

2026 Presidents Institute

A Deeper Purpose



January 4–7, 2026 ■ Signia by Hilton Orlando Bonnet Creek ■ Orlando, FL



The Council of Independent Colleges

Know Your Strengths

Presented by **Rev. Kelly Shushok**

Presidential Spouse and Associate to the President for College and Community Relations

Roanoke College

Pronouns: she/her

ACTIVATOR | CONNECTEDNESS | STRATEGIC | MAXIMIZER | WOO



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Independent Colleges

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2026 Presidents Institute • **Spouses and Partners Program**



About me...

- 4.5 years in this role
 - Senior Pastor for 20 years
 - School Teacher for 15
-
- 3 adult-ish children
 - Farm girl from Texas
 - Met Frank at age 15

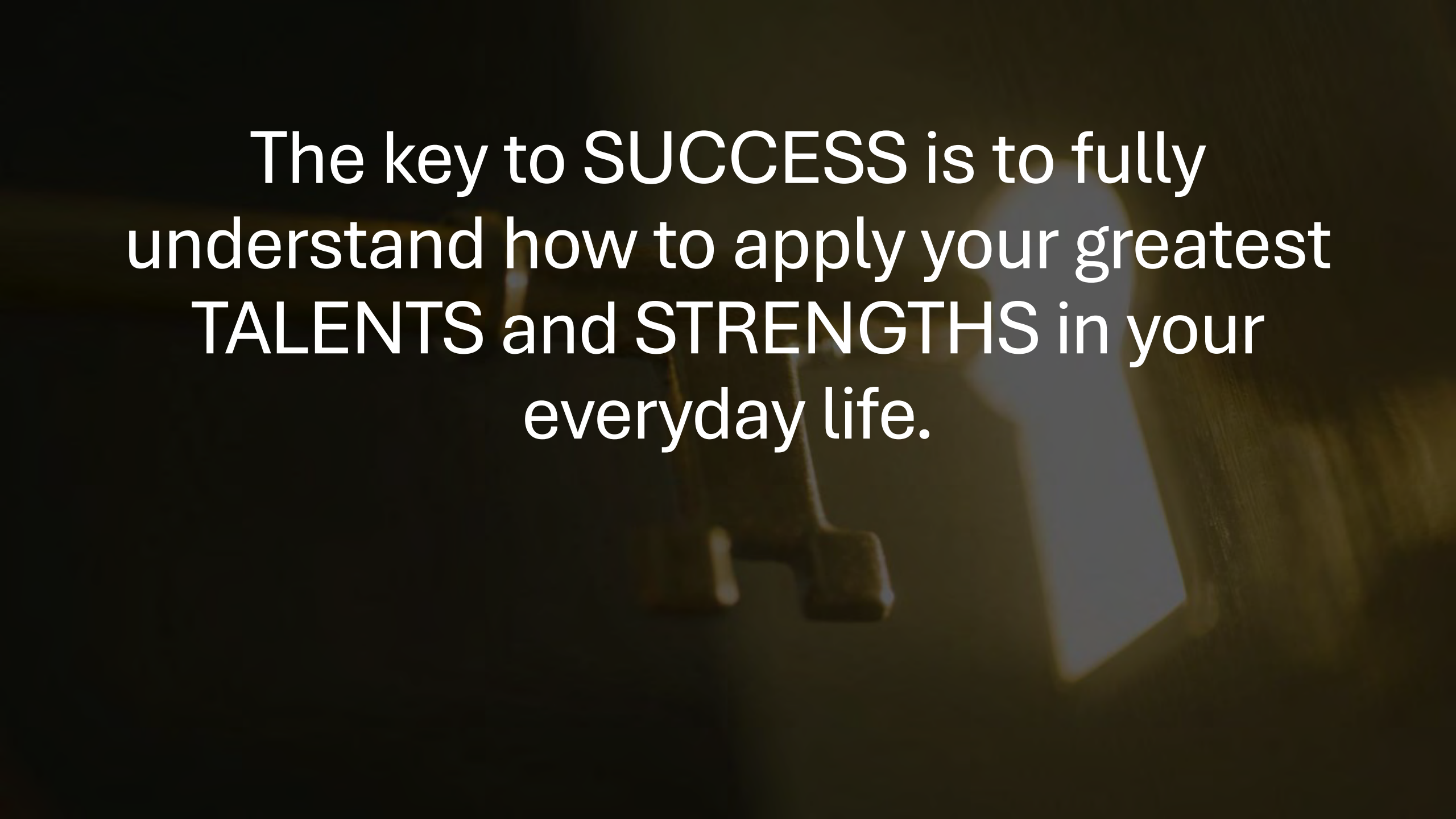
What lies behind
us and what lies
before us are
small matters
compared to what
lies within us.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson



What's within you?

