The ONESTOPers Guide to Well-Being

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Abstract

The Penn ONESTOP Service Center at the University of Pennsylvania is facing numerous challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, workplace environment changes, workload increase, role reclassification, personal pandemic-related challenges, and racial injustice. Penn ONESTOP seeks to increase resilience. Informed by current positive psychological literature, we propose three interventions to help Penn ONESTOP systematically develop character strengths awareness and literacy, develop a set of cultural core values to guide and unify workplace behavior, and build resilience. We recommend activities including character strengths conversations, strengths-spotting and recognition, a cultural core values workshop with positive introductions, and a series of resilience micro-lessons to put into practice. We suggest quantitatively measuring results with a culture & climate and engagement survey. Building a foundation of character strengths and shared core values will enhance and support improving resilience in Penn ONESTOP staff, setting them on the path to flourishing.

*Keywords: Well-being, Resilience, Character Strengths, Growth Mindset, Core Values, Culture, Protective Factors, Positive Intervention*
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The University of Pennsylvania (Penn) Student Registration and Financial Services (SRFS, recently rebranded as "ONESTOP") is seeking to increase resilience. To better understand the situation, we developed a customized discovery interview protocol following the tenants of appreciative inquiry to surface the core strengths of SRFS and their hopes for the future. We conducted interviews with Richard Le on January 13, 2021, and with Matt Sessa, Executive Director for SRFS; Jackie Smith, Senior Director of Operations for SRFS; Yvonne Giorgio, Associate Director of the One-Stop Student Center; and Richard Le, Division of Human Resources on January 29, 2020. We had a follow-up conversation with Le, Sessa, and Smith on March 31, 2021, to refine our direction further.

In this paper, we will present an overview of the challenges facing the higher education sector and the structure of ONESTOP. We follow this with a review of challenges facing ONESTOP staff related to COVID-19, remote working, race-related events, employee status change, the introduction of new technology, and centralization of the service delivery model. Then, we will discuss the strengths of ONESTOP, including camaraderie, dedication to service, teamwork, and collaboration. The next section of the paper will review key findings from literature related to three topics that form the basis of our proposed application plan and materials: character strengths, cultural core values, and protective factors for facing adversity and building resilience. We will conclude with a detailed application plan intended to build awareness and practice of character strengths, establish a set of cultural core values to guide behaviors at work, and building protective factors for facing adversity and increase resilience by developing a growth mindset. We designed a complete, four-phase application plan. After a discussion with ONESTOP leadership, we prioritized developing materials for phases one and
two. Phases one and two are the focus of this paper. Literature and application details for phases three and four can be found in Appendix C: Future Considerations.

**Situation Analysis**

**SRFS/ONESTOP Purpose and Structure**

Penn SRFS/ONESTOP comprises 85-90 employees dedicated to helping students, parents, and staff navigate various university experience elements, including financial aid, costs and budgeting, billing and payment, student employment, student records, registration, course catalog, and academic calendar. The department's overall mission is service with particular dedication and commitment to every student's academic success. Penn prides itself on meeting 100% of demonstrated undergraduate needs and is the nation's largest university to do so (Undergraduate Financial Aid).

Initially, our work was intended to focus on a specific branch of SRFS/ONESTOP, Penn Student Financial Services (SFS). SFS is comprised of ten financial aid counselors who assist Penn students and parents by phone, email, and (pre-COVID) by in-person appointment or drop-in visits. Every Penn student is assigned a financial aid counselor to guide them. The counselors field and answer questions related to all financial aspects of the student experience (R. Le, personal communication, January 13, 2021). However, after we presented the implementation plan, Sessa realized this work should extend to the entire department. At his request, we adopted a whole system approach for ONESTOP. Note that the challenges and strengths outlined in the sections below were specific to the SFS counselors since that was our scope at the time. While the language is specific to SFS counselors, the strengths and challenges may extend to ONESTOP staff as a whole.
Challenges

Our interviews with Le, Sessa, Smith, and Georgio revealed that the SFS counselors' well-being is challenged in several ways: adapting to changes in their work environment, navigating personal challenges related to the pandemic and experiencing difficult emotions from the students and families they serve amidst changing Penn policy. The pandemic and Penn's ensuing decision to send students/employees home brought about an abrupt change in the workplace environment. Counselors suddenly found themselves working from home, engaging in an increased volume of emotionally-charged conversations with Penn families about financial obligations all while navigating personal challenges related to the pandemic.

Financial Implications of COVID-19

The National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO) (n.d.) reports that COVID-19 and the race-related events of 2020 have significantly impacted the higher education sector by making college tougher to pay for and decreasing student and staff well-being. NACUBO (2020a) reports that the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic uncertainty has renewed and amplified the debate about the value of a college education. With COVID-induced job loss and salary reductions, many families found themselves forced to focus on short-term needs versus long-term goals or were suddenly unable to pay for tuition. This led to more inquiries from Penn parents and students about financial aid. (Richard Le, personal communication, January 13, 2021).

Workplace Environment Changes

Prior to March 2020, Penn did not have many work-from-home options for staff. Nearly all interactions happened face-to-face, and counselors were used to popping their heads over a
partition to ask a colleague a question. Suddenly, the counselors found themselves at home, sometimes without sufficient technology, navigating their work virtually and learning to use Zoom and Microsoft Teams to communicate (R. Le, personal communication, January 13, 2021). We also learned that ONESTOP is in the process of adopting a new software system that will integrate multiple stand-alone systems. This digital transformation adds complexity to day-to-day operations (M. Sessa, personal communication, March 11, 2021).

Workload Increase

According to Yvonne Giorgio, the SFS staff was "beyond overwhelmed" by Penn families reaching out quickly for answers while counselors tried to set up little corners of their home to work (personal communication, January 29, 2021). The counselors had to engage in emotionally-charged conversations with families (M. Sessa, personal communication, January 29, 2021).

Strengths

Despite the many challenges facing the SFS staff, our interviews revealed that they also demonstrate significant strengths: student-centeredness, teamwork and collaboration, dedication to service, adaptability, communication, understanding and support, service and purpose, positive and fun. A theme from the interviews is that the SFS counselors have a high commitment to serving Penn students and families, a strong sense of camaraderie, and a "get-it-done" attitude. Richard Le said "I've been very proud the counselors have been able to shift to this virtual model and maintain the level of service that they did face-to-face … I'm proud of the stories from families who felt like they had someone to support them and could go through these challenges together" (personal communication, January 13, 2021). While adapting to changes in
work and personal life, the counselors have remained anchored in a commitment to helping students and families.

The counselors' strong sense of camaraderie is also something to be reinforced and leveraged. Many counselors have worked together for a long time, and they've built a bond. They help each other at work through ongoing group texts and chats on Microsoft Teams. A few counselors coordinate events for team birthdays and holidays, such as Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Valentine's Day. On the day everyone was sent to work from home, tech-savvy counselors helped their less-tech-savvy counterparts pack up everything they would need. Counselors with cars helped those who typically take public transit get home with all of their equipment (Y. Giorgio, personal communication, January 29, 2021).

The next section details research that informs our strengths-based design approach, building on what is already working well within the ONESTOP staff to move forward.

**Literature Review**

**Character Strengths**

Positive psychology studies positive character traits, emotions, and organizations to understand the full human experience (Seligman et al., 2005). Positive interventions such as using one's strengths are a mechanism to improve well-being and diminish suffering (Seligman et al., 2005). Peterson and Seligman (2004) posit that there are 24 ways in which we individually demonstrate virtue via our behaviors, thoughts, and feelings – commonly known as character strengths. They apply across cultures and are categorized under six universally-held virtues common to philosophers, psychologists, and theologians for more than 2,500 years (Peterson &
Seligman, 2004). They serve as the foundational building block for well-being and connect to additional building blocks: enhancing resilience and developing cultural core values on a team.

As mentioned in the introduction, the ONESTOP staff's well-being has been negatively affected by stress from the pandemic, working remotely, an increasing workload, and the financial uncertainties of the students that the staff serve. One intervention supported by research is a character strengths positive intervention. Allowing team members to develop awareness of their character strengths and encouraging them to intentionally explore how to use and apply their top five or "signature" strengths promotes well-being (Niemiec, 2018). Specifically, taking the VIA Character Strengths Inventory, identifying, and consistently using one's signature strengths in a new way has been shown to increase happiness and decrease depression levels (Seligman et al., 2005).

