[Tapping Into Positive Psychology Using the MBTI® Assessment](http://www.aptibulletin.org/2011/09/tapping-into-positive-psychology-using-the-mbti%c2%ae-assessment/" \o "Permanent Link: Tapping Into Positive Psychology Using the MBTI® Assessment)

[](http://www.aptibulletin.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/knowyourself.jpg)

A primary focus of positive psychology is to help people identify and build on their unique strong points. Strengths are built-in capacities for certain thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. While everyone possesses the full range of these assets, the ability to draw upon one capacity over another varies among individuals. People tend to enjoy using their strengths and naturally call upon them when presented with a challenge. Your particular range of strengths is a blend of your natural propensities, your growth as a result of personal experiences, and your deliberate effort to develop certain parts of your personality. Your particular array of strengths is part of what makes you unique.

When you use your strengths, there is a tendency to feel energized. Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi describes a state of mind known as flow wherein the difficulty of a task and the skill level are matched which results in the individual functioning at a high level. When we are in flow or the zone, we are rewarded for using our strengths by a feeling of concentration and absorption that has been described as blissful engagement. However to tap into the benefits of your personal strengths, it is key to know what they are. A research study presented at the British Psychological Society in 2001 found that only 1/3 of the participants had a deep enough understanding of their strengths to be able to consciously use them. It may be that your particular strengths were not honored or valued or it may be that since they feel so natural, you do not even recognize them as strengths. Whatever the reason, there are many people who are not acquainted with their powerful and unique special qualities.

The work of Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Briggs pre-dates the current positive psychology movement, but their writings are seldom included in the supporting works that are cited in the positive psychology literature. Gifts Differing, published in 1980, describes the strengths of each personality type as measured by the MBTI® instrument. This book only scratches the surface of the contributions made by Myers and Briggs toward advancing the need to honor individual differences and strengths, a body of work that stretches over decades.

One of the foundations of the MBTI system is that all psychological types are fundamentally valuable and that each type has particular situations in which they tend to shine more brightly than other types. Psychological preferences form the foundation of strengths because, as noted in the positive psychology literature, one is drawn to or prefers activities that tap into strengths. Many tools have been developed since the venerable MBTI assessment was created to mine for these strengths, such as the StrengthsFinder® and the new questionnaire from the VIA Institute on Character. Many groups are interested in tapping into this method for using strengths to bring about happiness and satisfaction in everyday life.

It must be noted that the positive psychology movement is not just about finding strengths. There are elements of developing mindful behavior through meditation and awareness, cultivating a grateful mindset and savoring one’s blessings, as well as engaging in compassionate behavior. However, a cornerstone of this movement is to focus on one’s special gifts first and foremost, rather than looking at problems and shortcomings. In this key area, the MBTI assessment was not only pioneering, but continues to have relevance today.

[Tapping Into Positive Psychology Using the MBTI Assessment, Bulletin of Psychological Type Sept 2011](http://www.aptibulletin.org/2011/09/tapping-into-positive-psychology-using-the-mbti%C2%AE-assessment/)

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| **[http://www.aptibulletin.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/holm_ann.jpg](http://www.aptibulletin.org/?attachment_id=435)Ann Holm**, M.S., C.CC (ENFP), is a cognitive specialist and life coach. Since 1986, she has coached brain injured clients in recovering and maximizing cognitive skills, leading to greater competence and life satisfaction. Encouragement from clients and theirfamilies led Ann to become a life coach which makes it possible for her to offer individualized and dynamic plans which combine principles of learning and behavioral change with the latest in brain science. [annholm@comcast.net](mailto:annholm@comcast.net) |