1. What is one positive word people use to describe you?
2. In your role as a Presidential Spouse, what is one thing that you are good at?



The key to SUCCESS is to fully
understand how to apply your greatest
TALENTS and STRENGTHS in your
everyday life.



People who focus on using their Strengths...

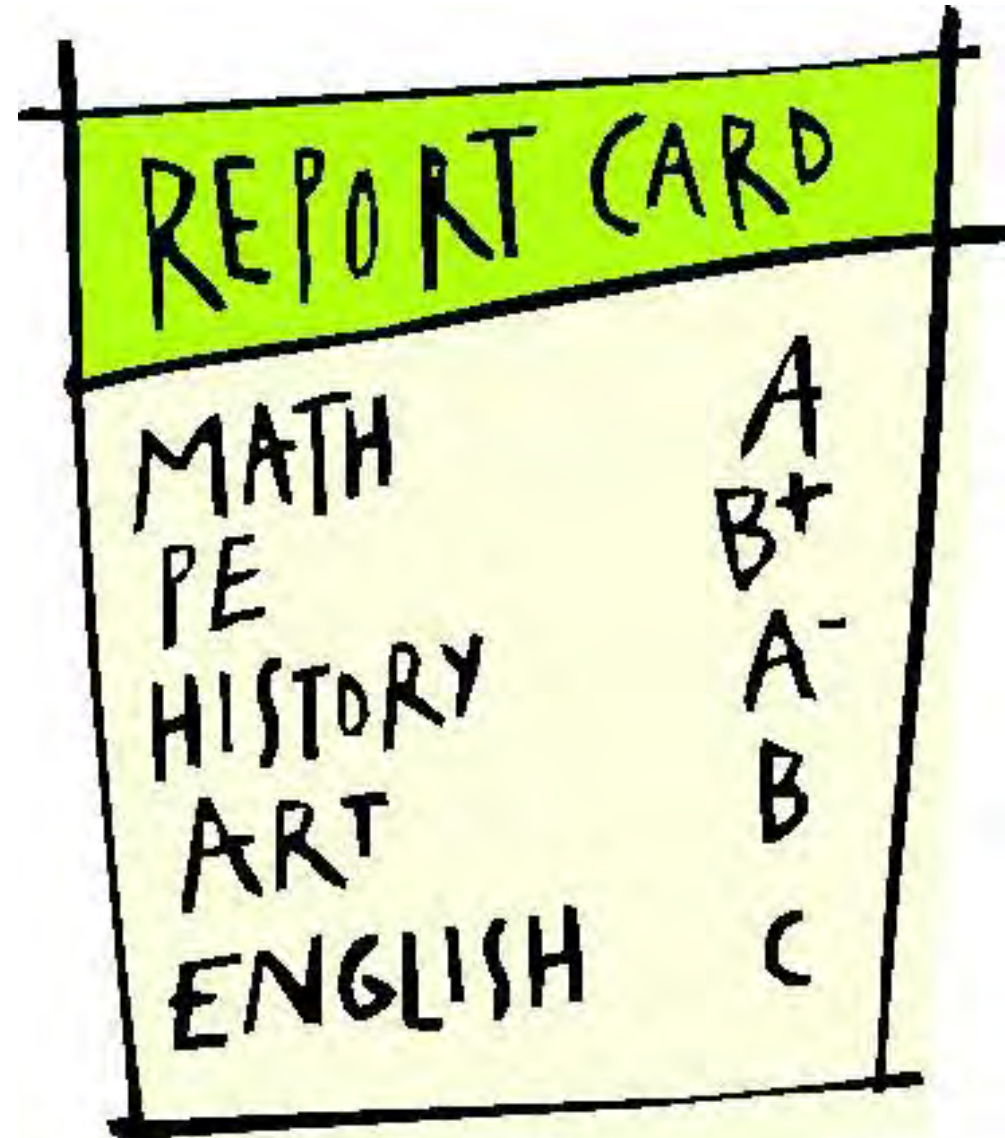
- 6x more successful
- 12.5% more productive
- 6x more engaged
- 3x more likely to live a happy life
- 15% less likely to quit their jobs

<http://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/170462/seven-reasons-lead-strengths.aspx>

I use my strengths every day.