Research shows that frequent and long-term use of strengths is associated with positive outcomes, including retention, job satisfaction, task performance, job dedication, engagement, passion for work, positive affect, organizational support, lower stress, and less burnout (Merritt et al., 2019). Using strengths at work requires personal will and fit with the workplace environment and needs leadership support and encouragement for success. When the strengths we possess and apply meet the role's demands and the institution's culture, there is more opportunity to use more of our strengths consistently. Interventions and supervisor support significantly increase strengths. When employees can't apply their strengths, it negatively impacts their perceived control, competency, and belonging (Merritt et al., 2019). When they have autonomy and leadership support, they are more likely to job craft their role to apply their strengths frequently.
Organizational Culture and Core Values

Organizational culture and core values alignment play an important role in employee engagement and performance. According to Edgar Schein (2016), organizational culture is a pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has come up with to address problems of external adaptation (surviving in the market) and internal integration (how individuals interact with each other). There are three components to organizational culture: visible artifacts, espoused or stated values (visible), and basic underlying beliefs and assumptions (invisible and often unconscious). Core values are the modes of behavior by which individuals operate (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). They typically reflect what people in an organization believe to be "good, worthwhile, and important" (Dutton, 2003, p. 140). It is important to note that the modes of behavior needed for good relationships in an organization may not be the same modes of behavior required for organizational success (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998).

Person-organization fit is the compatibility between an organization and the people who work there. Value-congruence, or the extent to which a person's values align with the organization's values, is widely accepted as the primary operationalization of person-organization fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). When a person's core values are congruent with the organization's core values, it yields positive outcomes such as increased positive affect and lower turnover, which is an outcome often associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998).

Our situation analysis revealed that ONESTOP does not currently have a stated set of values (R. Le, personal communication, January 13, 2021). They do, however, demonstrate behaviors that align with key elements of positive public service: challenge, efficacy, camaraderie, empowerment, and service (Jones, 2021). Given what the literature suggests about
the importance of shared values to person-organization fit and positive outcomes, we recommend that the ONESTOP team co-create and codify a set of espoused values. The following section will explore this in more detail.

**Character Strengths and Cultural Values Alignment**

ONESTOP leaders revealed the team's positive core during appreciative inquiry interviews (Cooperrider et al., 2005). We heard leaders express challenge, efficacy, adaptability, camaraderie, empowerment, and altruism as positive workplace behaviors that overlap with public service employee characteristics. We suggest the team use public service employee attributes and the character strengths framework to establish cultural core values, providing more options for using character strengths holistically at the organizational level. Additionally, when employees have frequent opportunities to apply their signature strengths, they avoid building stress over time which diminishes their job satisfaction (Merritt et al., 2019).

We suggest leaders co-design department core values with team members to promote unity and appreciation for each other. Furthermore, using real team experiences to create stories illustrating values in action enhances feelings of connection and role-models team members demonstrating values in the workplace. Core values help everyone remain aligned because they inform team members of expected behaviors and guide their actions and decisions in isolated, ambiguous, or unique situations (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Shared core values promote a sense of belonging and family by aligning behaviors to characteristics deemed necessary. Consistently demonstrated core values enable team members and stakeholders to experience the personality of the team. This alignment may also contribute to overall collective well-being which we will discuss in the next section.
High Quality Connections and Collective Well-Being

How does well-being spread among people? Positive emotions play a big role. The broaden and build theory of positive emotions suggests that experiencing positive emotions broadens people's thought-action repertoires and builds a variety of enduring physical, intellectual, social, and psychological resources (Fredrickson, 2001). One study particularly relevant to the ONESTOP team showed that positive emotions build psychological resilience and trigger upward spirals toward emotional well-being (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Fredrickson's (2016) positivity resonance theory suggests that there is a certain type of high-quality interpersonal connection that can occur between one or more people. This connection is characterized by three things: shared positive affect, mutual care, and concern, and behavioral and biological synchrony (Fredrickson, 2013). In other words, when people experience something pleasant together and feel invested in each other's well-being, even for just a moment, their nonverbal behaviors, physiology, and neural firing sync up. A series of correlational studies showed that perceived positivity resonance is associated with better mental health, lower levels of depressive symptoms and loneliness (Major et al., 2018). Such positivity resonance could be intentionally built with high-quality connections (HQCs).

Like positivity resonance experiences, high-quality connections don't require an intimate relationship between people or a long interaction. HQCs are characterized by a sense of vitality and energy, mutual positive regard where both parties feel cared for in that moment, and the sense that both people are fully participating in the interaction (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Every point of contact with another person has the potential to be an HQC, whether it's interactions between counselors and students or between counselors. HQCs in an organization create positive energy, defined as "the sense of being eager to act and capable of action" (Dutton, 2003, p. 6).
Every interaction at work has the potential to create or deplete energy. HQC's can buffer the impact of COVID and racial inequality that persists, supporting overall well-being in the face of adversity. The Positive Introductions activity outlined in the application plan is designed to create these powerful connections and produce positivity resonance.

**The Resilience and Character Strengths Connection**

Resilience is the ability to cope with adversity using positive mechanisms that promote thriving despite stressors (Martinez-Marti & Ruch, 2017). According to that same work, building resilience-related protective factors that protect against negative outcomes of adversity is more effective than reducing socio-economic or ongoing workplace stress and other risks like the pandemic. Developing character strengths is one possible way to positively build resilience. Martinez-Marti and Ruch (2017) identified five factors of character strengths that are associated with building resilience which include emotional, intellectual, and interpersonal. Emotional strengths leverage our get-up-and-go, resolve, and social networks to face adversity. When we think about adversity as a stimulating problem, we use our intellectual strengths to expand our perspective, gather information, build resources to solve issues and innovate effective coping strategies. Interpersonal strengths promote healthy relationships and build significant resources among a group. On a special note, bravery isn't associated with greater well-being but is significantly related to resilience by urging individuals to move towards a challenge with determination rather than shrinking from the issue.
Application Plan

Potential Applications of Positive Psychology: Multi-Tiered Interventions

Based on our understanding of the recent history and the current team climate, we suggest the positive psychology applications outlined in these sections. We propose that the interventions be applied at the individual level, team level, and leader level to permeate cultural, strengths, and resilience literacy and well-being throughout the team. The adversity experienced from the pandemic and racism affected all levels of team interactions and relationships. Including the whole team in these interventions will facilitate sustainability and flourishing (Cooperrider & Fry, 2012). Applying character strengths practices at the individual, team, and leader level as a framework for individual and group development integrates strengths-based approaches into the culture and whole system literacy. Team interventions might include strengths spotting to affirm the appropriate use of character strengths in others which may also increase positivity resonance and connection quality. Identifying and telling stories of the optimal use of strengths in a situation minimizes overuse and underuse (Niemiec, 2019). The leader-level interventions would consist of coaching team member strengths.

Given the relationship of character strengths to both cultural core values and resilience, the activities proposed in our application plan are designed and sequenced with character strengths as the foundation. Core values build on character strengths, and resilience builds on both. Figure 1 below represents this model.
Figure 1

The proposed interventions target the individual, team, and leader levels to permeate cultural, strengths, and resilience literacy and well-being throughout the team. Including the whole team in these interventions will facilitate sustainability and flourishing (Cooperrider & Fry, 2012). The Implementation Plan (Appendix B) provides high-level detail about each activity organized in two ways: tab one) activities are organized by topic (character strengths, core values, resilience), and tab two) activities are organized by phase with recommended sequence of rollout. After conversation with ONESTOP leadership, we developed protective factors for resilience in phases one and two. Resilience literacy pieces are proposed as future considerations for phases three and four.

Intervention One

Character Strengths

This activity will build on the team’s positive core discovered and identified through appreciative inquiry interviews (Cooperrider et al., 2005). As mentioned previously, leaders identified team strengths as student-centered, teamwork, collaboration, service purpose,
adaptability, communication, understanding, support, positive, and fun. We recommend team members take the VIA character strengths assessment to develop awareness, exploration, and application of their strengths (Niemiec, 2018). Then they will learn to apply character strengths at the individual, team, and leader level to learn the language of character strengths as a framework for individual and group development. Leadership should guide the optimal use of strengths in a situation to minimize overuse and underuse (Niemiec, 2019). We suggest individuals practice reflecting and intentionally exploring opportunities to apply strengths. Team interventions include strengths spotting to affirm the optimal use of character strengths in others. The leader-level interventions will consist of coaching team member strengths.

The objectives of the proposed activities are to build character strengths literacy, including individual and team awareness of signature strengths. The first activity in the application plan is an introduction to character strengths delivered in one-hour, one-on-one conversations between each counselor and the team leader or HR partner. Ideally, these sessions are an extension of existing one-on-one meetings rather than adding to already full calendars. Prior to the scheduled sessions, all attendees (staff and leadership) will take the free VIA Character Strengths Inventory to identify their signature strengths, and will watch a video that introduces strengths in action. They will bring their list of signature strengths with them to the scheduled session. During the session, the team leader or HR partner will give a brief overview of character strengths (e.g., signature, middle, lower, and phasic) and the positive outcomes of leveraging character strengths. Then, the leader will engage each counselor in a conversation about their signature strengths, facilitating a discussion of how they already use them and how they might use them more. After each counselor has had their session, the team will have established shared language around character strengths and awareness of strengths in themselves.
A facilitator guide for this conversation, including links to the video and the VIA Character Strengths Inventory, will be provided.

Periodically (e.g., each week as part of an existing team meeting), we suggest staff recognize strengths they have seen others demonstrate and appreciate the positive impact those actions had on them and others. This recognition may be given as a written note or expressed via digital means such as a Microsoft Teams chat or an email. The team may wish to establish their own creative means of recognizing strengths in others (e.g., branded strengths-spotting notecards). The act of appreciating strengths in action will strengthen relationships and reinforce strengths-based language in team interactions. It will also encourage learning from each other and affirm both individual and group strengths. A strengths-spotting guide is included in the application materials (Appendix D).

We recommend each team member complete a Novel Uses reflection and action planning worksheet at one team meeting per quarter. This short worksheet will give each counselor structured time to reflect on how they use their signature strengths. It also prompts them to commit to trying to use a signature strength in a new way or to tackle a recurring situation differently using a strength. Identifying and consistently using one's signature strengths in a new way has been shown to increase happiness and decrease depression levels in individuals (Seligman et al., 2005). Sharing their commitment with other team members will provide a layer of support and accountability. A reflection and action-planning worksheet is included in the application materials (Appendix D).

In addition to the quarterly team meeting, we recommend we also recommend the team leader or HR partner hold quarterly, 30-minute, one-on-one conversations with each counselor using a short list of appreciative questions to optimize the use and development of strengths. This
will keep the strengths-based approach top-of-mind and provide intentional development of signature strengths within the team. A conversation guide is included in the application materials (Appendix D).

**Intervention Two: Cultural Core Values Building**

This positive intervention seeks to establish cultural core values to guide workplace behaviors aligned to ONESTOP’s mission and altruistic purpose to serve Penn students in financing their education. The objectives of the proposed activities in this session are to identify a set of core values to guide the team and surface the intersection between these values and the character strengths determined in intervention one. This will provide more options to use character strengths holistically at the organizational level. We suggest leaders co-design department core values with team members to promote unity and appreciation for each other.

Furthermore, using real team experiences to create stories illustrating values in action will enhance feelings of connection, and team members role-model demonstrating values in the workplace. We propose a one-time, 90-minute values co-design meeting that would include activities like what's outlined below. A detailed facilitator guide for this meeting is included in the application materials (Appendix D).

**Positive Introductions (30-60 minutes).**

This is an optional exercise and assumes sufficient psychological safety to share a personal story. During a positive introductions exercise, a teammate shares a story in their life when they were at their best, through the lens of character strengths (Peterson, 2006). This can be implemented in a group setting, in small groups of three-four people, or in pairs. If workshop time is limited, it can be done as an independent activity in advance. Positive introductions can
increase well-being by enhancing the depth of relationships between teammates and buffer against future conflict because they help to "frame all subsequent interactions" (Peterson, 2006, p. 26). Before conducting positive introductions, we suggest teammates take the VIA Character Strengths Inventory to identify their signature strengths (see intervention one). They are given advance notice and time to reflect and write down their positive introduction story. They receive coaching on the proper way to listen and react to their teammates' stories, specifically, that they use *appreciative listening* to identify strengths in their teammates and acknowledge/build upon the strengths they hear versus focusing on any setbacks in the story (Peterson, 2006). While in the Situation Analysis, we learned that many of the counselors had worked together for some time. This experience would provide the following other potential well-being benefits:

- An opportunity for team members to create high-quality connections (HQC) with each other. With proper coaching on the positive introduction response, the exercise provides an opportunity for teammates to feel mutual positive regard for each other.
- An opportunity to reflect and spot strengths in themselves that they learned about in Intervention One
- An opportunity to spot strengths in a colleague, which enhances relationships and reinforces strengths-based language literacy introduced in intervention one

*Identifying values (45 minutes).*

This activity is planned to execute virtually over Zoom. Leaders and counselors will use the polling feature in Zoom to vote on the top five values they want to see in teammates. They will go through the second round of voting to land on three final values in the codifying and embedding values section. We suggest using the 24 character strengths and five public service strengths as a primer to start the brainstorming activity, but not to limit value creation (e.g., "fun"
isn't in these 29, but we've seen it as a value in other organizations). Involving counselors in selecting values gives them voice and autonomy, an element of Ryan and Deci's (2000) self-determination theory of well-being. This exercise can also be conducted virtually by using applications like Annotate and Miro or through polling software such as Poll Everywhere and Survey Monkey. It can be executed in person using sticky notes to place votes on a whiteboard.

**Codifying and embedding values (45 minutes).**

After identifying the top five values, leaders and counselors will discuss the values (e.g., why the value is meaningful to them) and ensure they align with the desired ONESTOP culture. This may include discussing historical behaviors aligned with the values and/or discussion of how the team wants to act in the future to align with the identified values. Leaders and counselors will vote a second time to narrow down their values to three. Focusing on embedding three items in the culture will be easier than five as the team does this for the first time. The team will invest time discussing specific behaviors they expect to see demonstrated in each other for each core value. This activity is crucial for aligning behavior with identified values.

After the session concludes, leaders will discuss how values will be documented, distributed, acknowledged, and incorporated into performance reviews and discuss plans to revisit the values annually to ensure relevance and alignment. The team may choose to add to their original list over time, but we suggest limiting it to 5-7 easily remembered items.

As mentioned above, core values help everyone remain aligned during remote working because they inform team members of expected behaviors and guide their actions and decisions in isolated, ambiguous, or unique situations (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Ambiguity can lead to thinking traps such as catastrophizing (K. Reivich, personal communication, March 5, 2021), so core values may be a protective factor that leads to resilience, which we'll discuss next.

As mentioned in the situation analysis, leaders cited increased team resilience and rebounding from adversity as a necessity for coping with ongoing challenges from the pandemic, racism, remote working conditions, high volume workload, job reclassification, and adoption of a new software system. These challenges leave little time for resilience training, so we propose micro-lessons facilitated during existing weekly team meetings to build a resilience practice. These micro-lessons will build fundamental resiliency skills that cascade throughout the team (Reivich et al., 2011). These skills include developing the following: 1) self-awareness of unproductive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors; 2) self-regulation of those patterns that block objectives and displays of emotion; 3) optimism to identify people's resources, challenge assumptions, and control circumstances; 4) mental agility to flex and evaluate circumstances accurately; 5) a strengths-based approach using character strengths to face adversity and complete goals, and 6) a social network of strong two-way relationships where individuals both give and receive support.

Micro-Lesson Format

We designed the micro-lessons to be built into existing weekly meetings and skills to be practiced within the typical workflow to embed them in the culture and increase the connection between team members. A ONESTOP leader will facilitate the lessons for the team. We recommend that both leaders and team members participate in the learning opportunity as both have experienced stress from the pandemic, racism, ambiguity, and workplace environmental changes. Additionally, the facilitation experience will prepare leaders to continually coach the team and individuals making it a cultural practice for ONESTOP
Each micro-lesson can stand alone or combined with another. The lessons will take between ten to twenty minutes to deliver and cover the following topics: growth mindset, mindfulness, optimism, thinking traps, and real-time resilience. They may include experiential or reflective activities and can be facilitated one-on-one, in pairs, or groups. A facilitator guide will be provided for each micro-lesson and supporting materials such as activity and action planning worksheets, videos, webinars, slides, or references, if applicable. Please refer to Appendix B: Implementation Plan and Appendix D: Application Materials for specific details about duration, frequency, and facilitation. We suggest this series be repeated annually to reinforce and embed a resilience practice into the ONESTOP culture. The following section gives more detail about the first micro-lesson since it is part of the phase one foundational work. Details about the other micro-lessons can be found in Appendix C: Future Considerations.

**Growth Mindset: The Power of Yet**

A growth mindset is the belief that one's potential and ability can be increased through learning (Dweck, 2006). Individuals with a growth mindset believe they can change and improve with effort and a strategy matched to their goal. Practicing a growth mindset increases persistence and resilience (Dweck, 2006). The objective of this lesson is to increase resilience when learning or when dealing with change. It helps individuals look at situations objectively and remain hopeful. This lesson is adapted from Dweck's (2006) book, *Mindset*.

In this micro lesson, participants will watch a video to learn about the power of putting the word "yet" at the end of a sentence when they describe a learning situation. For example, "I can't ride a bike yet". Then they will reflect on something they want to learn or are learning, write a "yet" statement to reframe their thinking and post it in a visible place.
Measurement

To measure the impact of these interventions, we recommend a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. We created a brief instrument that combines several items from an existing Penn Culture & Climate Survey with simple validated engagement items. The culture and climate measures relate to attributes of Penn’s campus community plus overall satisfaction with being a Penn staff member. The engagement measures assess engagement at the organizational, supervisor, job, and co-worker levels. This survey plus the customized appreciative-inquiry interview questions we used in the situation analysis can be used annually to assess impact. Refer to Appendix A: Discovery Interview Protocol for the appreciative-inquiry interview questions. Refer to Appendix E: Evaluation Plan for the recommended measurement items.

