness, optimism), skills (being good at math, sports, or music), and supports (family, faith community, and/or our culture) we can overcome tough times and feel more positive about our future. If we focus on the good stuff that helps make us who we are, we can become more resilient.

This reflection can help you notice the multiple strengths, skills and supports that you have in your life.”



Invite students to turn to [2.2 - My Strengths](#) in their notebook, and ask them to record their strengths, skills and interests. This exercise will help guide them to think about their skills/strengths in a variety of different areas. **Students can use their “I AM” table to see if they can repurpose some of their ideas.**

Optional: Name a strength or a skill for each student to help get them started (you can use the [Indeed.com](#) link provided in the additional resources).

NOTE: This table can be revisited to help them inform their resumé.

Slide 8: Brainstorm

Teacher prompt: “We’ve discussed the concepts of strengths and skills and you’ve started to identify your own. Now I’d like for us to brainstorm how strengths and skills can contribute to your achievements and personal growth.”

Slide 9: Debrief

» What were some takeaways from this reflection?

Teacher prompt: “Strengths and skills are the drivers that help you to reach your goals. When we set goals for ourselves, we need to plan on how we want to achieve these. Sometimes, we have all the strengths and skills needed to successfully achieve the goal, while at other times, we might need to learn and practice new skills to meet our objective. By being aware of our strengths and skills, we are in a better position to determine which ones we want/need to bolster to continue to grow personally and professionally.”

Optional: Encourage students to think about additional skills they would like to develop and how these skills can contribute to their future goals.

CONSOLIDATION

 20 min

Slide 10: Brainstorm

Brainstorm with the class other ways that they can learn about their strengths and what they are good at.

Responses could include: ask parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, Elders, faith leaders, friends, skills inventories, make a list of accomplishments, personal reflection, etc.

Introduce the concept of seeking feedback from others and encourage students to think of other sources of information/feedback that they could explore to gain a broader perspective on their personal strengths and areas of growth.

Provide guidance on how to approach others for feedback and encourage students to record the feedback they receive in their notebook.



Seeking Feedback

Teacher Prompt: “Approaching others for feedback can be a valuable learning experience. When seeking feedback, it’s important to approach with an open and positive mindset. Remembering that feedback is a valuable tool for self-improvement.”

Consider the following guidance as you approach others for feedback:

- » **Slide 11: Choose the right time and place:** Make sure the person is available and receptive.
 - You can ask, them explicitly, “I’d like your thoughts and feedback about some of my skills and strengths. Is now a good time to talk?”

- » **Slide 12: Be specific** about what you’re seeking feedback on: Clearly communicate and let the person know that you value their input and would appreciate their honest observations and suggestions.
 - For example: “What strengths do you think I have in this area?” or ‘Do you have any suggestions for my personal growth?’

- » **Slide 13: Active listening:** When receiving feedback, listen attentively without interruption.

- » **Slide 14: Be receptive:** Remember that feedback is intended to help you grow. Ask questions for better understanding. Stay open-minded and avoid becoming defensive or dismissive of constructive criticism.

- » **Slide 15: Express gratitude:** After receiving feedback, express your gratitude to the person for their time and insights. Let them know that their feedback is valued and will contribute to your personal development.

Slide 16: Notebook challenge:

Invite students to a notebook challenge!

Teacher prompt: “Now it’s your turn! Go and ask feedback from two trusted sources, such as teachers, coaches, mentors, peers, Elders, knowledge keepers, knowledge holders, and employers and to add your findings to your notebook.”

- » **Be curious and see if you learn something new about yourself!**

WRAP UP



Slide 17: Notebook reflection

Teacher prompt: "Explore some careers that are aligned with your strengths and interests and add the results in your notebook."

Slide 18: Notebook extension

Teacher prompt: "How can you use social media to demonstrate your interests, strengths, and skills to potential employers? How does using media in this way contribute to the development of your sense of self and to the way you present yourself to the world [e.g., building a 'personal brand']?"

Slide 19: Wrap up.

Teacher prompt: "Strengths, skills and interests are great things to know about yourself, as they can help you both in your personal life and in your post-secondary life."