Paradigm busting approach



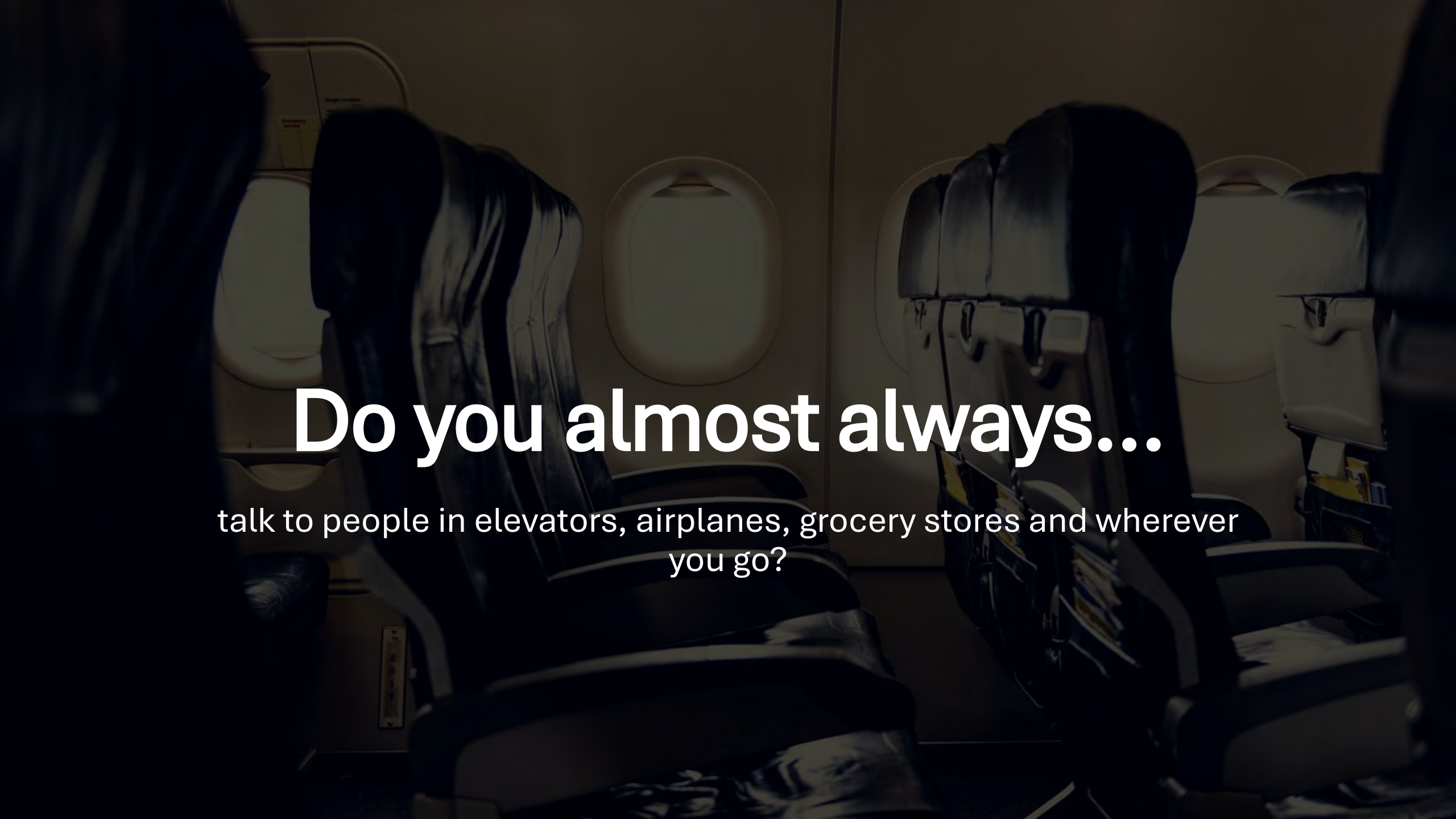
REPORT CARD	
MATH	A
PE	B+
HISTORY	A-
ART	B
ENGLISH	C

Strengths Philosophy



“Individuals gain more when they build on their talents, than when they make comparable efforts to improve on their areas of weakness.”

Clifton & Harter, 2003, p. 112

A dark, low-key photograph of an airplane cabin interior. The image shows rows of seats with headrest covers, and oval windows are visible in the background. The lighting is dim, creating a somber and isolated atmosphere.