Summary

The Penn ONESTOP Service Center staff already exhibit strong strengths of student-centeredness, teamwork and collaboration, dedication to service, adaptability, communication, understanding and support, service and purpose, positive and fun. By recognizing and reinforcing those strengths, building a foundation of character strengths literacy and developing shared core values to enhance resilience, the three interventions proposed in this paper will help ONESTOP navigate their existing challenges and those that lie ahead. The interventions are designed with a whole-system approach in mind, providing leaders and staff the resources they need to become a more resilient department in service of Penn students, families, and the broader community.
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Appendix A: Discovery Interview Protocol

Thank you for meeting with us today to discover how we can support Penn Student Registration and Financial Services employee well-being initiatives. We all work in organizations that have been impacted by the pandemic. We realize that workplace populations are experiencing decreased well-being, including depression, anxiety, lessened motivation, effort, and learning. However, we believe there are also stories of resilience, compassion, found meaning, and purpose. Our purpose today is to gain a better understanding of the current SRFS culture and employee well-being. We also want to understand your desired vision for SRFS's wellness future. This holistic understanding will give us the guiding context and direction for our partnership. We want to start our call with a short interview and end with mutual agreement for the objectives of this well-being intervention for SRFS.

1. Considering what you and your team have experienced in recent days, weeks, and months of the pandemic, reflect on the strength, courage, and compassion you have observed or heard. Please share one or two of the most powerful stories that have inspired or encouraged you to believe or feel that good can come from crisis or tragedy. After sharing the stories, please list three of the most important strengths that you or your team leveraged in these situations.

2. Charles Darwin once said: "it's not the strongest of the species that survive nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change"—especially in times of challenge and complexity, like ours. As a leader, what hardships, situations of emotional, mental, and physical distress would you most like to alleviate or improve for your team?

3. What do you value most in the SRFS culture and its employees? What are the true colors of the SRFS culture? Please list three values or core strengths you would never want to lose, no matter how much your department and team changes.
4. Thinking of your team's future wellness two to three years from now, please describe your hopes and dreams for the next chapter of SRFS. How would perspectives have shifted? What are you most proud of in your department, the services it provides, and in your team?

5. Please describe in detail a day in the SRFS team's life, their well-being, and how the services they provide make a difference for others.

6. How many people work in SRFS? Can we conduct short AI interviews with a few staff members and/or send them a short survey to catalog their strengths, ideas, and hopes for the future?

7. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?
Appendix B: Implementation Plan

Please click to open the Excel document below entitled “Penn ONESTOP Implementation Plan”.

The "Topic Development" tab shows activities to fully develop each topic in the pyramid: character strengths, core values, and resilience.

The "Activity Flow" tab lists the interventions in recommended phase and sequence.
Appendix C: Future Considerations for Phases Three and Four

Job Crafting

SFS leadership's plan to change the staff from non-exempt to exempt was intended to provide them improved benefits and a greater challenge via assignments for career growth. In order to make the most of their new roles and to incorporate their character strengths into their tasks, management could empower employees to co-create their job responsibilities through a process called job crafting. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) define job crafting as the process employees undertake to redefine and reimagine their tasks and interpersonal relationships to find more meaning at work. Meaningfulness can mean the degree of significance of our work, or our view about whether we're making a difference in the world (Rosso et. al, 2010; Prilleltensky, 2016). The SFS staff may experience several benefits if they perceive their new job status as being more meaningful, including increased job satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Grant, 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Rosso et al., 2010). A job crafting intervention would help the SFS staff cultivate more meaningfulness in their work through three pathways: task, relational, and cognitive (Berg et al., 2011).

From the Situation Analysis, we believe that there is more opportunity for relational and cognitive crafting than task crafting. That said, if SFS counselors are empowered to be able to change the time allocated between tasks, for example two counselors agreeing to split more or less time devoted to calls versus emails for a particular time period, then they might feel their job is fairer. And fairness leads to wellness (Prilleltensky, 2016). Before SFS can make these changes that Berg et al. (2011) have shown can lead to meaningfulness at work, SFS must determine what its values really are.
Play at Work

In our interviews of management, we heard that SFS counselors fostered a culture of camaraderie through celebrations and other acts of play at work. In this section, we review empirical study of play at work, the ways in which it can be used most effectively by SFS to further its cultural core values, and the ways in which it might detract.

What is play at work? Celestine and Yeo (2021) have dubbed it *activity-based play-at-work* and define it as "activity undertaken in a work context that is interactive in nature and undertaken with the goal of having fun" (p. 253). West et al. (2016) note that the type of activity isn't important, but rather the orientation to it; thus, a play-at-work activity might simply be a reframing of an existing work task to "make it more enjoyable" (p.72). Celestine and Yeo (2021) highlight that "activity" is a broad term (e.g., talking with a colleague is an activity), that interactivity requires engagement with other colleagues (i.e., checking Facebook doesn't count), and that fun usually results from internal desires (e.g., working out at lunch might not be fun if the motive is purely health-driven or doctor's orders). Further, they created a typology of four categories of play at work so that a *theoretical organizing framework* exists with which to understand different types of play at work and their potential outcomes. The first category is *manager-initiated work-embedded*, also known as "serious play", or play designed to meet organizational objectives (West et al., 2016). For example, management could co-create a gamification to see which counselor can answer the most emails in a day. The second category is *self-/peer-initiated work-embedded play* (e.g., seeing tasks as a puzzle or game). The third category is *manager-initiated diversionary play*, or manager-promoted activities where counselors are not engaged with work (e.g., holiday dress-up parties). The fourth category is similar: *self-/peer-initiated diversionary play* (e.g., telling jokes).
What are the potential outcomes for SFS? West et al. (2016) found that play is associated with three organizational benefits: creativity, building collaborative relationships, and increasing intrinsic motivation. Celestine and Yeo (2021) found three main forms of positive outcomes in their literature review: increased positive emotion, increased performance, and increased communication. Most of the studies they reviewed reported these beneficial outcomes accrued to the individual and the organization, with only 16 of 122 studies reporting undesirable effects from play-at-work (e.g., poor performance, bullying). Below is a summary of their research findings by category, in the order of most researched:

- **Manager-initiated work-embedded play**: this was the most researched category and yielded benefits of increased communication and enhanced performance.
  - For this category to have positive effects, an intervention such as gamification needs to be proposed by management in such a way that the counselors see its intrinsic value (e.g., leaderboards increase motivation, which yields higher performance, which helps the SFS counselor finish their tasks on time to go home and see family).

- **Self-/peer-initiated work-embedded play**: this was the second most researched category and yielded benefits of increased performance and positive emotion.
  - Experiencing work as a game, puzzle, or sport is a concept introduced by Abramis (1990), and it may lead to flow experiences for the counselors (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). For example, in one study, railway control room workers analogized their work to solving a crossword puzzle, which led to better performance.

- **Self-/peer-initiated diversionary play**: this was the third most researched category and the primary benefit is emotional regulation (e.g., stress reduction) through, for example,
concepts such as coworker socializing, joking practices, and "goofing off". While research identified some deviant practices associated with these concepts, these activities can be generalized to allow the counselors some time to replenish energy.

- **Manager-initiated diversionary play**: this was the least researched category and the primary benefit is its impact on employee attitudes. It is important for management and the SFS counselors to be aligned on activities in this category so they don't feel like obligations or annoy those who would rather not participate in, for example, dress-up days.

A new outcome proposed by Celestine and Yeo (2021) is that play-at-work activities can impact energy management at work by either restoring energy or increasing energy. They note that restoration might occur through a) replenishing resources (e.g., allowing time to conserve energy or rest; Hobfoll, 2002) or b) building new resources, such as those that occur during upward cycles attributable to positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2009). Managing the counselors' energy is important, not only because Quinn et al. (2012) remind us that energy is critical to functioning well at work, but because Fredrickson (2009) points out that high-quality connections that occur during play are "life-giving" and "recharge your energy" (p. 201).

Fredrickson's (2009) research supports the findings in the outcomes section above that play feels good and that new-found positivity builds resources the SFS counselors can use at work.

Celestine and Yeo (2021) summarize their recommendations for managers considering play-at-work activities as follows:

- **Manager-initiated diversionary play**: proceed with caution. Evidence suggests employees can view these activities with cynicism and an interruption. Managers need to be keen on
employee's intrinsic motivations in order to drive better participation in play-at-work strategies (Przybylski et al., 2010)

- Co-create acceptable play-at-work activities to bridge any gaps between SFS counselors and management (e.g., counselors may seek pleasant hedonic experiences whereas management might seek activities that lead to specific outcomes).

