

# BRAVING THE MOUNTAIN!

## Using your strengths

Target competency	Know and value oneself
Cross-curricular competencies (QEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construct their identity</li> <li>Use creative thinking</li> <li>Solve problems</li> <li>Cooperate with others</li> </ul>
General objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify one of one's own strengths</li> <li>Use everyone's individual strengths in teamwork</li> </ul>



### REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP

In the last workshop, we talked about the comfort zone and avoidance. Do you remember the challenge I gave you? Tell me how it went.

\*The challenge was to use at least one means to reduce or cope with anxiety instead of running away from it.

### IN THE LIVES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

After talking to Ms. Nathalie, Leo and Charlie finally got up the courage to leave their comfort zone and attempt the climb, even though they were scared. The entire Camp OFF-TRAIL team is now in the middle of hiking up Mount Jacques-Cartier. A tired Leo says:

"We've been walking for two hours, and we're still nowhere near the top. I'm tired and hungry. Can we stop?"

"No! I'm still full of energy. I want to keep going," says Charlie.

Charlie moves quickly up the trail. She a little ahead of the group when she suddenly encounters an obstacle.

Charlie shouts to the rest of the group: "The trail is blocked!"

Ms. Catherine informs the students: "The safety patrol warned me that the hike would be more difficult because of bad weather over the past few days. There have been landslides and even fallen trees."

Leo says to the rest of the group: "I'm pretty agile. I can go first. Then I can help you climb over the rocks and trees."

Charlie speaks up in turn: "I can help too: I've got lots of energy! I can carry bring someone's bag if they're tired."

Ms. Catherine is delighted and encourages these initiatives: "Great. We're going to work together and use everyone's strengths to face this challenge. This landslide won't stop us from getting to the summit!"

## DID YOU KNOW?

Our attention is often focused more on our limitations than on our strengths.

However, some researchers suggest that thinking more often about one's strengths and giving them greater importance in daily life can lead to an increase in well-being, as well as a reduction in stress and depressive symptoms.

A strength can be defined as a positive trait that characterizes an individual, such as kindness, perseverance, or the ability to communicate clearly, among others.

Helping students identify their strengths and understand how they can put them to work helps them to develop their abilities more effectively. This support also helps them to better equip themselves to face more difficult challenges and situations.

By helping students highlight their strengths, you remind them that they have important qualities and you foster their self-esteem by reflecting a positive outlook. By putting their strengths to work in a variety of situations, you encourage them to consolidate their skills and help them understand how useful they can be in a variety of contexts.

(Seligman et al., 2005)

## INSTRUCTIONS

N.B. This workshop may last longer for some groups than for others. It may be a good idea to allow more time, or to combine it with certain other English-related learning objectives (e.g., oral expression).

1. Explain to the students that, like Leo and Charlie, they'll each have to identify one of their strengths and combine it with those of others to achieve a goal.
2. Give each student a copy of the printed *My Strengths* handout, below, and ask them to form teams of four or five.
3. Explain that, as a team, they'll have to come up with an idea to improve their school. Let them know that there are no limits to their ideas, and that they don't have to worry about monetary or physical constraints. Encourage them to be creative. Ask them to identify a strength for each team member of their team that will help make their project a success.
4. Explain that the students are to present their school improvement project, highlighting how each person's strengths can help them implement it. Remind them that if they face a challenge, they need to support each other as a team to progress. Teams can use the supplementary *Proposal to improve our school* form if desired.
5. Once the ideas have been conceived, bring the students back together as a large group to hold a press conference, so that all the teams can communicate their proposed improvements and the strength of each team member to the others. You can record the proposed ideas in a notebook and indicate the students' strengths, then remind them of their strengths, if necessary.
6. Conclude the activity with a discussion prompted by the following questions:
  - How did you identify the strength you were going to use?
  - What did you find difficult in creating your improvement proposal?
  - How did you overcome these difficulties?
  - How did you use your strength to develop your proposal?
  - How have the strengths of others helped you build a better proposal?



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## CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Before the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, identify two strengths that you'll use in a teamwork situation.



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## ENABLING REINVESTMENT

Ask the students to think about one of their personal strengths. Ask them to imagine a new way of using it during the day. For example, if a student is targeting perseverance, they might complete a task that they generally find more difficult. Suggest that your students describe this strength in as much detail as possible in a notebook, and then describe how they intend to use it. If you want to experiment further, use their diary to plan the use of one strength each day of the week.

## READING SUGGESTIONS

- Brown, T.L. (2010). *Soar Elinor!* FSG Kids



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## HANDOUT TO PRINT

### My strengths

What is a strength? A strength is a characteristic that defines you positively and helps you overcome difficulties. It's a great, authentic ability you have, which helps you perform certain activities well, makes you enthusiastic, and facilitates certain elements of your life. Authentic means that this strength is yours, unique, that you express it in your own way and that it represents you naturally.

Here are a few examples of strengths to help you better identify and use yours and develop new ones:

Rigorous	Outgoing	Good in the kitchen	Good at sports
Good at music	Hard-working	Persevering	Creative
Resourceful	Manual	Calm	Good in sciences
Enthusiastic	Receptive	Orderly	Motivated
Respectful	Good memory	Good sense of humour	Cautious
Good cooperation skills	Courageous	Good communication skills	Patient
Curious	Honest	Friendly	Responsible

(Commission scolaire des Samares, 2010; Dubreuil et al., 2012)

## SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

### Proposal to improve our school



Description of our project:

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Each member of our team will use one of their strengths to complete our project:

First, last names:	Identified strength:
We will use their strength as follows:	

First, last names:	Identified strength:
We will use their strength as follows:	

**SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET**  
**Proposal to improve our school**



Each member of our team will use one of his or her strengths to complete our project (continued):

<b>First, last names:</b>	<b>Identified strength:</b>
<b>We will use their strength as follows:</b>	

<b>First, last names:</b>	<b>Identified strength:</b>
<b>We will use their strength as follows:</b>	

<b>First, last names:</b>	<b>Identified strength:</b>
<b>We will use their strength as follows:</b>	

This template was inspired by a school of the CSS de Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup