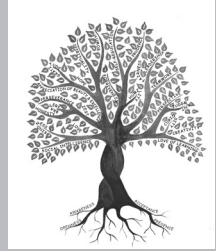


## M BSP Handout 7.2

### Session 7:

## Aware-Explore-Apply



Attempting to improve or build upon a character strength is a process that involves three general steps: aware-explore-apply.

### 1. Aware

The first step of any change process – self-directed change or practitioner-guided change – is awareness. For strengths work, this crucial step involves understanding the language of strengths, the concepts, definitions, and seeing how they are attributed to oneself. This step answers the question, “What are my strengths?” and begins to answer, “What strength was I just using?”

- Mindfulness in this phase helps the individual shift from autopilot and strengths blindness to a place of greater awareness.

### 2. Explore

This phase is often skipped by individuals eager to begin making a quick change. It is important to first develop a deeper understanding of one’s character strengths. Here, individuals begin to understand what their signature strengths are and how they have previously used them at times of suffering and success. This begins to shed some light on who they are and what really makes them tick. This phase typically involves solitary reflection, pondering, and journaling, as well as interpersonal discussion and co-exploration.

- Mindfulness in this phase helps the individual cultivate deeper insight into who they are and draw new connections with their past and current behaviors.

### 3. Apply

This is the action phase. After a sufficient amount of exploring, the individual is ready to set a goal and take action with character strengths. Typically, this involves setting a plan for the cultivation of a particular strength (e.g., boosting kindness) or of a strength approach (e.g., increase strengths-spotting in others). This usually is supported by the creation of a routine and/or a reminder or cueing system to stay on track with the new practice.

- Mindfulness in this phase helps the individual to stay connected to the question “What matters most?” and involves wise action as change is implemented.

### **Maintain: Repetition and Moving Forward**

When working with strengths, remembering these three words (aware-explore-apply) is easy and straightforward and will provide a path for times when one feels “stuck” or confused.

As mindfulness and strengths work is an ongoing process, these phases should be repeated over time. Repetition underscores “practice and more practice” which is the key to developing character strengths and maintaining strong use. Without mindful awareness, the strengths use is likely to become stale and stagnant, ultimately leading to strengths erosion. Mindful awareness at each phase ignites the strengths work and creates a positive synergy of benefit.