



## Strengths – it's not about being strong

Sometimes as parents we can describe our children at their worst. They can be stubborn, selfish, disinterested – the list goes on, and for parents behaviours like these can be challenging. But it isn't always like this and at times our children show us wonderful strength of character.

Our character strengths are what distinguish us from other people and are based on what we value. They guide our behaviour and make us feel good about ourselves. Your child may have strengths that come so naturally to them that they may not even consider them to be strengths.

Character strengths such as self-regulation, perseverance and love of learning are not only the foundations of positive youth development and thriving, but are related to school wellbeing, success and life satisfaction.



### You can play a key role in building your children's character strengths

**Give meaningful and specific praise.** Tell your child when you see them using certain character strengths to handle a situation or themselves. Use the name of the strength in your conversation. For example:

*I'm really proud of the way you handled that situation with your friend. You were honest about your feelings but you also showed respect for your friend's feelings.*

**Help your teenager to recognise the character strengths they possess.** Sometimes teenagers can become focused more on what they can't do than what they can do. Celebrating your child's strengths and not focusing on their weaknesses is the best way to raise a confident, emotionally mature person.

Tell your child the strengths that you know they have (be honest) and how these strengths make them the wonderful person they are. Work with your child to help them to practise the strengths they want to build.

**Help your teenager recognise character strengths in others.** Try reading books or watching movies where strengths are used by the characters. Have conversations and ask questions to develop your child's awareness of the strengths shown by fictional and real-life characters. Ask questions such as: What strengths did the characters show in the movie? How did the characters use their strengths to overcome challenges or obstacles? How was this character like you? How was this character not like you? How would you like to be more like this character?

**Demonstrate your positive strengths.** Share personal stories where you have had to draw on your strengths such as forgiveness, open-mindedness, fairness, courage and self-control, and how these helped you to cope and manage yourself in a challenging situation. Talk about the strengths that you want to build and use in the future.