- *Work-embedded play:* these activities have a lower risk of disruption than diversionary play, and evidence suggests the counselors would value self-/peer-initiated play activities more than manager-initiated activities. Thus, management should seek to understand how certain counselors already use work-embedded play and determine if other counselors could craft their job to reap similar benefits.

**Mindfulness**

Another way the counselors can tap into their character strengths and energy is mindfulness. Mindfulness has been shown to change the physical structure of the brain in ways that lead to attention regulation, body awareness, emotion regulation, and perspective of one's self (Hölzel et al., 2011). A principal benefit of mindfulness practice is that over time it gives the practitioner more and more ability to choose how they will react to a stressful event (e.g., an angry parent complaining to an SFS counselor) through the mechanisms of self-regulation cited above (Baime, 2020).

Mindfulness practice can be integrated with the development of character strengths. Indeed, mindfulness itself has been said to be the product of the exercise of two character strengths: self-regulation and curiosity (Bishop et al., 2004). The efficacy of mindfulness-based strengths practice (MBSP) has been researched and experimental results provide evidence for
positive well-being effects in the workplace and collegiate domains, such as an increase in satisfaction with life (Ivtzan et al., 2016; Niemiec & Lissing, 2016; Wingert et al., 2020).

Niemiec (2018) invites workers to take mindful pauses during their day to relieve stress, connect with the present moment and reconnect with their character strengths. The exercise has two steps:

1. Pause, and transition your awareness to your breath (inhale and exhale) for 10 breaths. Place your attention and awareness fully on your breath
2. After 10 breaths, ask yourself a question: Which of my character strengths can I summon to deal with the situation at hand?

**Online Interventions**

With many employees working remotely, the internet is a very low-cost, anonymous, and effective delivery option for interventions with small and large populations. Drozd et al. (2014) replicated a randomized controlled trial by Seligman et al. (2005) with the same three positive interventions: using your strengths, three good things, and the gratitude visit. Participants in both the intervention and control groups showed significantly increased happiness and decreased depression levels over six months. While the results didn't show a difference in outcomes between the intervention and placebo groups, they showed that interventions could be successfully implemented online. Further research opportunities exist to understand if cultural factors or participant motivation to improve well-being through web-based channels are elements in the intervention and control groups' positive results.

A chatbot is another viable option for bringing interventions to individuals (Greer et al, 2019). A randomized control trial delivered positive interventions to young cancer patients using the Vivibot chatbot. The content was engaging and reduced participants' anxiety, similar to other
digital interventions designed to lessen anxiety and depression in the health sector. Future research should include more extensive and diverse populations. However, the results are notable and indicate a viable alternative to in-person interventions (Greer et al., 2019).

**Mindfulness: 10 Breaths**

A principal benefit of mindfulness practice is that, over time, the practitioner increases their ability to pause and choose how they will react to a stressful event (e.g., an angry parent complaining to an SFS counselor) through the mechanisms of self-regulation (Baime, 2020; Reivich et al., 2011). Mindfulness practice can be integrated with the development of character strengths. Indeed, mindfulness itself has been said to be the product of exercising two character strengths: self-regulation and curiosity (Bishop et al., 2004). This lesson encourages diaphragmatic breathing and one's strength as resources to increase mental agility and cope during adverse circumstances.

In this micro-lesson, participants will be asked to take mindful pauses during their day to relieve stress, connect with the present moment, and reconnect with their character strengths (Niemiec, 2018). They will be encouraged to pause and transition awareness to the breath (inhale and exhale) for 10 breaths, placing their attention and awareness entirely on the breath. After 10 breaths, they will reflect on a question: which of my character strengths can I summon to deal with the situation at hand?

**Optimism: How optimistic am I?**

Positive emotion is one component of well-being (Seligman, 2011). Optimism shifts our outlook towards the positive. Optimism is a combination of belief, perspective-taking, and action to forge favorable outcomes. Optimistic people believe good results are possible, but not a sure
thing. They assess the positive and negative aspects of a situation, engage in problem-solving, prepare, and perform tasks to generate a positive outcome (Reivich & Shatté, 2003).

Optimism increases long-term well-being. Optimistic individuals persist in the face of challenges and accomplish more in school, work, and personal life. They experience better health because they believe making healthy lifestyle choices and practicing preventative care leads to better health (Seligman, 2006). Optimism is malleable. It can be strengthened and developed with intentional effort and practice (Reivich & Shatté, 2003). The objective of this micro-lesson is for individuals to build awareness of their optimism levels so they can identify areas to improve.

In this micro lesson, participants will first take the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) to measure their baseline dispositional optimism (Carver et al., 2010). Then they will engage in a reflective journaling activity for ten days to increase awareness of their daily optimism and discover patterns that affect their positivity. They will reflect on the day in general, how optimistic they felt throughout the day; and they will reflect on one specific event each day and how optimistic they felt about that event. After ten days of journaling, they will take the LOT-R again to see how scores compare to baseline and reflect on what they notice.

**Thinking Traps: Am I getting in my way?**

Thinking traps are rigid and general patterns of thinking and believing that prevent us from seeing a situation objectively (Reivich & Saltzberg, 2021). The purpose of this micro-lesson is to counter thinking traps by shutting down unproductive thoughts to gain focus and confidence to move forward in a positive direction (Reivich & Shatté, 2003). Participants will learn what events trigger thought patterns that hurt them and affect outcomes in a situation (Beck, 1976).
In this micro-lesson, participants will learn about thinking traps, the symptoms people often experience when hurtful thinking takes over, and when people are most susceptible to thinking traps. They will use a worksheet to reflect and identify people or events that trigger thinking traps and learn behaviors to practice that may counter these thinking traps and help them to move forward.

**Real-time Resilience: Driver's Training**

Resilience is adapting and coping in the face of adversity (Southwick & Charney, 2019). Real-time resilience practices aim to build a thinking skill and increase resilience during a stressful situation (Reivich & Shatté, 2003). When first learning this skill, it is best to practice it after a challenging event when a person isn't under duress, similar to learning to drive a car in an empty parking lot. Over time, with consistent practice, individuals can increase their skills and ability to handle challenging situations or people (Reivich & Saltzberg, 2021).

This micro-lesson is adapted from Reivich & Saltzberg (2021). Participants will review the steps in the real-time resilience practice model. Then they will reflect on a recent challenging experience that they wish had gone differently. Using a worksheet with the real-time resilience steps, they will plan what they would do next time to identify resources and control circumstances. Then they will discuss with a partner to get feedback and improve the plan.

The phased approach to this application plan—building a foundation of character strengths literacy, co-creating and codifying a set of core values, and embedding resilience practices into the flow of work—intends to create sustainable change that will provide both relief and support for the Penn SRFS team. Engaging the entire team, counselors and leadership, in the interventions may lead to increased trust, cohesion, and connection that will guide Penn SRFS in its goal to provide superior service and care to the Penn community, students, and families.
Please refer to the appendices for additional detail about implementation, evaluation, and the materials that will be developed in the next phase of work.

Appendix C References


Greer, S., Ramo, D., Chang, Y., Fu, M., Moskowitz, J., & Haritatos, J. (2019). Use of the chatbot "vivibot" to deliver positive psychology skills and promote well-being among young people after cancer treatment: Randomized controlled feasibility trial. *JMIR mHealth and uHealth, 7*(10), e15018-e15018. [https://doi.org/10.2196/15018](https://doi.org/10.2196/15018)


https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.5.410


https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2020.1764005

Appendix D: Application Materials

[materials begin on the next PDF page]
Appendix E: Evaluation Plan

To measure the effectiveness of these interventions, we recommend a short (5-7 item) survey be administered at baseline, mid- and end-point to assess change. The items below are categorized into two areas: Penn culture & climate and engagement.

Penn Culture & Climate

These items come from the Penn Faculty survey last administered in 2015-2016. There are no survey results that include staff input on the Penn Office of Institutional Research & Analysis web site. You may consider reaching out to Penn IR&A for additional item recommendations.

*Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1-not at all to 4-very:*

1. Penn’s campus community is safe.
2. Penn’s campus community is welcoming.
3. Penn’s campus community is competitive.
4. Penn’s campus community is diverse.

*Please answer the following questions on a scale from 1-very dissatisfied to 5-very satisfied:*

1. Overall, how satisfied are you being a staff member at Penn?
2. How satisfied are you with the resources Penn provides to support you?

Engagement

The following is a validated 12-item scale for role-based engagement. The items map to organization, job, supervisor, and co-worker engagement. Additional information about this engagement framework can be found in Young et al. (2020). Permission has been granted for use within the context of the Penn SRFS intervention.

