

PARENTAL PULL-OUT

Parents: Please remove this centrefold carefully to avoid damaging the staples!

Character Strengths SPHE Programme - Parent Guide

This short booklet is designed to give parents a brief introduction to the “*Weaving Well-Being*” programme and to help them support their children as they complete the **Character Strengths** (2nd Class) section of the programme. The *Weaving Well-Being* programme is a well-being programme for children specifically designed to promote positive mental health and flourishing in children. The skills are based on current research from the field of **Positive Psychology**.

What is Positive Psychology?

Positive Psychology is concerned with the science of well-being, personal growth and resilience. It is founded on the concept of identifying and developing personal strengths. Positive Psychology uses evidence-based activities which help people to flourish, grow and engage with life on an optimal level whenever possible. Our lessons and activities introduce children to many of these strategies and activities which can empower them to become active participants **in creating, maintaining and boosting positive mental health** throughout their lives. Activities have been designed in accordance with the SPHE curriculum, and the Guidelines on Well-Being issued by the Department of Education and Skills (2015).

Character Strengths has been identified as one of the key pillars in the field of Positive Psychology. The **Character Strengths** programme consists of ten lessons which are designed to help children become aware of the different character strengths that we all possess to some degree and the benefits of using each one. They will also identify their own top strengths, which they can use in different ways to enhance their happiness and well-being. Each child has a Pupil Book which gradually builds into a highly personal portfolio reflecting their use and understanding of each strength.

Why are Character Strengths important and how can we cultivate them in our children?

Character Strengths are part of who we are. They are the elements of our personality which can help us to live a happy and helpful life. The classification of our strengths that is used in this programme (Values in Action or VIA) suggests that there are 24 different **Character Strengths** and that we all have different levels of each strength. This programme enables the children to identify their own key strengths and encourages them to use them as much as possible to enhance their well-being.

Research has shown that identifying your key **Character Strengths** and using them in different ways on a regular basis can lead to a wide range of benefits. These benefits, which can vary depending on the strengths used, include increased happiness, higher levels of life satisfaction, increased self-esteem, enhanced academic achievements and better relationships with peers.

In this programme the children are introduced to the concept of well-being in weeks 1 and 2 and the concept of **Character Strengths** in week 3. The children learn about four **Character Strengths** each week from week 4 to week 9 of the programme. The lesson names on the following pages shows the different strengths covered each week. In the final week they identify their own top five strengths.

To gain maximum benefit from the strengths, your child should be encouraged to use them as much as possible. There is a homework task each week which encourages practical use of the strengths. In order to help and encourage your child, you may find the following information useful.



Lesson 1: What is Well-Being? (Part 1)

In this lesson, children discuss and learn what well-being means and the implications of taking care of our well-being in our daily lives. Children learn that well-being is linked with feeling good in both our body and mind and it allows us to cope with little problems, enjoy life and accept ourselves just as we are. Other benefits of caring for our well-being are discussed in terms of friendships and feeling connected with others, having energy and being proud of our efforts. For homework, children are asked to make a list of things that make them happy. These can be activities, people, pets, favourite books, songs or movies and so on.

How to support your child: Talk to your child about the importance of taking care of their well-being. Discuss your child's **Happiness List** and what it means to them. Encourage them to do some of the things on their list this week where possible. Give examples of some of the things that make you happy. Discuss how you can care for or enhance your well-being as a family.

Lesson 2: What is Well-Being? (Part 2)

In this lesson children continue to explore and learn about what well-being means. They have an opportunity to assess how they are doing in relation to each element of their well-being by completing a simple **Self-Assessment Well-Being Checklist**. For homework they get to set a goal and decide on two actions they can take in order to improve that part of their well-being.

How to support your child: Review your child's well-being checklist. Discuss with them the reasons for the answers they gave. Ask them what support you could give them to change a neutral or sad face to a happy face. Help them decide what actions they could take to achieve their homework goal and encourage them to take these actions.

Lesson 3: Introduction to Character Strengths

In this lesson children are introduced to the concept of **Character Strengths**. They discover that there are 24 different **Character Strengths** and how we have different amounts of each strength. They learn about the benefits of using our **Character Strengths** and are asked to think about which of the strengths they have the most. They learn that they will be finding out more about each strength over the coming weeks and discovering what are their own top five strengths.

How to support your child: Discuss the list of 24 **Character Strengths** with your child. Ask your child if there are any particular strengths that they like or, that they feel they may have a lot of at this stage. Choose your own favourite strengths from the list and give your child some examples of how you may have used any of these strengths to help yourself or others in the past. Take the opportunity to notice and discuss the **Character Strengths** of others this week, perhaps other family members and of course, the strengths of your child.

