



The Nature of Strengths

The natural world inspires and sustains us in every aspect of our lives, from food to art, medicine to engineering. While surprising and elegant innovations can arise from observing nature, so too can qualities that build resilience in the human spirit.

The Nature of Strengths is about discovering these qualities and imagining how we can apply them in our lives. Use the cards with children and adults to explore strengths and stories, metaphors and ideas to enhance learning, self-awareness and appreciate nature's infinite variety.

Stereotypes, myths and legends

Sometimes the strengths of plants and animals depicted on these cards may surprise you. A hyena, for example, is considered an unattractive or even evil creature in some cultures, but in the *Nature of Strengths* we discover that hyenas have big hearts!

Facilitators and educators can use the cards for conversations that gently open us to the assumptions and stereotypes we form, often based on age, gender, race, socio-economic background or profession.

- Which cards do you think have a surprising match between the image and the strength identified? What makes the match surprising? Are there particular ideas or assumptions you had already formed about a particular creature or plant?
- Looking at yourself, are there strengths you don't identify with? Can you think of a time when you have actually demonstrated this strength? What if you were to become known for this strength? What would you be doing more of?
- Pick a creature or plant you don't immediately warm to. Research this creature or plant and see if you can use this information to identify one of their strengths. Create a phrase that describes this strength.

Team-building and Leadership

Use the cards as a refreshing window into the strengths of teams and leadership. For example, you may like to contemplate the cards that will be important strengths for a project you are already working on or about to begin.

- Which 3 (or more) cards do you think are important strengths in effective leadership?
- Thinking of a team you are part of, which card do you associate with each person on the team?
- Which 3 cards represent qualities you are able to bring to the team?
- Can you select a card that identifies a style of leadership you think your project, position or team needs right now?

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Opposites attract

Facilitators and teachers may notice that some cards in *The Nature of Strengths* form a natural pair because the phrases on them seem to be opposites. For example: 'Blending In' and 'Standing Out'; 'Holding On' and 'Letting Go'; 'Standing Solid' and 'Walking on Air'; 'Listening Well' and 'Speaking Out', or 'Taking Care' and 'Taking Chances'.

These pairings can be fruitfully used to promote reflection, insight and dialogue—and it can be fascinating to observe how perspectives and interpretations vary from person to person. Conversation starters might include:

- Choose two cards that represent 'opposite' strengths to you. Can you share a story about a time when you used each of these strengths?
- Have you ever experienced a time when you decided to change from one strength to the opposite?
- How do you know when to use each of these strengths?
- Is one of these strengths more natural to you than the other? For example, do you sometimes find it easier to 'hold on' than to 'let go'?
- If you were to pick another creature or plant to illustrate each of these strengths, what would they be?

Create your own naturalist's notebook

The Nature of Strengths' watercolour illustrations are designed to evoke the drawings and studies of early naturalists and explorers. In the classroom, they can be used to inspire students to create their own naturalist's notebook.

- Ask students to research well-known natural history illustrations from museums, art books, and galleries. What styles of painting or drawing do they notice? Is there a style they might want to emulate? Or will they use a style of their own to depict their plants and animals?
- Ask students to study an area of ground, parkland, playground or backyard and record and sketch some of the plants, insects or animals that live there.
- Are students able to identify or research how the habitat has changed over the years. What impact have humans had? What impact are humans having now? Are there any species that are in danger?

THE NATURE OF STRENGTHS

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