*Please rate the following statements on a scale from 1-strongly disagree to 7-strongly agree.*
1. I feel inspired by the mission and goals of my organization.

2. I am proud to be a part of my organization.

3. I want to give my all to my organization.

4. I enjoy the work I do.

5. Time goes by quickly when I am at work.

6. I typically approach my job with a great deal of enthusiasm.

7. My supervisor inspires me.

8. My supervisor gets me excited about my work.

9. My supervisor contributes to my feelings of well-being at work.

10. My work group energizes me to do my job.

11. My coworkers inspire me.

12. My coworkers and I share an enthusiastic work ethic.
The ONESTOPers Guide to Well-Being

Facilitation Materials for

Penn Student Registration & Financial Services
Details about each activity included in this guide are noted below for at-a-glance planning.

3 Introduction
4 Phase One
5 Character Strengths Conversations
   **When**: 1:1 meetings
   **Who**: Team members and leaders
   **Frequency**: One time
   **Length**: 60 minutes
   **How**: Conversation

10 Strengths-Spotting & Recognition
   **When**: Team huddles or 1:1
   **Who**: Team members and leaders
   **Frequency**: Weekly
   **Length**: 10 minutes
   **How**: Written or digital note

12 Growth Mindset
   **When**: Team huddle
   **Who**: Individual
   **Frequency**: Weekly
   **Length**: 20 minutes
   **How**: Reflection

16 Phase Two
17 Core Values Workshop
   **When**: Team meeting
   **Who**: Team members and leaders
   **Frequency**: One time
   **Length**: 90 minutes
   **How**: Experiential

27 Positive Introductions
   **When**: Team meeting
   **Who**: Team members and leaders
   **Frequency**: One time
   **Length**: 30-60 minutes
   **How**: Experiential

30 Novel Uses of Signature Strengths
   **When**: Team meeting
   **Who**: Team members and leaders
   **Frequency**: Quarterly
   **Length**: One week
   **How**: Reflection

31 Future Considerations
32 References
The ONESTOPers Guide to Well-Being is a step-by-step guide to increasing well-being within Penn SRFS by building character strengths literacy and establishing a set of cultural core values which will provide a common language and focus to pave a pathway to resilience.

The activities presented in this guide are designed and sequenced with character strengths as the foundation. Core values are built on top of character strengths, and both support growing resilience.

The activities target the individual, team, and leader levels to permeate cultural, strengths, and resilience literacy and well-being throughout Penn SRFS. They are presented in **two phases**. The phased approach to these materials - building a foundation of character strengths literacy, co-creating and codifying a set of core values, and embedding resilience practices into the flow of work—is intended to create **sustainable change**.

We recommend that both leaders and team members participate in these activities. Engaging **everyone** in the activities may lead to increased trust, cohesion, and connection that will guide Penn ONESTOP in its goal to provide superior service and care to the Penn community, students, and families. Additionally, the facilitation experience will prepare leaders to continually coach team members making it a cultural practice for Penn SRFS.

Enjoy the journey!
The activities in Phase One focus on building a foundation of character strengths awareness and literacy. ONESTOPers will understand their own strengths and be able to spot and appreciate strengths in others which may increase resilience, empowerment, gratitude, and relationships. They will also learn how a growth mindset can help when facing new and challenging situations. There are no core values activities in Phase One.
Character Strengths Conversations
Character strengths are positive personality traits that, when fully leveraged, lead to greater well-being.

Frequent and long-term use of strengths is associated with positive outcomes including retention, job satisfaction, task performance, job dedication, engagement, passion for work, positive affect, organizational support, lower stress, and less burnout (Merritt et al., 2018).

This is a guide to prepare leaders for character strengths-based conversations with ONESTOPers to build awareness of strengths at the individual and team level.

The process includes three steps:

1. Take the VIA Survey (Leader).
2. Take the VIA Survey (Team Member).
3. Have a Character Strength Conversation.

Read on for instructions for each step.
As a leader, it’s important that you become familiar with character strengths and your own set of signature strengths before having conversations with others.

To receive your character strengths profile, follow these steps:

2. Click the “Take the Free Survey” button.
3. Create an account under “VIA Adult Survey”.
4. Complete the survey.
5. View and save your report.
Take the VIA Survey (Team Member)
After you have taken and reviewed your VIA Survey, ask your team to complete the survey. Below is a sample message you can send to them that briefly frames what the assessment is, how to complete the survey, and what will happen next.

Sample Message
Character strengths are positive personality traits that, when fully leveraged, lead to greater well-being. To promote greater well-being within our team, we will build awareness of our own strengths and the strengths of others. As a first step, please follow the steps below to complete the VIA Character Strengths Survey. It will take about 15 minutes to complete. I look forward to discussing your strengths at our next one-on-one meeting.

VIA Character Strengths Survey Instructions:
2. Click the “Take the Free Survey” button.
3. Create an account under “VIA Adult Survey”.
4. Complete the survey.
5. View and save your report.
CHARACTER STRENGTHS CONVERSATIONS

ACTIVITY | Character Strengths Conversation

When: 1:1 meetings
Frequency: One time
Length: One hour
Who: Team members and leaders
How: conversation (in person or video)

Have a Conversation
Use each connection with your team members as an opportunity to discuss and affirm each individual’s character strengths. The intent is to create an ongoing strengths-based dialogue to strengthen character-strengths literacy and embed the language in the team. Below are some talking points about what character strengths are and the positive outcomes associated with using them. Share these with your team or have them on hand during discussion. The next page lists discussion questions that can guide conversation.

Character Strengths Talking Points

- Character strengths are positive personality traits. They are the things that are *right and good* about people.
- Character strengths 1) reflect our personal identity; 2) produce positive outcomes for ourselves and others; and 3) contribute to the collective good.
- Everyone has all 24 character strengths within them, but some come more naturally than others. **Signature strengths** (top 5-7) are those that come to you most naturally, are energizing, and make you feel like *you*. **Lesser strengths** (bottom 5) come less naturally to you and may feel draining to use, but they are **not weaknesses**. **Middle strengths** are the rest.
- There have been over 700 studies done on character strengths to-date. These studies show that frequently using character strengths is associated with outcomes like flourishing, positive relationships, engagement, less depression and stress, less burnout, meaning, resilience, coping, productivity, and happiness.
- Character strengths can be developed!

Niemiec, 2018
Character Strengths Discussion Guide

The questions below can guide character strengths conversations with your team members. Choose one from the list below to work into conversations with team members or create your own! Remember to be present and give all your attention to your team member during these conversations.

Discussion Questions

• What was your initial reaction to your VIA results?
• Did anything surprise you?
• Do your highest strengths resonate with you as your signature strengths?
• How do you express your signature strengths each day?
• When you think of a time you were at your best, which strengths were you using?
• Is there one signature strength that you value most? Why is it meaningful to you?
• How do your signature strengths contribute to your success at work?
• What are some ways you can use your strengths more intentionally to benefit yourself and/or others?

Make a Strengths-Based Commitment

Encourage each person to commit to one strengths-based action for the next week. This could simply be logging when they notice themselves using their signature strengths or reflecting on strengths they’d like to use more frequently at work.
STRENGTHS-SPOTTING & RECOGNITION

Facilitator Guide

Resource: Use this video to introduce developing character strengths in ourselves and others. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0fK4837Bgg

Research: Developing an awareness of character strengths in team members and encouraging them to intentionally explore and apply their top five or “signature” strengths promotes their well-being (Niemiec, 2018). Research shows that frequent and long-term use of strengths is associated with positive outcomes, including retention, job satisfaction, task performance, job dedication, engagement, passion for work, positive affect, organizational support, lower stress, and less burnout (Merritt et al., 2018). Strengths-spotting and recognition is one way to support strengths awareness and use in team members.

Benefits:
- Written recognition can be remembered and savored (see activity).
- Cultural core values synonymous with character strengths can be “seen” and identified in team members.
- Consistently demonstrated strengths patterns are revealed.
- Individuals and teams discover new ways to cultivate their strengths by observing them in others.

Suggestions: Display strengths spotting recognition so team members can support each other in using and developing their strengths.
- Paper a wall or bulletin board near your desk.
- Take a photo and use it as a digital backdrop.
- Create a recognition wall in the office.
- Frame recognition notes.

(Niemiec, 2018; Merritt et al., 2018)
ACTIVITY | Strengths Spotting & Recognition

**Purpose:** Individuals help team members develop awareness of their strengths by recognizing character strengths behaviors. Individuals develop an appreciation of their team members’ contribution and impact.

**When:** Team Huddles or 1:1  
**Frequency:** Weekly  
**Length:** 10 minutes  
**Who:** Team members and leaders  
**How:** Written or digital note

---

**Observe**  
Be attentive; spot others using their strengths.

---

**Write a note**  
Be specific.  
What strength did they use?  
How and when?  
What impact did they have on others or a project?

