***24 individual strengths & head/heart/gut***

The *VIA inventory of strengths* *(VIA-IS)* survey has been completed by more than 3 million people from every country in the world. Examination of over 1 million of the responses shows that 16 of the VIA’s 24 character strengths can helpfully be classified into 3 groups – *head/relationship with the world, heart/relationship with others* and *gut/relationship with oneself:*

***inquisitiveness*** (head/learning) – *relationship to the world*:

***appreciation of beauty & excellence*** (awe, wonder, elevation); ***creativity*** (originality, adaptive, ingenuity); ***curiosity*** (interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience); ***love of learning*** (mastering new skills & topics, systematically adding to knowledge); and ***perspective*** (wisdom, providing wise counsel, taking a big picture view)

***caring*** (heart/humanity) – *relationship to others*:

***capacity to love & be loved*** (both loving & being loved, valuing close relationships with others), ***fairness*** (just, not letting feelings bias decisions about others), ***forgiveness*** (mercy, accepting others’ shortcomings, giving people a second chance), ***gratitude*** (thankful for the good, expressing thanks, feeling blessed), ***kindness*** (generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruism ‘niceness’), and ***teamwork*** (citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty)

***self-control*** (gut/doing) – *relationship to oneself*:

***honesty*** (authenticity, integrity), ***judgment*** (critical thinking, thinking things through, open-minded), ***perseverance*** (persistence, industry, finishing what one starts), ***prudence*** (careful, cautious, not taking undue risks), and ***self-regulation*** (self-control, disciplined, managing impulses & emotions)

*the more general 8 strengths, happiness & adaptive functioning*

As illustrated above, 16 of the 24 VIA character strengths fit fairly directly onto this three factor model. The other 8 strengths are more general and link strongly with more than one of these three factors. These 8 more general strengths include ***humility***(modesty, letting one’s accomp-lishments speak for themselves), ***leadership*** (organizing group activities, encouraging a group to get things done) and ***spirituality***(religiousness, faith, purpose, meaning). Overall happiness & flourishing are more strongly linked to *“strengths of the heart”* than to *“strengths of the head & gut”*. However for adaptive, successful functioning in particular environments – for example, work, study or relationships – other *“situational”* strengths may come to the fore. For successful close relationships *love,* ***social intelligence***(emotional intelligence, aware of the motives/ feelings of self/others, knowing what makes people tick) and ***humour***(playfulness, bringing smiles to others, lighthearted) seem of particular importance. In contrast, for autonomy ***bravery***(valor, not shrinking from fear, speaking up for what’s right)*, honesty* & *perspective* appear more central. Similarly different strengths may prove of particular help at different life stages. It seems too that some strengths are more helpful if well balanced with others – for example *kindness* & *honesty, love* & *social intelligence,* and *hope* & *gratitude*. Overall though, a recent major review of relevant research studies highlights that of all 24 character strengths, ***zest***(enthusiasm, vigor, vitality, energy, feeling alive & activated),***hope***(optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation) and *curiosity* seem most strongly associated with high levels of overall wellbeing.