**Tip sheet: Using the Values in Action Institute Inventory of Strengths (VIA – IS) in Counselling**

**What is the VIA - IS?**

Developed by Peterson and Seligman (2004), this is a 240 item self report inventory designed to profile an individual’s character strengths and requires approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) researched and developed a classification of 24 character strengths. These strengths have been organised into 6 virtues which form the basis of the inventory:

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| --- | --- |
| **Virtues** | **Strengths** |
| **1.Wisdom** | Creativity |
|  | Curiosity |
|  | Open mindedness |
|  | Love of learning |
|  | Perspective |
| **2. Courage** | Bravery |
|  | Persistence |
|  | Integrity |
|  | Vitality |
| **3. Humanity** | Love |
|  | Kindness |
|  | Social Intelligence |
| **4.Justice** | Citizenship |
|  | Fairness |
|  | Leadership |
| **5. Temperance** | Forgiveness and mercy |
|  | Humility/Modesty |
|  | Prudence |
|  | Self regulation |
| **6. Transcendence** | Appreciation of beauty and excellence |
|  | Gratitude |
|  | Hope |
|  | Humour |
|  | Spirituality |

**Validity and Reliability:**

Although research is limited, the statistics available indicate acceptable internal consistency and test – retest reliability. There is evidence of concurrent validity and research into predictive validity is continuing.

**Using the VIA - IS**

Can be completed for free online at: <http://www.viacharacter.org/> or

http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx

On completing the online survey you will be emailed a short report detailing your character strengths in descending order.

**Advantages of using the VIA – IS:**

* Helps develop a language to label and access strengths
* Provides a platform for exploring strengths: For example asking client how they can use their strengths to overcome challenges or exploring how they have used these strengths in the past.
* Enables exploration of how and when the client deploys his/her strengths

**References**

Kauffman, C., Siberman, J., & Sharpley, D. (2008). Coaching for strengths using VIA. In J. Passmore (Ed.), *Psychometrics in Coaching*. UK: Kogan page Ltd.

Petersen, C and Seligman, MEP (2004) Character strengths and virtues. American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Websites: <http://www.viacharacter.org/>

http://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu/Default.aspx