It's a Matter of Framing

Many of us have pictures of our family or family members displayed in our homes and offices. A nice frame makes all the difference. Matisse said once that the four sides of the frame are the most important part of the picture. Van Gogh was also meticulous over how to frame each of his paintings. The frame prepares our eyes, mind, and heart to interpret the picture on its own merit, i.e., what it purports to be. If a person is framed with a deficit and illness based perspective, then they will often reflect what that framing portrays.

For a long time, society and the mental health profession have tended to use the frame of *what's wrong* with people as opposed to *what's strong* about them. Martin Seligman, the founder of the positive psychology movement, wrote, "We can now describe and measure much of what is wrong with people, but what about those things that are right? .... When psychiatrists and psychologists talk about mental health, wellness or well-being, they mean little more than the absence of disease, distress, and disorder. It is as if falling short of diagnostic criteria should be the goal for which we should strive."[1]

Fortunately, a growing number of mental health professionals are leading the movement for a strengths based and resilience building focus. Two leaders of this movement, Seligman and his colleague, Christopher Peterson, conducted rigorous and empirically based research to develop a comprehensive classification system known as Character Strengths and Virtues (CSV). This impressive work presents 6 virtues and classifies them into 24 related character strengths. Seligman and Peterson also developed a self-assessment process called Virtues in Action (VIA) to assist individuals in finding their character strengths. The idea is that instead of people striving to build on deficits (strengths they don't have), they benefit more by developing and enhancing the top 5-6 character strengths they do have. This can be a great aide for developing more resilience in ourselves, our families, and our teams. See the CSV chart below.

Character Strength and Virtue (CSV) Chart [1]		
Wisdom & Knowledge	**Courage**	**Humanity**
Creativity	Bravery	Love
Curiosity	Perseverance	Kindness
Judgment	Honesty	Social Intelligence
Love of Learning	Zest	
Perspective		

Justice	**Temperance**	**Transcendence**
Teamwork	Forgiveness	Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence
Fairness	Humility	Gratitude
Leadership	Prudence	Hope
	Self-regulation	Humor
		Spirituality