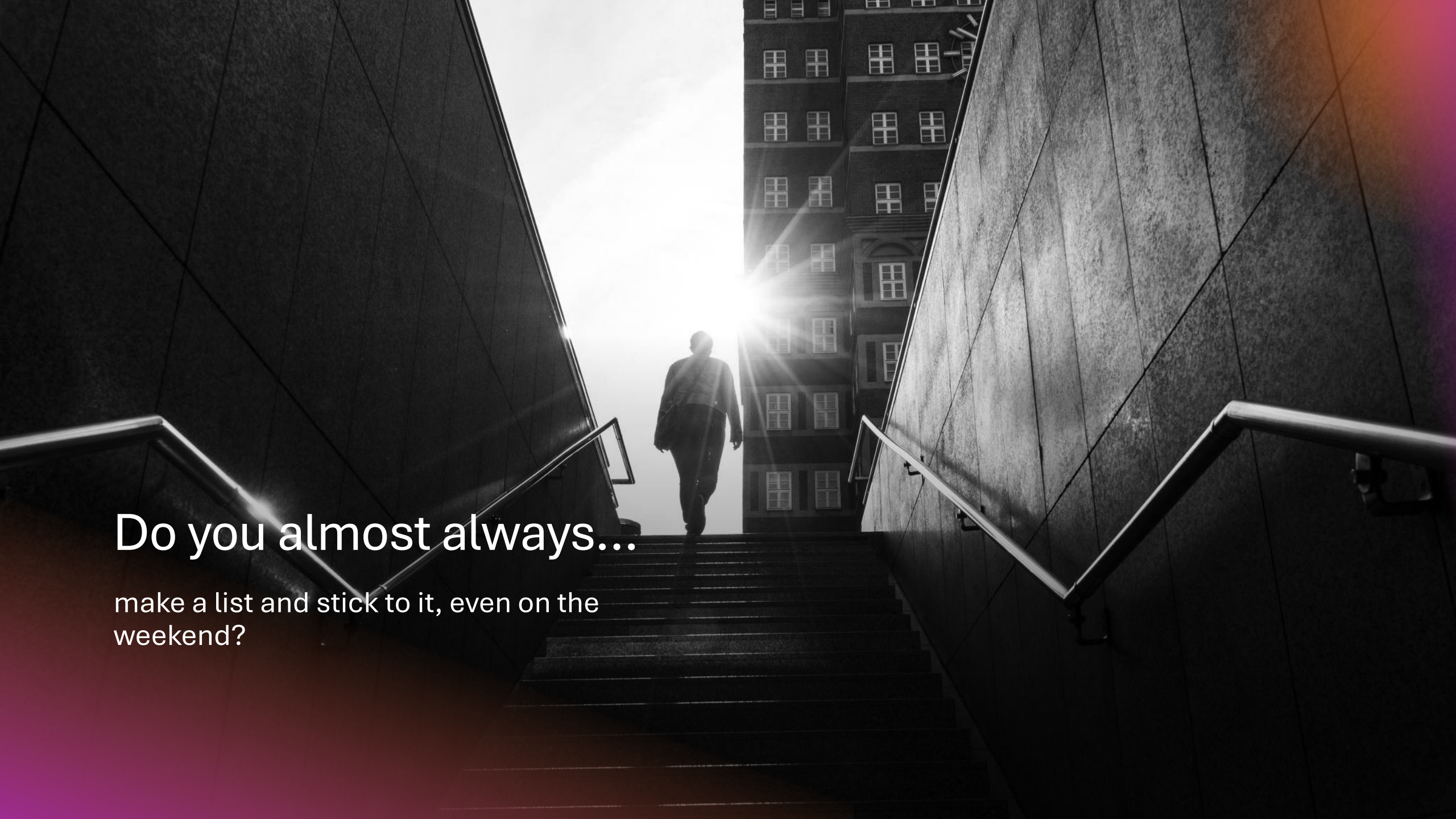
Do you almost always...

talk to people in elevators, airplanes, grocery stores and wherever
you go?

Do you almost always...

