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Indian Association of Health, Research and Welfare

Teenage Issues

Love, infatuation, or biology: Opposite sex attraction in adolescence

Peer Pressure and Adolescent Substance Use

School Bullying among Teenagers

Teen Love and Parenting



**Strengths - The Key to Our Best Selves
; An Interview with Dr. Neal Mayerson**

Interview with Discovery Channel's John Hendricks

1st International Online Conference on Psychology and Allied Sciences (IOCPAS-2011)



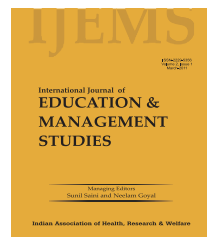
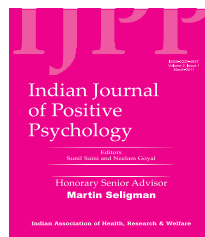
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Strengths - The Key to Our Best Selves:

An Interview with Dr Neal Mayerson

Mary Judd



Neal H. Mayerson Ph.D., is the founder and Chairman of the nonprofit VIA Institute on Character. When Neal Mayerson was a teenager, he often felt like he wasn't free to be himself, especially in school. As he grew older, he became determined to increase opportunities for young people to identify, believe in and build upon their strengths in other words, to be their best selves.

Together with Dr. Martin Seligman and Dr. Chris Peterson, Mayerson created the VIA Survey of Signature Strengths, which helps people identify core character strengths, such as bravery, creativity, teamwork, honesty and more.* The survey has been taken by millions around the world and is widely used in settings ranging from education to business to psychotherapy to the military.

MJ: What are your top signature strengths?

NM: Creativity, Persistence, Love, Honesty, Zest and Open-mindedness.

MJ: Do you feel like you had these strengths as a kid?

NM: I can see creativity, persistence, judgment, and honesty being there when I was young... zest is a different matter for two reasons: 1.) I was kind of anemic and 2.) My father was always pushing me to be excited so I learned to be resistant.

MJ: Do you feel like you were able to use these strengths in school?

NM: It almost brings me to tears to think of what it would have meant to me to have teachers who saw me, and encouraged me and gave me opportunities to make the most of my strengths instead of having to fit into their "square peg." As kids, we often feel like something is wrong with us, when really, we just have different learning and expression styles.

MJ: Can you share a story about a time when you felt it was hard to be yourself?

When I was in college my creativity and curiosity were getting the best of me. I would go to class and read the text and it would be interesting to me and then my mind would diverge into a variety of things from that whether it was getting more information or sitting down to write music. I remember in my organic chemistry class, for one of the assignments I wrote a long poem (my creativity at play). I soon realized I couldn't keep that going and also be able to memorize all the things they wanted me to for a test. So, I started to wonder, why am I doing this school thing? I have never liked school. Why am I doing this? I answered myself I am doing this because I have a certain place I want to end up. I need a degree so I can do certain things, which means I need to make certain grades... and so on. So, I decided for the next while, I was going to "flip off my curiosity." I remember making a very conscious decision to do that.

Then during the next couple of years I struggled because I felt that I was dying. I needed my strengths of creativity and curiosity. Thankfully, Donna (now my wife) was with me and said, 'the things

Mary Judd has been interviewing people who have taken the VIA Survey to see how their strengths play out in their lives. Previously, Mary Judd has interviewed Prof. Martin Seligman (August, 2010 issue on Positive Psychology) and MentorCoach Ben Dean (October, 2010 issue on Stress Management) for the PsyInsight. In this issue also read Mary's interview with Discovery Channel founder John Hendricks on Childhood Dreamer to Global Explorer on page no. 3. Mary tapped her own strengths of curiosity and love of learning to find out what inspired the man behind the survey and see what advice he would offer today's young people.



Read on!

that are at the very core of our person, if they get stifled they might go from a roaring flame to a bare flicker, but they don't go out. Trust me,' she said, 'when you're done with this, all those parts of yourself will come back alive as you want them to. It was difficult, but I trusted her. And she was right. It took a LOT of persistence for me to get through school because by and large schools have not been particularly good for me. Luckily, I was able to change this some. And, as an adult, I use my strengths quite often: creativity to solve problems and design new programs and also to create music and art; perseverance to see major projects through; love to stay in close touch with my family and to acknowledge the many fine people I work with.

MJ: What would you say to young people today?

NM: Knowing and understanding your character strengths is a powerful tool for building a life that feels true for you. As a teenager I was reflective, athletic, and creative. And love was important to me. But, I definitely experienced pressures to be someone other than who I was, and those pressures created discomfort. However, I also felt anchored in myself and tried to limit/manage how much I exposed myself to situations/people in which I felt those pressures.

All of these qualities are alive and well in me to this day. I think (don't know) my parents moderated their encouragement of my creativity and athletics because they did not want my life trajectory to go in those directions for practical reasons. Fortunately, my passions have found expression in my career (I initially chose psychology because I knew it would appeal to my curiosity, my love of learning, and my desire to contribute positively to others' lives) and in my avocational pursuits (music writing/performing, recreational sports competition, etc.).

