

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 may have primarily focused on fixing your perceived weaknesses while growing up, 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 in neurodivergent women.

STRENGTHS

Recognizing Old Coping Behaviors

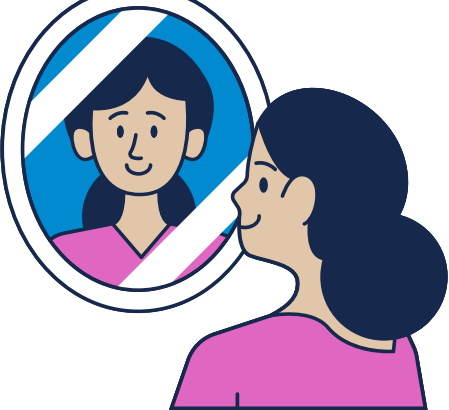
The negativity bias leads you to focus on your perceived flaws, compare yourself to the neurotypical gold standard of women, and ultimately reinforces the coping behaviors we are working on replacing.

Remember, these 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 coping behaviors you identified that you want to work on replacing with new ones?

Building a Bridge to New Coping Skills

One way to transition from old coping skills to new ones is to learn about and tap into your strengths. 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, which can be gained by recognizing and utilizing your strengths.

Reflection Questions

1. What would my life be like if I always did things I was naturally good at?
2. How significantly would my life improve in terms of stress, happiness, and emotional regulation if I consistently focused on tasks and activities that align with my natural strengths and abilities?

Credit to Kristy Arbon for these questions

Unveiling the True Self: Exploring Masking and Embracing Authenticity

An authentic person is aware of their inner world, can honestly consider information about themselves, behaves in line with their values and needs, and 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 be essential in overcoming challenges and improving 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

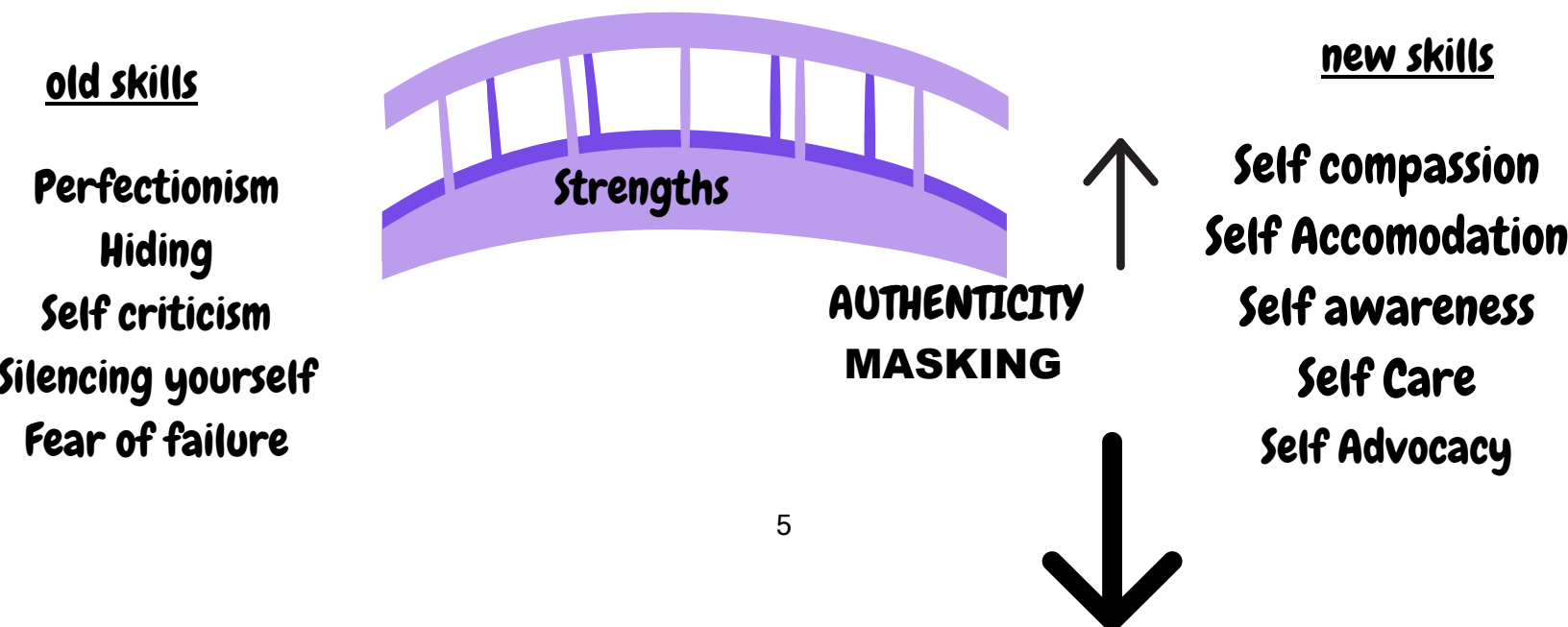
Authenticity is tied to happiness and satisfaction, serving as a buffer against anxiety and depression.

