

Finding the Strength

*Using a Strength-Based Approach to Empower Participants
and Prevent Staff Burnout*

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Agenda

- Importance of focusing on strengths
- Identifying strengths in the people we serve on ACT teams
- Reflecting and affirming strengths
- Using a strength-based approach to prevent staff burnout



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES



Recognize how focusing on strengths and positive relationships/interactions contribute to recovery and the well-being of participants.



Improve their skills in identifying and reflecting strengths to others, including reframing challenges and negative thinking by focusing on strengths and opportunities.



Understand the value of strength-based work for staff wellness and burnout prevention.

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Historical and Cultural Context

- Evolution has primed us to focus on the negative – survival was paramount!
- Culture and family play an important role
 - E.g., valuing status quo vs. achievement/improvement orientation
- Society's value system – what is praiseworthy vs. not?
- Traditionally, health services training more focused on diagnosis, problems, and deficits



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Foundations

- Carl Rogers – “Unconditional positive regard”
- Motivational Interviewing
 - Spirit: Acceptance
 - Culturally Adapted Motivational Interviewing (CAMI)
- Internal Family Systems



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What are strengths?

What are some examples of strengths your participants have?



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Seeing Strengths

- What strengths do you see in the following vignettes?
 - A person who has been fired from or left 25+ jobs and is seeking vocational support.
 - A person who has been using substances for many years and been in and out of rehab several times, often not staying to complete treatment, expresses willingness to try again. At one point, they were able to avoid substances/remain sober for a year.
 - A person who was hospitalized against their will accepts an intake appointment with an ACT team following discharge.



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Reflecting Strengths

- Genuineness
- Includes characteristics, values, efforts made
- Bolsters hope and confidence
- May go beyond the individual (e.g., a supportive family or friend)
- Supports/enhances/broadens the person's self-concept



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Think of a piece of feedback that has stayed with you that reflects one or more of your strengths (or that of your family/community).

Would anyone like to share?



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Let's Practice: Do you mean that...?

- In groups of 3 or 4, each person takes a turn completing this sentence: “One thing I like about myself is...” or “One nice thing a friend or relative might say about me is...”
- The other members of the group take turns asking questions in the form of “Do you mean...?”
- The person who made the statement can only respond with “yes” or “no”
- Try to come up with 5 “Do you mean...?” questions for each person. After several minutes, we’ll debrief.
- Before we go into our breakouts, Darlene and I will demonstrate...



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Strengths-Based Culture: ACT Team



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Strengths-Based Culture: ACT Team

Start with Team's existing strengths

- What does the team already do exceptionally well?
- What keeps us effective even when the work is difficult?

Map individual team member's strengths:

For example: clinical expertise, engagement skills, crisis management, creativity, humor, persistence, cultural knowledge/humility, community connections

***Deliberately use them**

Strengths-Based Culture: ACT Team

Create a shared team purpose

- Reconnect staff with the meaning and impact of their work
- Ask: "What difference did our team make this week?"
- Celebrate the small wins, not just the major clinical outcomes
- Regularly share examples of participant progress

Normalize Peer support and Mutual care

- Develop routines in which staff actively support one another
 - i.e. debriefing after critical incidents; buddy system after difficult encounters
- Team rituals, celebrations (birthdays, graduations)

Strengths-Based Culture: ACT Team

Acknowledgement of vulnerability and need of support is a **strength**

Importance of building psychological safety within team

Are you able to say...?

"I'm overwhelmed."

"I don't know what to do with this participant."

"I'm worried about this participant"

"I made a mistake"

"Can someone else take this call or join this meeting with me?"

Level	Strengths-Based Question	Examples
Individual (As an ACT team member)	What helps me thrive in this work?	D: Colleagues can cover for me, and I can count on them. N: I am passionate about helping people and making a difference.
Team	What makes us effective together?	D: That we all believe in recovery. N: Mutual respect and kindness.
Participant (Client)	What achievements with participants remind us why this work matters?	D: Overtime, recognizing the growth and relationships I have built. N: Helping people to see a brighter future.
Organization	What conditions allow strengths to flourish?	D: Structure for time off; allows for coverage when I'm using PTO N: Trust with accountability, affirming staff's strengths

