

# Week Four—Strength

"We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face... we must do that which we think we cannot.

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

## More Isn't Better... Better is Better!

What does curiosity feel like?

What does bravery think like?

What does humility look like?

Being healthy is about thinking, feeling and behaving in healthy ways. We can improve our health by widening the way we use our strengths of character. Each of our character strengths –creativity, judgment, zest, teamwork, hope – are actually *capacities* for thinking, feeling and behaving.

We spend a lot of our waking moments being consumed with negative thoughts – how we didn't measure up, pondering a mistake we made, or worrying about a conflict that is arising.

We spend a fair amount of time being upset with painful emotions such as anger, sadness, guilt and anxiety. Why not balance our negativity with healthy thoughts and positive feelings? We can turn to our strengths to help.

Consider the strength of bravery. This strength conjures up images of courageous feats such as men and women going to war, saving the kitten from the burning building, or facing a personal fear. These are all behaviors. But, we don't tend to consider: What are my brave thoughts? What goes through my mind when I am acting courageously?

Example of brave thoughts: "I can deal with this situation. I will face my fear. It will not hold me back. I'm confident there will be a positive outcome to my actions."

On the other hand, consider the strength of fairness. This strength tends to be more focused in the head, where you have thoughts relating to treating people fairly, giving someone a fair chance, or thoughts about the most just way to act in a situation. But, what does fairness feel like? When you use your fairness strength, where do you feel it in your body?

Example of fair feelings: "I feel a sense of contentment when I am fair. I can feel a lightness in my chest and a looseness and relaxation rise in my face and neck."

Considering each of these three levels of our strengths psychology - the thoughts, feelings and behaviors associated with our strengths—helps to unite our often disconnected mind and body. Strengths become a welcomed alternative to the thinking distortions, inner critic and perfectionist thinking that pervades our mind.