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 inauthenticity 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 Strengths

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 and Autistic Mind

Research and information suggest that people with neurodivergent conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and dyspraxia often have unique strengths. While these conditions can present challenges, they are also associated with specific strengths and abilities. Here are some of them:

- Creativity: Unique perspectives and approaches to problem-solving, leading to innovative and creative solutions.
- Hyperfocus: People with ADHD, for example, may experience intense periods of focus and concentration, which can be helpful when working on specific tasks or projects.
- Pattern recognition: Autistic individuals may excel in recognizing patterns or trends, making them particularly skilled in fields such as mathematics, coding, or data analysis.

Strengths of the ADHD and Autistic Mind

- Attention to detail: Neurodivergent people, especially those on the autism spectrum, may have a good eye for detail, which can be beneficial in professions requiring precision and accuracy.
- Persistence and determination: Neurodivergent individuals often develop strong resilience and determination from overcoming challenges related to their condition. This can lead to an unwavering commitment to achieving their goals.
- Memory: Some neurodivergent people possess exceptional memory skills, which can be helpful in various academic or professional settings.
- Empathy and sensitivity: While some neurodivergent individuals may struggle with social cues, they may also have heightened empathy and emotional sensitivity, making them attuned to the feelings of others.

Group Activity: Uncovering your Strengths

Objective: To identify personal strengths and connect them to moments of authenticity and accomplishment, while encouraging mutual support and celebration within the group.

Instructions:

Take a few moments to reflect on three moments in your work or personal life where you felt authentic, accomplished, or in your element. These can be moments that brought a smile to your face, made you laugh, or gave you a sense of satisfaction.

Once you've identified your three moments, give each one a title and write down three sentences describing the event. Think about your behaviors, actions, and emotions during each moment.

Consider using the following words as prompts to help you:



Group Activity :Uncovering your Stregnths

- Accomplishment
- Creativity
- Connection
- Adventure
- Nature
- Laughter
- Learning
- Relaxation

After you've completed your three moments, look for common threads or themes between them. Are there any strengths or characteristics that emerge across the moments? 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 stregnth might be connection.

Finally, reflect on the strengths that emerged from your moments of authenticity and accomplishment.

- What does this say about who you are as a person?
- What unique strengths do you bring to the table?

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

Group Activity: Uncovering your Stregnths



Group reflection Questions

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

- Do you notice your stregnths are those not typically developed or encouraged in our world?
- Do you feel like you were encouraged more to fix your perceived "weaknesess" than develop your stregnths?
- What would your lives be like if you were always doing things you were natually 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 stregnths?

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

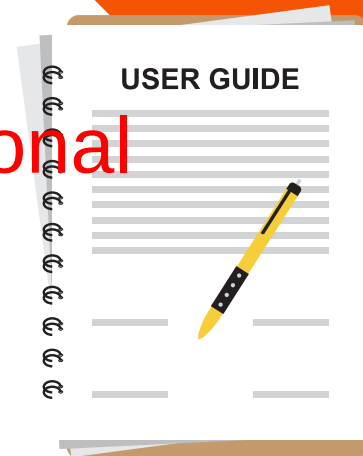
Building on Strengths: Leveraging ADHD Nervous System and Self-Awareness for Success

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 increased motivation, improved executive functioning, and a greater sense of accomplishment.

Individual Activity: 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:

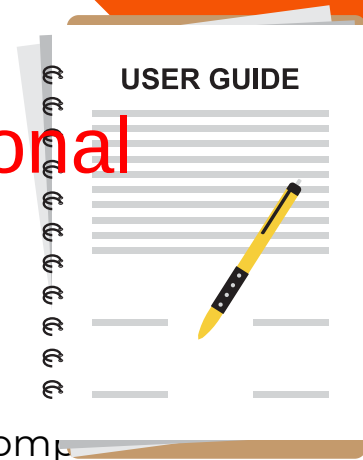
Reflect on a recent task or activity that you completed successfully or a day when you felt particularly good.

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

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.

Individual Activity: Craft a Personal 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.

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



Discover your Strengths: VIA STRENGTHS

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. Here is the list of the six virtues and their corresponding character strengths:

Individual activity EF skills improve when you use your strengths



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 ADHD-related traits impact the activity?
- Did you feel emotionally dysregulated, stressed or self critical?

Individual Activity EF skills improve when you use your strengths

Bring to mind an activity that was particularly challenging and frustrating for you.

- a. Did you notice your executive functioning impairments more? (attention, regulation, motivation etc)
- b. Was the activity utilizing any of your unique strengths and neurodivergent traits?
- c. How did it make you feel?
- d. How much energy did you have during the activity?
- e. How motivated were you?
- f. How was your attention during the activity?
- g. How did your ADHD-related traits impact the activity?

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 or 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.