Resources/Handouts



Strengths List Activity



Strength-Based Questions



Team Strengths Soundtrack



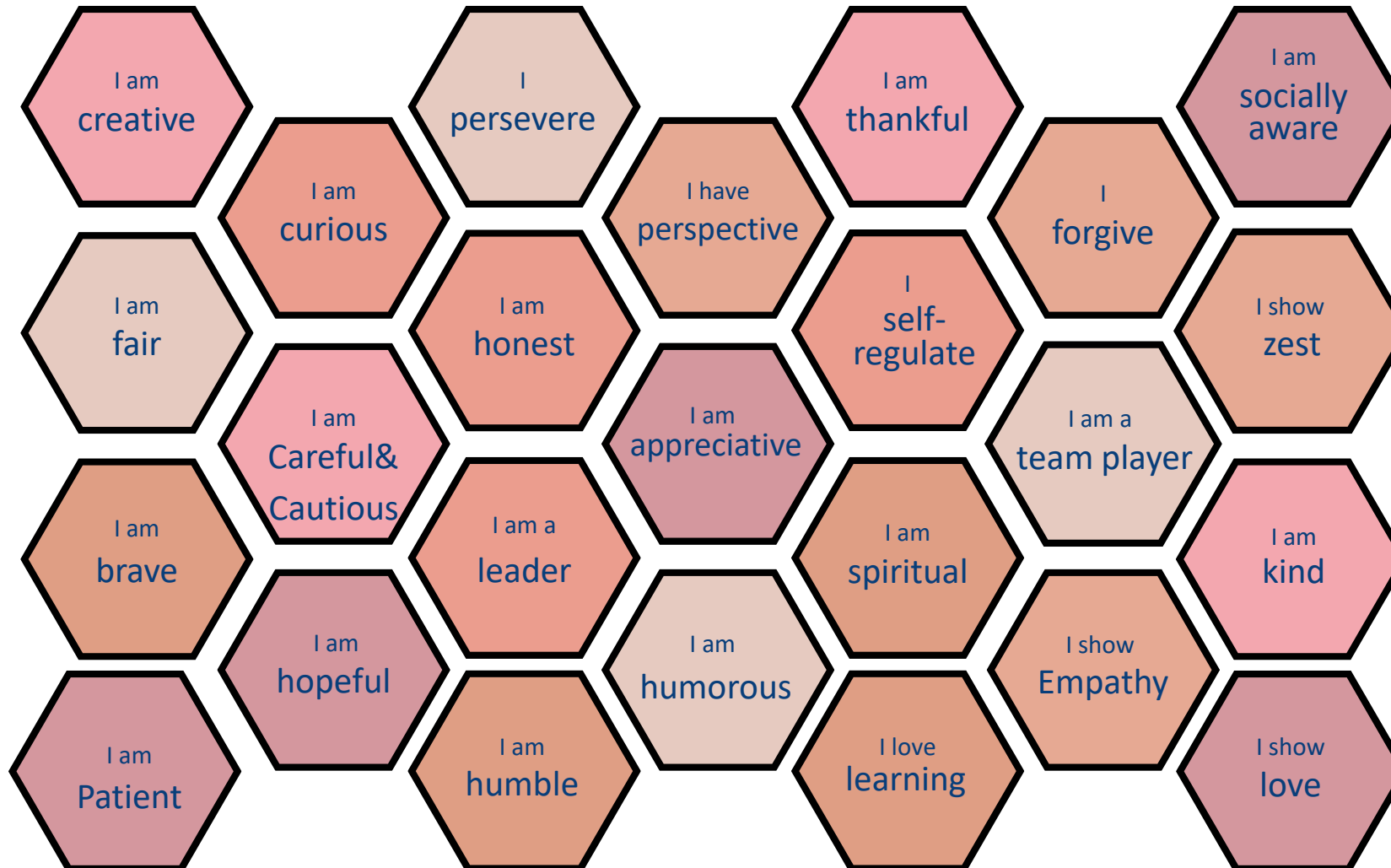
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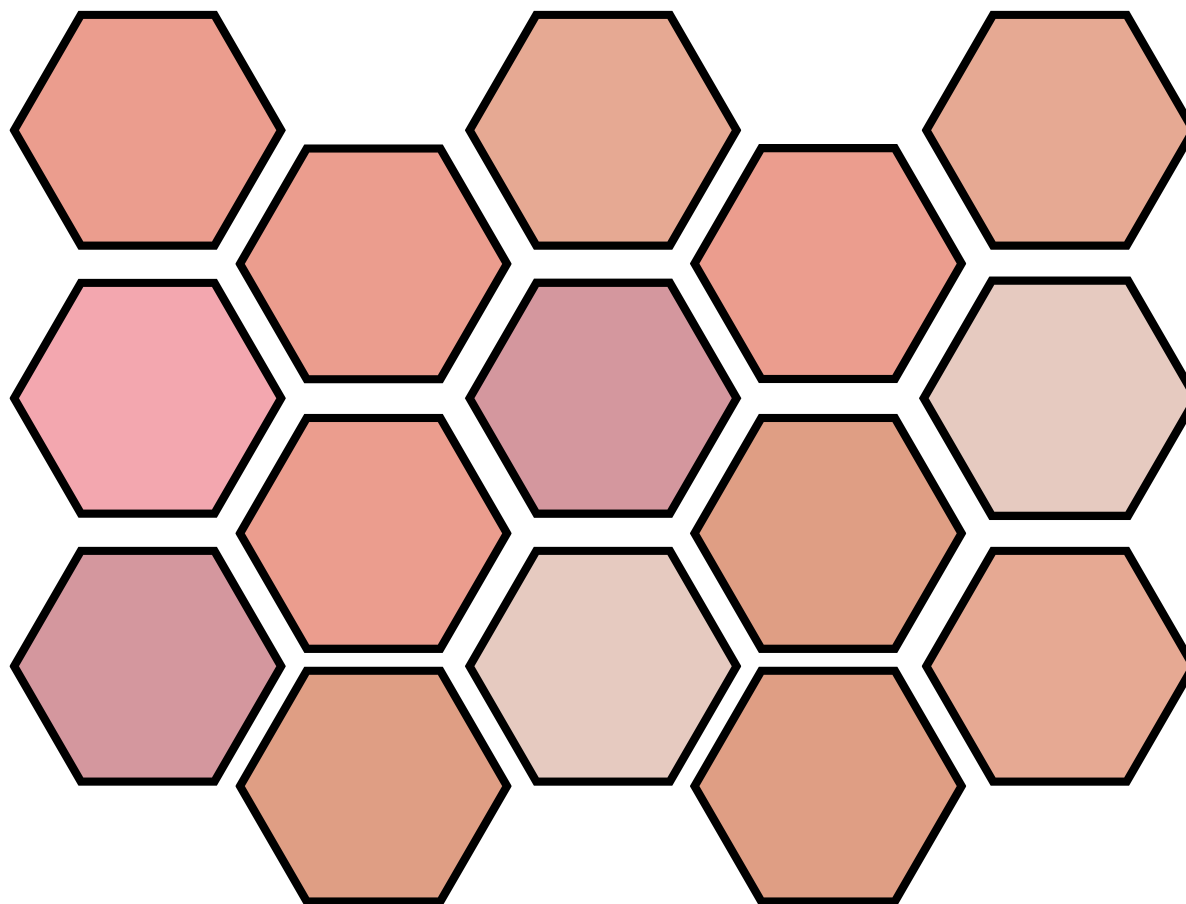
Strengths List





