

Is There a Shadow Side to a Strengths-Based Perspective?

Susan is a researcher at a consulting firm. Analytical is one of her top talent themes. Susan loves to probe problems and ask many questions. Her colleagues say that Susan continually peels back the onion. This is a tremendous asset to her organization, as her in-depth analyses add real value for the company's clients.

The downside is that she sometimes doesn't know when to quit, and she can drive her colleagues crazy with what they perceive as her endless questions. It also doesn't help that her e-mail messages, filled with data and analysis, can run many pages.

When thinking about Susan's talents from a strengths-based perspective, it's helpful to return to our original question: "Is there a bad side, or a dark side, to strengths? Again, if you look at Gallup's definition of strength — the ability to consistently produce a nearly perfect positive outcome in a specific task — the answer is no, because a strength is about producing "a nearly perfect positive outcome."

On the flip side, if you were to wonder whether Susan was applying her talents in a negative way, the answer is clearly yes. Again, Gallup's definition of talent — a natural way of thinking, feeling, or behaving — helps clarify this. If Susan's Analytical talents lead her to wear people out with her persistent questioning, then she is applying those talents in a negative way.

– Brian Brim, "Probing the Dark Side of Employees' Strengths," *Gallup Management Journal*,
February 8, 2007

Identify one of your Signature Themes in which you see a "shadow side," and answer the following questions:

Which theme did you identify as having a potential shadow side?

How is the shadow side of this theme exhibited in your life?

What knowledge and skills do you need to acquire in order to develop this theme and employ it as strength?

Activity 5.4: Is There a Shadow Side to a Strengths-Based Perspective?