---

**Share**  
Recognize and thank them publicly or privately based on their preference.  
Give them the note to remind them of and help them their strengths.

---

**Sample**

**Hope**

Stephanie, Thank you for sharing your strength of hope during our meeting yesterday. The new software system has been a challenge to learn and implement. You boosted everyone’s optimism by sharing how much we’ve learned and how it is improving our ONESTOP service to students and their families. Additionally, you reminded the team that it will make our work easier and quicker to accomplish. I appreciate the positive impact you make on others when you share the silver lining in a situation!

(Niemiec, 2018)
GROWTH MINDSET
REALIZING YOUR POTENTIAL

Facilitator Guide

Resource: Use this video to connect the character strengths lessons to developing a growth mindset. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0fK4837Bgg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0fK4837Bgg)

ACTIVITY
When: Team Huddle
Frequency: Weekly
Who: Individual
Length: 20 minutes
How: Reflection

What are mindsets, and why do they matter?

**Growth Mindset:** I believe I can change by working hard, using effective strategies and feedback to develop my potential.

- I can grow my intelligence.
- I like challenges; they are an opportunity to learn.
- Effort and practice are necessary for me to learn.
- Failures are temporary and situational.
- Other people’s achievements mean something is a possibility.
- Feedback is something I can apply to get better.

**Fixed Mindset:** I believe I was born with my abilities and talents. They are set in stone.

- My intelligence level is fixed.
- I avoid challenge because I might fail and look bad in front of others.
- If I’m naturally talented I won’t have to work hard at it.
- If I fail, I give up. I’m just not good at that.
- If someone else succeeds it’s a threat; I’m jealous.
- Feedback is criticism. What do they know? I don’t need to do anything about it.

(Dweck, 2006)
GROWTH MINDSET TALK TRACK ACTIVITY

Facilitator Guide

Neuroplasticity: The brain is malleable. It literally grows new pathways when we challenge ourselves which means learning and developing our potential is hard but doable. Watch this video to understand brain plasticity https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELpfYCZa87g

Self-Talk Tracks

Purpose
Replace a fixed mindset talk-track with a growth mindset talk-track

Steps
Our mindset can vary depending on the situation or the people involved.

• Give every team member a copy of the growth mindset talk-track poster (see page 13).
• What fixed mindset talk-tracks do you use?
• Identify the situation or the people that bring out your fixed talk-track.
• Set a goal to practice using one growth mindset talk-track for the next week.
• Reflect afterwards to identify the benefits of changing your talk-track. Be specific.
• Share with a team member or someone else to celebrate your accomplishment

(Dweck, 2006)
GROWTH MINDSET
TALK TRACK POSTER

Growth Mindset Talk-Track

Say this…

• I’m struggling with this because it’s new, and I’m learning.
• I can’t do ____ YET.
• I failed this time What can I learn and apply the next time?
• I didn’t do very well this time, but I did better than last time. Learning takes time and repetition.
• This is pushing me out of my comfort zone. That means I’m challenging myself and growing.

(Dweck, 2006)

Fixed Mindset Talk-Track

Don’t say this…

• I’m struggling because I’m not good at this; it’s not my thing.
• I can’t do this. I’m done. This isn’t worth the effort.
• I failed. I’ll do something I’m good at.
• I didn’t do very well but I did my best. That’s good enough.
• This is outside of my comfort zone. I’m going back to doing it the way I’ve always done it.
GROWTH MINDSET

Additional Resources

The Power of Yet
Purpose: There is a learning curve for challenging goals. Using this phrase helps us understand growing and learning takes time and failure is part of the process. I can’t ______ yet.

Activity: Use this video to jump start a challenging project or reenergize team members when a project has stalled. It is a good follow-up or pre-work option for the Self Talk Track Activity.
Power of Yet Lyric Video. C.A.P.S. C.J. Luckey
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SA---ZNJms

11 Strategies for developing a Growth Mindset
This video provides additional strategies for developing a growth mindset.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7u6UwtnGyE

Developing Team Mindset Activity:
• Watch the video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDHvF6wJj4
• Facilitate a group discussion using the questions at the end of the video.
The activities in Phase Two build on the character strengths and growth mindset foundation. After this phase, the team will have an established set of cultural core values which support mission, engagement, and relationships. The core values workshop is the most critical part of phase two. The workshop can begin with the positive introductions activity, or it can be done separately. Using signature strengths in a novel way will extend team members’ character strengths literacy and may improve well-being. There are no resilience activities in Phase Two.
What are Core Values?

- Core values are the modes of behavior by which individuals operate (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998).
- They typically reflect what people in an organization believe to be “good, worthwhile, and important” (Dutton, 2003, p. 140).

Potential Benefits

- Opportunity to use character strengths at the department level
- Involving team members in setting ONESTOP’s core values gives them voice and autonomy.
- Core values help everyone remain aligned because they inform team members of expected behaviors and guide their actions and decisions.
- Person-organization fit: When a person’s core values are congruent with the organization’s core values, it yields positive outcomes such as increased positive affect, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Meglino & Ravlin, 1998).

Pre-requisites

Teammates should have:
- Taken the VIA Survey to identify their signature strengths
- Completed all Phase One activities (preferred)

ACTIVITY | Core Values Workshop

When: Standalone Team Meeting  Who: Team
Frequency: One-Time  Length: 90 minutes  How: Experiential

Note: The 90-minute session is broken into two 45-minute sections: Identifying Values and Codifying & Embedding Values. If you plan to do Positive Introductions as part of this session, schedule 120-150 minutes.
To Prepare:
• Schedule a **90-minute** team meeting.
• Read all pages of the facilitator guide that follow
• Read the full detail of the Application Plan (available from your SRFS HR partner
• If the workshop will be virtual, set up a Core Values Zoom Poll using the Core Values Bank (p. 18) in advance. Detailed instructions are on pp. 19-24 (alternatives include setting up a free Miro account and following their [Dot Voting instructions](#) or using Microsoft Forms)
• If the workshop will be in-person, we suggest using Survey Monkey or other survey software to vote on core values in advance and debrief the results in person

**Brief Overview | How it Works (5 to 3 polling)**
• ONESTOPers will vote for their top-5 values using Zoom polling
• Voting occurs simultaneously so no one team member influences others.
• You’ll then facilitate a discussion of the 5 values selected and why they’re important to ONESTOP
• After a break, regroup to discuss what behaviors are aligned with the values
• From the 5, a final vote to select the top 3 values ensues
• Finally, discuss how the values will be incorporated into ONESTOP processes going forward

**Estimated Time:** 90 min (45 min identifying values; 45 min codifying and embedding values). Note: This activity can be combined with Positive Introductions or done separately. If combining, plan for 120-150 minutes.

**Best Practices**
• Set clear expectations: the goal is to reach consensus on the top-3 values that will guide ONESTOPer behavior (may be aligned with but not necessarily limited to personal values)
• Avoid “group think”: encourage people to vote for what’s important to them for culture and climate at work, not for values that are popular
Why Use Character Strengths?
We suggest ONESTOP use the character strengths framework to align cultural core values, providing more options for using character strengths holistically at the department level. When employees have frequent opportunities to apply their signature strengths, they avoid building stress over time; stress diminishes job satisfaction. (Merritt et al., 2018).

The 24 Character Strengths

- APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY / EXCELLENCE
- BRAVERY
- CREATIVITY
- CURIOSITY
- FAIRNESS
- FORGIVENESS
- GRATITUDE
- HONESTY
- HOPE
- HUMILITY
- HUMOR
- JUDGMENT
- KINDNESS
- LEADERSHIP
- LOVE
- LOVE OF LEARNING
- PERSEVERANCE
- PERSPECTIVE
- PRUDENCE
- SELF-REGULATION
- SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE
- SPIRITUALITY
- TEAMWORK
- ZEST

Why Use Characteristics of Positive Public Service?
Our situation analysis revealed that ONESTOPers demonstrate behaviors and values (e.g., altruism & service) that align with key elements of positive public service.