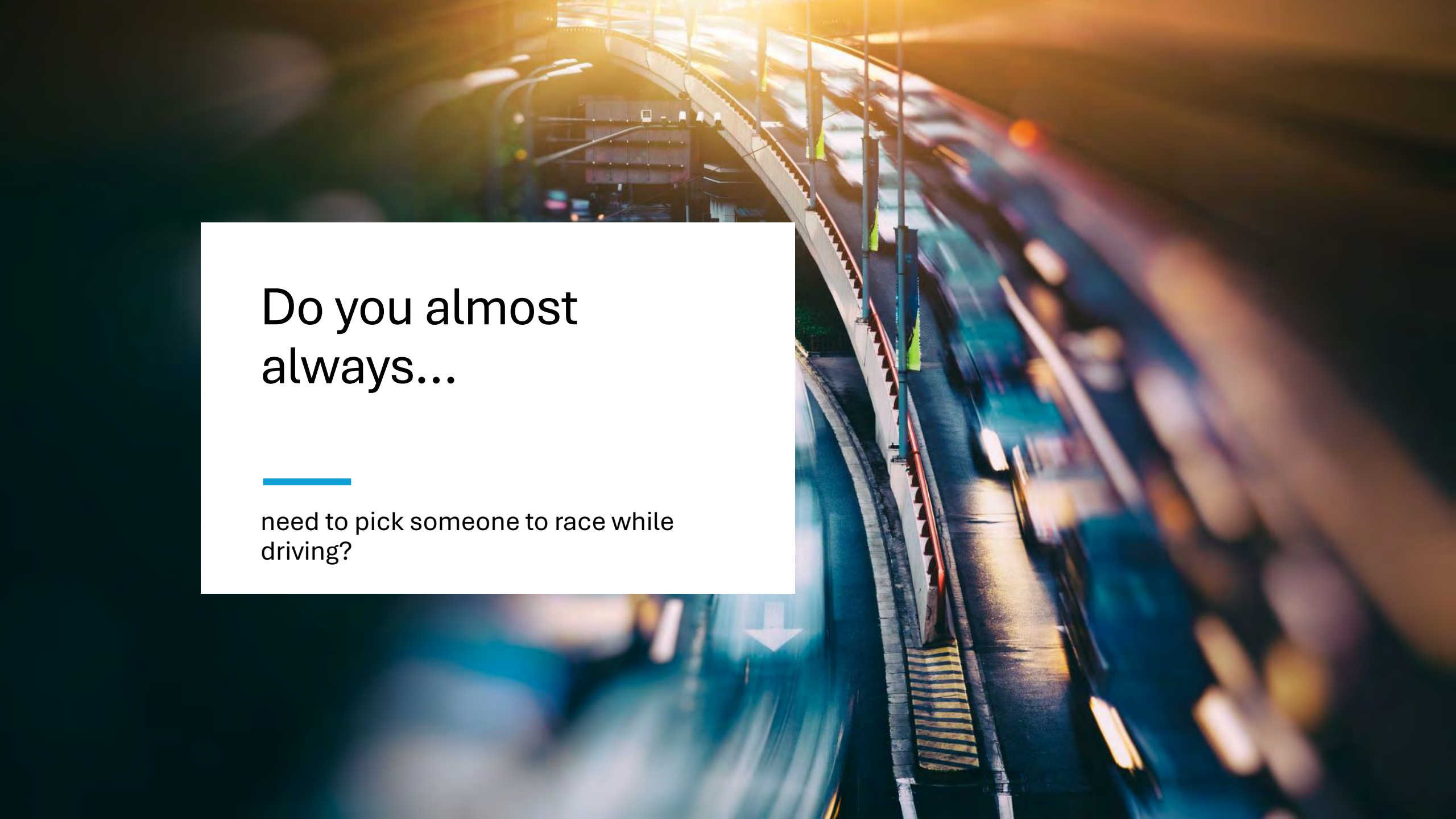
have a color-coded or otherwise
organized closet?



A high-contrast, black and white photograph of a person walking up a wide staircase. The person is silhouetted against a bright light source at the top of the stairs, creating a strong lens flare. The staircase is flanked by dark, textured walls. In the background, a tall building with many windows is visible, also silhouetted against the bright light. The overall mood is one of aspiration and progress.

Do you almost always...

make a list and stick to it, even on the weekend?