I feel sometimes that managing my strengths is like trying to control wild horses. I need to understand when to let them run or slow them down. It's hard sometimes, but it is possible and as a result I have been able to thrive and help others live better lives, too.

My message to a teenager today would be: Learn to be true to yourself and kind to others.

(For more information or to take the survey, go to www.viacharacter.org)

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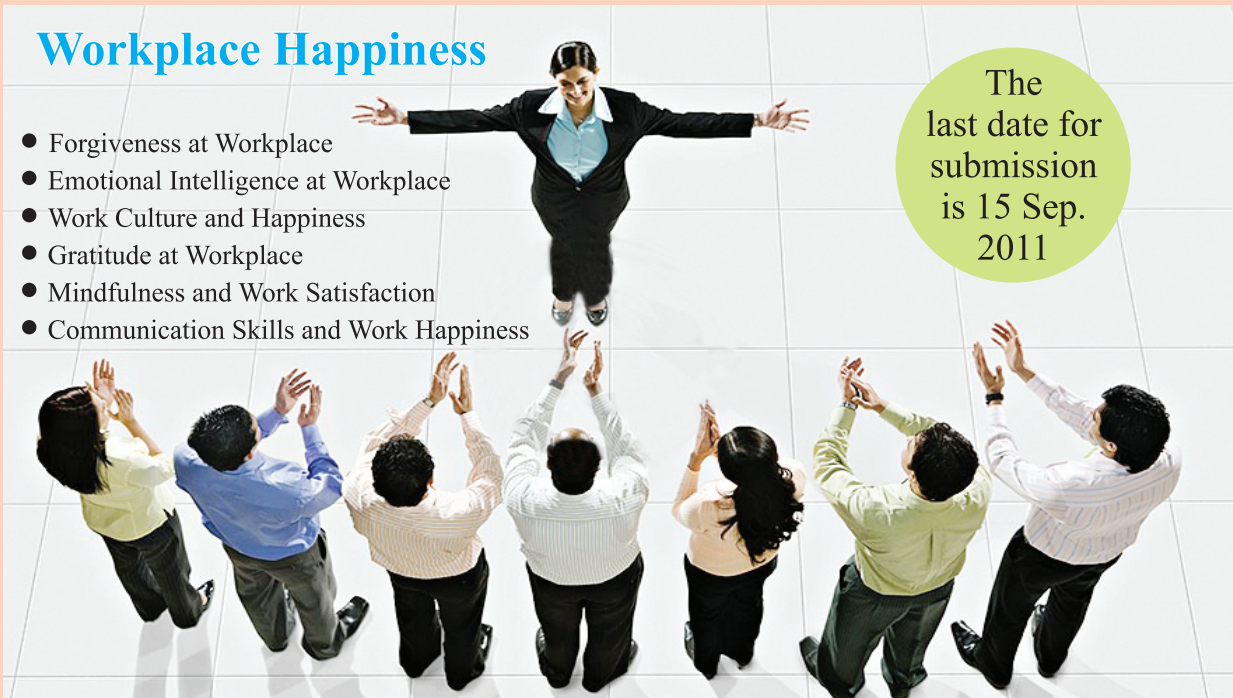
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- Work Culture and Happiness
- Gratitude at Workplace
- Mindfulness and Work Satisfaction
- Communication Skills and Work Happiness

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Greetings

Dear Readers

With this issue PsyInsight has completed its first year. We are very grateful to all contributors and readers across India and abroad for their appreciation and cooperation during the whole year. The themes of previous issues were on Positive Psychology, Behavior Modification for HIV/AIDS, Stress Management, Positive Parenting and Grandparenting, Sexuality, Life Skill Awareness, Gender Issues, Aging Gracefully, and Marital Satisfaction. The current theme discusses Teenage Issues. Researchers and social thinkers all over India have contributed valuable thoughts on teenage issues.

Updesh Kumar has presented an article on Love, Infatuation, or Biology: Opposite Sex Attraction in Adolescence, Nayanika Singh has addressed the issue of Dating Violence, Piya Bedi has focused on Body Dissatisfaction, L.N. Suman has put her thoughts on Teenage Peer Pressure, Kiran Sahu has discussed on Teen Suicide, and many others have contributed interesting articles on how to deal with teenage issue. Hope the readers of PsyInsight would love reading this issue.

We thank whole heartedly all the contributors and readers who have been our real strength behind this effort. We are specially thankful to Mary Judd who added special value to PsyInsight, and got interviews of Prof. Martin Seligman, MentorCoach, Ben Dean, the founder of Discovery Channel John Hendricks, Neal Mayerson who along with Martin Seligman, and Chris Peterson created the VIA Character Strength. We believe that the current issue on teenage issue would also be liked by all of you. We are committed to make everyone's life better by replacing negativity with positivity in life through this small effort. We again are thankful to all our contributors and readers for their continuous support and suggestions.



-Sunil Saini
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