

Knowing Your Strengths & Leadership Style

“A leader isn’t someone who tells people what to do but instead joins or is a part of the struggle. A leader is a person that brings people together for the better in the name of building a brighter future. A leader uplifts their peers, uplifts those that follow them and even those who dislike them, as being a leader isn’t about ourselves. It’s about learning from the faults of the world around us and stepping up to the plate. It’s about knowing that the priority of the greater good and the greater presence of humanity is priority in our lifetime, in a capacity that we didn’t grow up with.”

*Oliver Trulock,
CONNECTED Young Influencer*

EXPERT OF YOUR OWN LIVED EXPERIENCE

There is a common misconception that you must earn a degree, get special training or have a fancy job to be a leader. However, you are an expert of your own lived experience, and your voice has the power to motivate and guide others. You know the challenges you face. You know what you need. You know what gets in your way or what supports your resilience. You know how systems such as health care or foster care can either help or harm. The courageous things you have already achieved attest to the leadership talents already inside you.

You are already a leader if...

- You use your voice to make a difference for yourself and others.
- You’ve learned from your life experiences like navigating the foster care system, building a youth group, addressing a mental health challenge or creating change at school.
- You’re willing to tackle a challenge even if you’re scared.
- You are passionate about improving the lives and mental wellbeing of other young people.

“You are your best thing.” — Toni Morrison

Always be yourself. As a leader — not to mention as a human being — the most important thing you bring to your life and work is yourself. There is no one single way to be a great leader. Don’t follow some arbitrary rule book and change yourself into someone you’re not. Never adopt someone else’s style if it does not suit you.

If you are unsure of yourself, start by knowing yourself. If you are a seasoned leader in a tough spot or trying to grow, return to your unique self. **Always be yourself first.**

Everyone is continuously improving as leaders. We are wise to dedicate our whole lives to growing, learning new things, adopting new skills, adapting to new circumstances and changing for the better. You may already know leaders you admire and can learn from and model.

Use all those skills, advice, resources and examples to be a more talented and effective you.

LEARNING MORE ABOUT YOUR WORK STYLE CAN HELP

We all have different leadership styles and there are many ways to identify and learn more about our own styles, the styles of others, and working well together. Even when we are working jointly on the same goals, each of us will do things in our own way.

Do you like to prepare quietly before class or a meeting, reviewing everything and gathering your thoughts in advance? Or maybe you typically think out loud, love group interaction, and generate your best ideas through discussion?

Do you love lively debate and healthy conflict where everyone can wrestle with different opinions? Or do you value group harmony and thrive on teams that share a common purpose and approach?

When collaborating with others to achieve a goal, you may share the same passion but each of you will bring different skills and strengths to the work.

FOR INSTANCE, YOU MIGHT BE:



The **detail-oriented advocate** who keeps the dates & logistics straight.



The **strategic advocate** who helps determine the plan of action.



The **outgoing advocate** who uses their voice to inspire others to join.



The **social media-savvy advocate** who takes the lead on communication.

*The most successful leaders shape their lives and work in ways that match their style.
Great leaders also understand and respect other people's styles.*

16 Personalities is a free online quiz you can use to learn more about personality and leadership styles.

<https://www.16personalities.com/>

DISCOVER YOUR PASSIONS

“Decide first what is authentic, then go after it with all your heart.” — Louise Erdrich

WE COME INTO THIS WORLD WITH OUR OWN UNIQUE GIFTS AND STRENGTHS

The best advice about understanding your strengths?
It’s not about what you’re good at, it’s about what you love doing.

Get clear about what you most love doing and do those things as often as you can. Work to improve what you already love doing.

Spending time on things we are not fond of is typically draining after a short period of time. It’s not the best place to devote a lot of your energy. When you spend time doing the things you love, you may be physically tired, but you are also likely to feel jazzed and energized. Focus on the things you love doing and where you’ll be most successful.

Knowing your strengths is not an excuse to stop growing or play it safe. Instead use your strengths as the first step out of your comfort zone. Stretch yourself around your strengths.

If you love organizing, do it a lot. If you love helping people, learn strategies to help them even more. If you love data analysis, then learn new methodologies and take on larger projects. If public speaking energizes you, find new audiences and choose topics closer to your heart.

Unimaginably great things can happen when you challenge yourself from your place of strengths. Leadership is about discovering what you most love to do — your true strengths — and growing skills around those passions.

Leadership is about finding and pursuing your passions.

What are you passionate about? What do you want to see change at school, in your community or in the world?

Passion also takes different forms.

Maybe you’ve had one burning passion for as long as you can remember. Your leadership will likely stay really focused on that one powerful passion. It is also possible you’ve had many different passions that come and go. Your leadership strengths will shine when you put energy towards your ever-changing curiosity and passions, growing your skills and influence even if the topics change.

Both forms of passions are great, even if they are different.

The important thing is to link your leadership to your passions.



“My personal experience, growing up I was always alone. This program makes me want to help young influencers to reach their goal to help the youth in our communities to feel like they’re not alone.”

Alexis,
CONNECTED Young Influencer