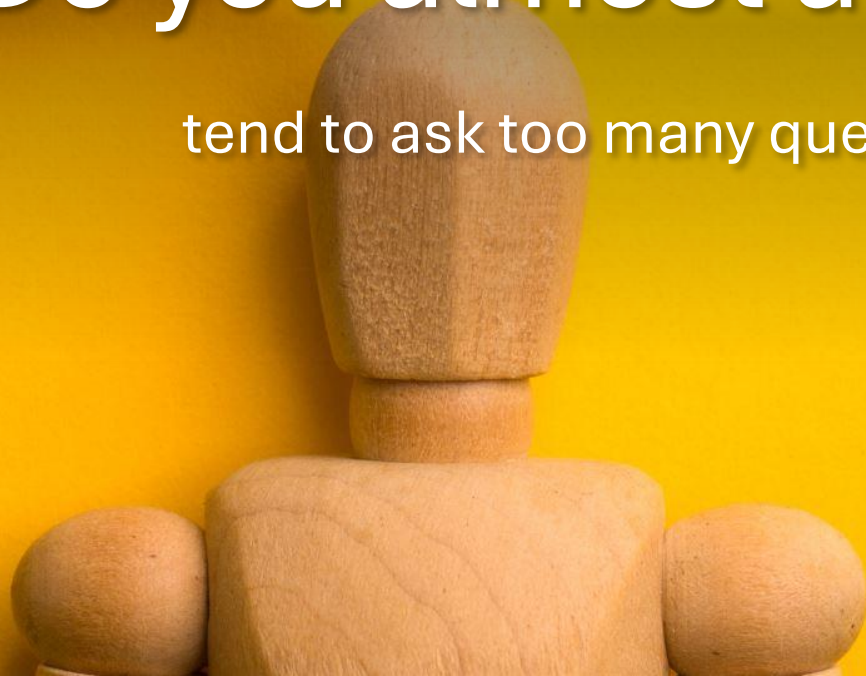
Do you almost
always...

need to pick someone to race while
driving?



Do you almost always...

tend to ask too many questions?





Do you almost always...

Press the elevator button to 'remind' it that you are there?

What is TALENT?