Qualities of Positive Public Service:
- CHALLENGE, EFFICACY, CAMARADERIE, EMPOWERMENT, and SERVICE (Jones, 2021)
Zoom Polling Setup

Step 1: Log into Zoom and ensure polling is enabled in your settings

Step 2: Schedule the Core Values meeting (or edit an existing meeting)

Step 3: Enter meeting details and click “save”
Zoom Polling Setup (continued)

Step 4: Scroll to the bottom of the “manage new meeting” screen to the polling section and click “add”

Step 5: Name your poll, select “Multiple Choice”, and enter values from the Values Bank (provided earlier in this Guide), and click “Save”
Workshop Part I: Identifying Values

Step 1: Goals & Instructions

• Remind participants why they’re here (co-creating ONESTOP’s core values and identifying behaviors they’d like to see at work)
• Give participants the instructions: once the Poll is launched they’ll select the 5 values that are most important to them to codify as ONESTOP’s core values. After the group reflects on the 5, they will narrow down to 3.
• Remind them of “the why”; these values support ONESTOP culture
• Remind participants that these are values they want to see in their team (not just personal values)

Step 2: Voting

• When it’s time to poll during the meeting, click the “Polls” icon at the bottom of the screen then click “Launch Polling”
• Let the team know they have 5 minutes to vote for their top 5 values
Workshop Part I: Identifying Values (continued)

Step 3: Tallying votes

- After 4 minutes, give the team a 1-minute warning to complete votes
- Ask them to raise their Zoom hand if they need more time
- Once you get confirmation everyone is finished, click “end polling” and “share results” so everyone can see

Step 4: Reflection

- Facilitate a team discussion, taking notes so you can synthesize the responses later. Example prompts include:
  - Why do you think the top-5 values have emerged? What historical behaviors have you witnessed that align with these values?
  - What behaviors aligned with these values would you like to see more of in the future?
  - Why are these values important to ONESTOP’s climate & culture
  - How do they facilitate the Mission of ONESTOP?

Step 5: Take a break

- Next up: Selecting the top 3 to Codify & Embed as ONESTOPer Values
- Write down the top 5 values for use in the next step
- Click “stop share results” to end polling
Workshop Part II: Codifying & Embedding Values

Step 1: Synthesis & Alignment
- Facilitator shares some common themes from the Reflection

Step 2: Defining the Values
- Facilitate a team discussion: how would we define the top-5 values in the context of ONESTOP? (Invite them to share verbally or in text chat)
  - Example: “Kindness” means going out of our way to provide high-quality service to students, parents, and each other.

Step 3: Brainstorm example behaviors
- How/when have we seen ONESTOPers behave in alignment with these values? (Invite them to share verbally or in text chat)
  - Example: I saw Stephanie exhibit kindness when…
- Probe for real team experiences to create stories illustrating values in action, which enhances feelings of connection and role-models team members demonstrating values in the workplace

Step 4: Create Poll to Select the Top 3 Values
- To create a 2nd poll during the meeting, click the “Polls” icon at the bottom of the screen, then click “edit” in the upper right corner
Step 4.1: Create Poll to Select the Top 3

This will open up your Zoom account browser window. Add a poll, select “multiple choice”, and enter the top five values from the first poll and then click “save”

Step 4.2: Create Poll to Select the Top 3

- Navigate back to the Zoom meeting, click “polls” to return to the polling window, and choose your new poll from the dropdown in the upper-right corner, and click “launch polling”
- Let the team know they have 3 minutes to vote for their top 3 values

Step 5: Tallying votes

- After 2 minutes, give the team a 1-minute warning to complete their votes
- Ask them to raise their Zoom hand if they need more time
- Once you get confirmation everyone is finished, in click “end polling” and “share results” so everyone can see
Workshop Part II: Codifying & Embedding Values (continued)

Step 6: The Final Tally

- Debrief the Results of the Top 3 values chosen
- Do these embody what it means to be a ONESTOPer?
- Facilitate a discussion that identifies the expected behaviors for each of the three core values selected.

Step 7: Codifying the Core Values

- Let the team know how the new Core Values will be disseminated and displayed

Step 8: Embedding the Core Values

- Let the team know how the new Core Values will be embedded in ONESTOPer culture (e.g., will core values be incorporated into performance development plans and performance reviews?)

Congratulate yourselves – you now have a set a core values to drive ONESTOPer behavior!
What is a Positive Introduction?
A ONESTOPer shares a story in their life when they were at their best, through the lens of character strengths (Peterson, 2006)

Potential Benefits
• Opportunity for a high-quality connection (HQC)
• Opportunity to reflect and spot strengths in themselves that they learned about in Phase One
• Opportunity to spot strengths in a colleague, which enhances relationships and reinforces strengths-based language literacy introduced in intervention one

Estimated Time
3 minutes per person; 30-60 minutes in total depending on format (e.g. all 10 counselors together or breakout rooms of pairs or small groups of 3-4)

Best Practices
• Warm up the participants and create some psychological safety with the “NYC introductions” icebreaker
• Have two leaders model the Positive Introduction and response before teammates share

Pre-requisites
ONESTOPers should have:
• Taken the VIA Survey to identify their signature strengths
• Been given advance notice and time to reflect and write down their positive introduction story
• Received coaching on the proper way to listen and react to their teammates’ stories

Preparation
• Familiarize yourself with breakout room functionality (Zoom or MS Teams)
• Read pp. 25-28 of Peterson’s (2006) A primer in positive psychology
• for more info on Positive Introductions
Advance notice
Give the team a heads up about when you’ll be doing the positive introductions. Give them an example and give them at least a week to write/reflect on their story. You could provide them your own positive introduction story or the example from Peterson’s (2006) *A primer in positive psychology*.

Instructions for writing the story
We suggest you include the following in your invitation to team members to write their positive introduction:

- Think about a time when you were “at your best” (could be personal or professional).
- Reconnect them to what they learned in Phase One - this is more about character strengths than it is sharing a talent or skill.
- Good stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Have them read their story aloud once drafted. Target a length of 1 page (3-5 minutes spoken) and revise accordingly.
- Set an expectation of confidentiality.

NOTE: We strongly urge the leadership team to try this exercise among themselves first before facilitating for the ONESTOPer staff so it can be properly modeled

Icebreaker: “NYC Introductions”
This activity generates energy and builds a sense of connection important to the positive introductions activity.
- Give ONESTOPers the following instructions & then put them into breakout rooms:
  “Pretend as you enter the breakout room that you’re walking down Fifth Avenue in New York and you bump into a “long-lost friend”. AND GO!”
POSITIVE INTRODUCTIONS

Positive Introductions
• Debrief the NYC introduction exercise and how it felt
• Tell them it’s now time to transition to sharing the positive introductions they wrote, and to make their story handy

Instructions for Listening to Others’ Stories
Give ONESTOPers the following instructions and then put them into breakout rooms, preferably with one member of leadership in each room:
• Focus on active listening (e.g., smile & nod where appropriate)
• Try to spot your colleague’s strengths
• When your colleague is finished, help them savor the moment
• Immediate recognition is key (e.g., clap, share superlatives)
• Tell the speaker what strengths you heard; don’t try to relate it to your own experience
• Any observations about strengths are welcome (i.e., doesn’t need to be a VIA character strength)

Debrief Positive Introductions
• Debrief the positive introductions
• Have ONESTOPers share verbally or in the chat the strengths they spotted in their colleagues

Next Steps
• Have the participants write down or make a mental note of the strengths they spotted in anticipation of a core values workshop to identify the core values that will guide ONESTOPer behaviors this year
• Depending on whether you combine this exercise with the core values workshop, take a break or transition the meeting to a close
Using Signature Strengths in Novel Ways
In a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study of five different positive interventions, the group assigned to using their signature strengths in novel ways experienced *increased happiness* and *decreased depression* for six months. These results were fully replicated, and similar results have been found within various populations in different countries (Seligman et al., 2005).

**Option One**
1. Choose one of your signature strengths
2. Use that signature strength in a **new and different way** each day for one week
3. Write down when, where, and how you used the strength each day
4. Reflect and note how using the strength made you feel. This will help you make further connections between your actions, feelings, and the context.

**Option Two**
1. Use a **different** signature strength in a new way each day for one week
2. Write down which strength you used and when, where, and how you used it each day
3. Reflect and note how using the strength made you feel.

**Reflection Questions**
How challenging was it to come up with new ways to use a signature strength? Did you notice using a strength in certain ways felt better than others? Why might that be? What did you learn from this experience?

Share your experience and reflections with others for deeper understanding and connection.
FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

This ONESTOPers Guide to Well-Being outlined the first two, foundational phases to holistically developing the well-being of Penn SRFS at all levels, but the work doesn’t stop here!

A detailed Application Plan and Implementation Plan outline additional areas of focus including:

• Introduction to Building Resilience
• Introduction to Coaching Strengths & Development
• Introduction to Resilience Train-the-Trainer Model

These activities aim to build resilience skills in the areas of mindfulness, optimism, thinking traps, and real-time resilience. They also offer ways to further embed character strengths literacy into team member development and to multiply the effects of training by teaching trainers to cascade the work throughout the organization in a scalable way.

For more information, please contact Richard Le (rle@upenn.edu).


VIA Institute on Character. https://www.viacharacter.org/

**Growth Mindset**

REFERENCES

Phase Two

Core Values


Positive Introductions


Novel Uses of Signature Strengths