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My Strengths



Strengths-Based Questions for Participants

- When have you faced a tough time before, and how did you manage?
- What is something you are doing well right now, no matter how small?
- What is one thing you enjoy or want to learn next?
- What are you most proud of accomplishing in the past year, season, month?
- When you are at your best, what strengths are you using?
- What do your closest friends and family say you are great at doing?
- What does a really good day look like for you?
- What personal qualities help you get through hard days?
- Who or what can you count on in your daily life?
- What's something about yourself that you wish other people recognized more?
- If things were going a little better six months from now, what would you notice?
- What is important to you at this point in your life?
- What would you like to have more of in your life?
- What are some early signs that tell you you're starting to struggle and what has helped when you notice them?
- What's something you'd like to do more often because it makes you feel good?
- What activities make you feel calm, energized or connected?
- What makes someone a good support person for you?
- What kinds of connections would you like to build or strengthen?
- What places or communities make you feel comfortable or like you belong?
- What would you like the ACT team to understand about you?
- What kind of support from your ACT team is most helpful to you?
- What is one thing you would like to take the lead on?
- What's one strength, we can build on together to help you move toward your goals or what you want?



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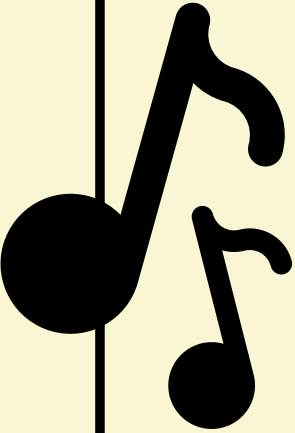
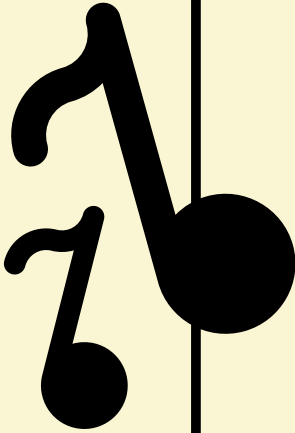
Strengths-Based Questions for ACT Team

- What keeps you engaged in ACT work?
- What do you find most meaningful about working on an ACT Team?
- What aspects of your role allow you to use your strengths more effectively?
- Can you describe a time when you felt particularly proud of your work on the ACT team?
- What makes ACT different from other settings in which you have worked?
- What does your team particularly do well?
- What helps your ACT team work effectively together?
- How do different disciplines complement one another?
- Can you describe a time when teamwork made a meaningful difference for a participant?
- What team practices help people feel supported and valued?
- How does your team make good use of individual staff members' expertise, experience and skills?
- What aspects of your current work environment help you do your job well?
- What workplace conditions help you feel supported in your role?
- What does your organization do that contributes positively to staff well-being?
- What flexibility and resources make your work more manageable?
- When the work becomes challenging, what helps you and your team stay resilient?
- What does your team do well when the workload and job demands increase?



Team Strengths Soundtrack



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- Ask each team member to think of a song, sound or musical style that represents a strength they bring to the team
 - Team member writes their strength + song/sound and why on an index card
 - Take turns sharing, play 20-30 seconds of the chosen song/sound/style
 - Invite team to identify strengths they observed in one another
 - Create an ACT Team Playlist
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What is a strengths-based perspective, tool or activity that you will incorporate in your own practice or on your ACT team?



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Thank you!



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