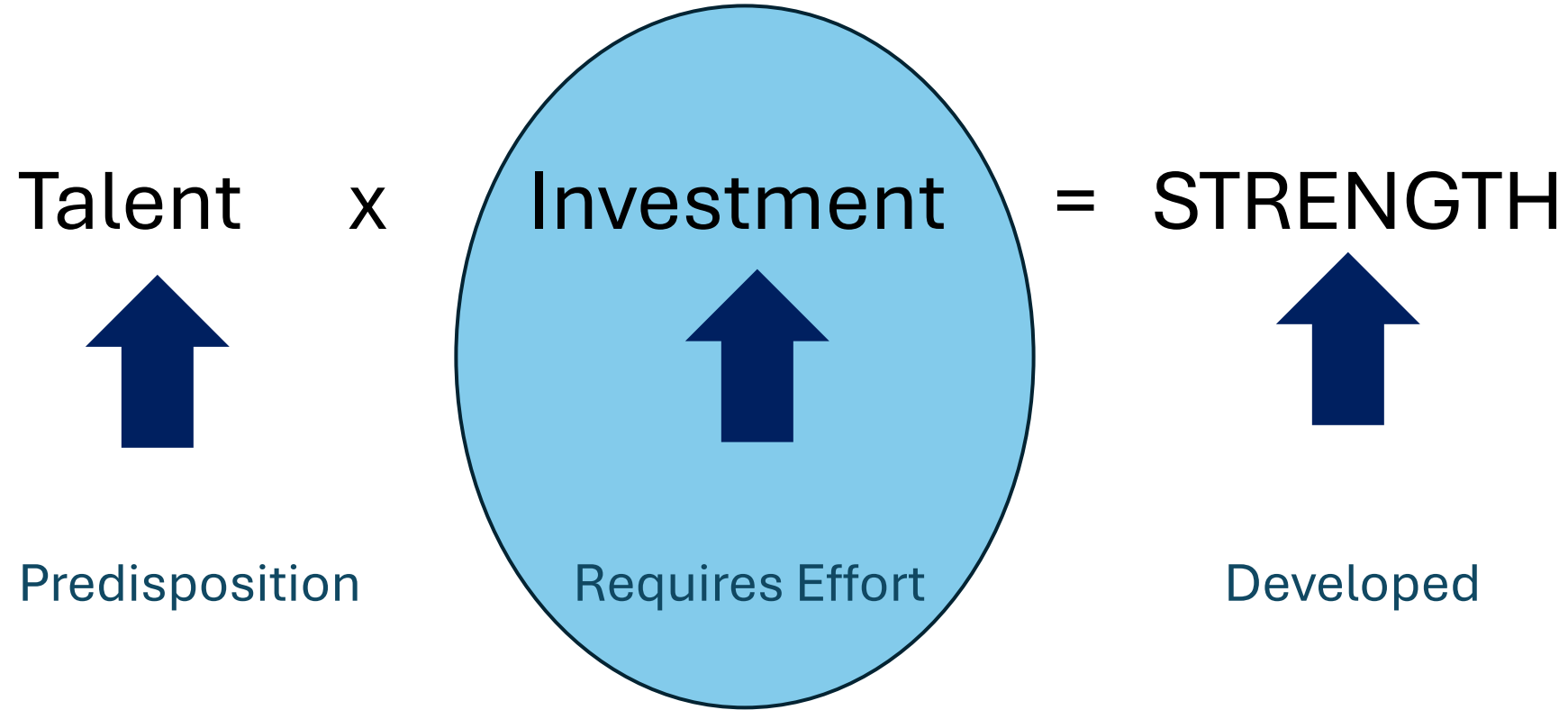
***A naturally recurring
pattern***

*of thought, feeling, or
behavior*

*that can be productively
applied*

- effortlessly and instinctively starting conversations
- thinking in an orderly or timely manner
- easily and naturally influencing others
- seeing patterns in data
- consistently having a positive outlook on life

What is a **STRENGTH**?



Investment is a MULTIPLIER of talent!

Investment includes time spent practicing, developing skills, & building knowledge

How the Clifton Strengths Assessment was created

Don Clifton, Nebraska Faculty turned CEO



250,000 Interviews of high-achieving people

Invent ways of
using their
strengths in new
situations

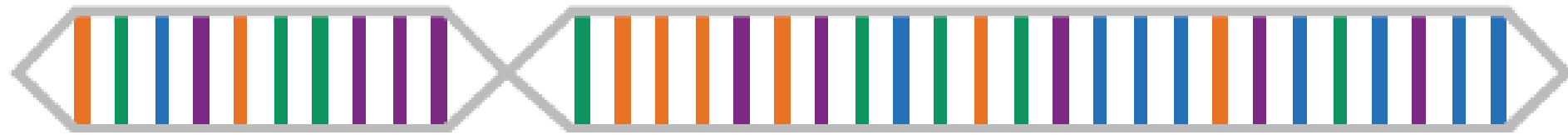
Spend most of
their time in
areas of strength

Delegate or
partner with
others

Apply their
strengths to
overcome
obstacles

What would happen if we
studied what's **right** with
people instead of what was
wrong with people?

-Don Clifton (1924-2003)