Lesson 4: Strengths 1 to 4 (Love / Curiosity / Gratitude / Self-Control)

In this lesson, children are introduced to the first four **Character Strengths**. A brief explanation of each of these strengths is shown in the first activity for this lesson. Your child is encouraged to think about how using each of these strengths could help them in school and which of the strengths they may have the most. There is an opportunity to focus on the strength of **Curiosity**. Children are encouraged to pick and try to use one of these strengths this week.

How to support your child: Talk to your child about the four strengths covered this week.

Discuss times when they may have displayed any of this week's strengths. Do they have a favourite and why? For the homework activity help your child to think of people or characters who may have one or more of these strengths. Share your thoughts on which of these four strengths you possess the most.



Lesson 5: Strengths 5 to 8 (Leadership / Honesty / Creativity / Emotional Intelligence)

In this lesson, children are introduced to the next four **Character Strengths**. A brief explanation of each of these strengths is shown in the first activity for this lesson. Your child is encouraged to think about how using each of these strengths could help them in school and which of the strengths they may have the most. There is an opportunity to focus on the strength of **Creativity**. Children are encouraged to pick and try to use one of these strengths this week.

How to support your child: Talk to your child about the four strengths covered this week.

Discuss times when they may have displayed any of this week's strengths. Do they have a favourite and why? For the homework activity help your child to think of people or characters who may have one or more of these strengths. Share your thoughts on which of these four strengths you possess the most.



Lesson 6: Strengths 9 to 12 (Kindness / Forgiveness / Fairness / Optimism)

In this lesson, children are introduced to the next four **Character Strengths**. A brief explanation of each of these strengths is shown in the first activity for this lesson. Your child is encouraged to think about how using each of these strengths could help them in school and which of the strengths they may have the most. There is an opportunity to focus on the strength of **Optimism**. Children are encouraged to pick and try to use one of these strengths this week.

How to support your child: Talk to your child about the four strengths covered this week.

Discuss times when they may have displayed any of this week's strengths. Do they have a favourite and why? For the homework activity help your child to think of people or characters who may have one or more of these strengths. Share your thoughts on which of these four strengths you possess the most.



Lesson 7: Strengths 13 to 16 (Bravery / Open-Mindedness / Love of Learning / Appreciation of Beauty)

In this lesson, children are introduced to the next four **Character Strengths**. A brief explanation of each of these strengths is shown in the first activity for this lesson. Your child is encouraged to think about how using each of these strengths could help them in school and which of the strengths they may have the most. There is an opportunity to focus on the strength of **Bravery**. Children are encouraged to pick and try to use one of these strengths this week.

How to support your child: Talk to your child about the four strengths covered this week.

Discuss times when they may have displayed any of this week's strengths. Do they have a favourite and why? For the homework activity help your child to think of people or characters who may have one or more of these strengths. Share your thoughts on which of these four strengths you possess the most.



Lesson 8: Strengths 17 to 20 (Caution / Meaning / Zest / Perseverance)

In this lesson, children are introduced to the next four **Character Strengths**. A brief explanation of each of these strengths is shown in the first activity for this lesson. Your child is encouraged to think about how using each of these strengths could help them in school and which of the strengths they may have the most. There is an opportunity to focus on the strength of **Perseverance**. Children are encouraged to pick and try to use one of these strengths this week.



How to support your child: Talk to your child about the four strengths covered this week. Discuss times when they may have displayed any of this week's strengths. Do they have a favourite and why? For the homework activity help your child to think of people or characters who may have one or more of these strengths. Share your thoughts on which of these four strengths you possess the most.

Lesson 9: Strengths 21 to 24 (Perspective / Humour / Humility / Teamwork)

In this lesson, children are introduced to the last of the 24 **Character Strengths**. A brief explanation of each of these strengths is shown in the first activity for this lesson. Your child is encouraged to think about how using each of these strengths could help them in school and which of the strengths they may have the most. There is an opportunity to focus on the strength of **Humour**. Children are encouraged to pick and try to use one of these strengths this week.



How to support your child: Talk to your child about the four strengths covered this week. Discuss times when they may have displayed any of this week's strengths. Do they have a favourite and why? For the homework activity help your child to think of people or characters who may have one or more of these strengths. Share your thoughts on which of these four strengths you possess the most.

Lesson 10: Identifying and Using My Top 5 Strengths

In the previous six lessons the children have been introduced to each of the 24 **Character Strengths** and discovered the benefits of each of these strengths. This week they are reminded of each strength and the benefits of using our strengths to enhance our happiness and well-being. Their homework activity is to identify their own top five strengths. They are encouraged to use them every day to help both themselves and others.

How to support your child: Discuss the various strengths with your child. The full list of strengths is shown on the back page of your child's Pupil Book. Talk to your child about their favourite strengths and help them to choose their top five strengths. Encourage them to feel even better about their strengths by reminding them of times they may have displayed any of these strengths.

There are a number of relaxation and meditation tracks to support this programme available on the digital content section of our website www.otb.ie/WWB.