CLIFTONSTRENGTHS®

is the code that cracks open your awareness of your unique talents



The 34 Themes of Talent Measured by CLIFTONSTRENGTHS®

TOP 5 SIGNATURE THEMES

33,390,720 POSSIBLE COMBINATIONS

ONLY
1 IN **278,256**

PEOPLE SHARE **YOUR**
TOP 5 THEMES

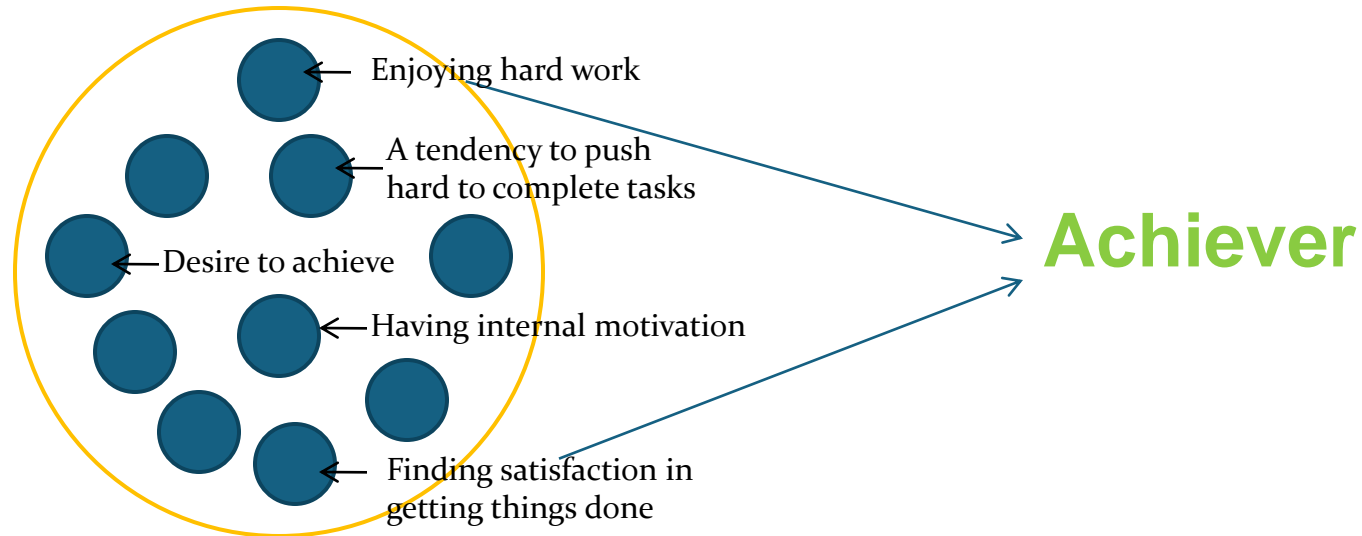


ONLY
1 IN **33.39M**

PEOPLE SHARE **YOUR**
TOP 5 THEMES IN THE
SAME EXACT ORDER AS YOU!

What is a CLIFTONSTRENGTHS® theme?

A talent theme is a group of similar talents



Activator

- Turn ideas into actions
- Impatient with talking about doing things—wants to do them now
- Powerful force in making things happen
- Action is the best method for learning—learn by doing





Maximizer

- Excellence is their standard
- Drawn to “good to great,” not “bad to good.”
- See talents and strengths in others, sometimes before they do, and love to help others become excited by their potential
- Capacity for seeing what others do best and how to match people to tasks
- Good networker

Communication

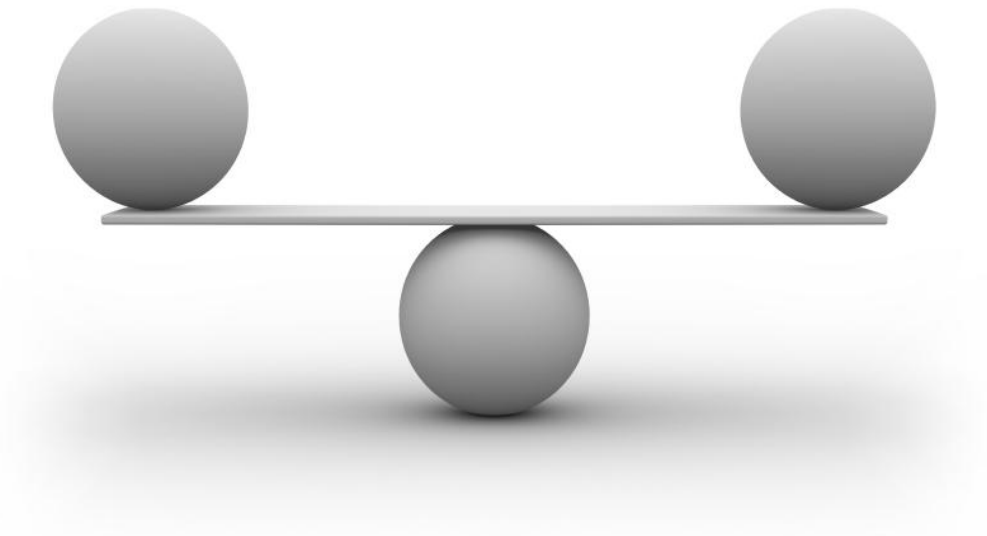
- Enjoy talking—and do it well
- Good at explaining clearly
- Captivating stories, images, metaphors
- Inspirational and motivating



Deliberative

- Think through all the pros and cons before making a decision
- Good at seeing the risks
- Making the right decision is more important than the timing
- Thorough and careful, often a private person





Consistency

- Fair and just in their treatment of others
- Warrior against special treatment or favoritism
- Clear rules and procedures enable them to treat everyone fairly
- Predictable and even-handed
- Balance is important

Relator

- Enjoy working hard with close friends to achieve a goal together
- Deep relationships with a small circle
- Pulled toward people they already know
- Comfortable with intimacy and self-disclosing



Arranger

- Able to find the right combination of people and resources to get things done
- At their best in dynamic situations, confronting the unexpected
- Highly organized, yet flexible
- Order out of chaos
- Multi-tasker



First Impressions

What was your first impression of your top five themes from your CLIFTONSTRENGTHS report?



What is something in your report that surprises you?

Your report is a beginning, not an end

NAME IT!

- Choose a theme description you identify with, and underline words or phrases that best describe you.

CLAIM IT!

- Now, reflect on specific examples of how this theme helps you in your role.

AIM IT!

- How could you use this theme more intentionally?

**Starting tomorrow, I will use my talents in this theme by...*

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Q&A



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Thank you for attending this session!



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