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MHTTC

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Flourishing at Work: A Plan for Helping Professionals

Podcast Series

Transcript – Remembering Your Purpose

Michelle: Hi there, my name is Michelle Zechner and I'm faculty at Rutgers University School of Health Professions, Department of Psych Rehabilitation and Counseling Professions, and I'm back with Dr. Tony Zipple, a psychologist with a years of building effective organizations and teams, and we're the hosts for [Flourishing at Work, a Plan for Helping Professionals](#), a podcast series.

Hey Tony!

Tony: Good to be with you, Michelle.

Michelle: Nice to have you here. Today we're actually going to be talking about something that's very near and dear to my heart which is the importance of remembering your purpose and I always think of this as the “why in the heck am I doing this work” any way.

Tony: So, I think that you're exactly right. Why do we do this work is an important question that all of us need to ask ourselves about the work that we do. We have to do all kinds of things on the job, and some of them are things that we might just assume not do, but we must have the energy. However, we get in there and we absorb the stresses and do all these things, because at some level the work also matters, and why is it that work matters is an important question.

Michelle: Yeah, absolutely. I know there are things about my job that I'm not a big fan of. I'm never a great fan of doing lots of paperwork. But, I love talking to people. That is really something that connects with me, and it's so important to sort of know who you are and why are we really interested in this work. So I'm wondering, you and I were talking at one point about other ways that can support us at work and you were talking about this idea of personal strengths.

Tony: Well I think personal strengths and understanding our personal strengths is a really important part of figuring out what it is that takes care of us at work, and why we do it. We know that all of us have different combinations of strengths. And, we also know that we're at our best, we're most like who we really are, and we're most effective when we're using our best strengths, our real signature strengths. And so, if you can find a way on the job to do more of that work, use more of your signature

strengths, you're going to be happier on the job and you're going to be more effective. You're going to feel like this is home for you.

Michelle: Yeah. The idea of personal strengths. It is so wonderful to remember that we have these great strengths, and I always think of strengths as kind of the sparkle that we have, that kind of zing that makes us special and who we are. We're all unique, right? Some of us are really great creative folks and some of us are really great at persevering. Some of us, I mean I imagine most of the people that are listening, are amazing at motivating other people, which is part of why we end up helping other people because we're sort of good at motivating and we're good. We have good empathy. But I wonder, how do you figure out what your, your strengths are?

Tony: There are a lot of tools for doing that. You know one of the ones that's really common, we used as the [Gallup Strength Finder](#). That's really a fine tool.

I actually like the [ViaCharacter Strength Survey](#), even better though, in part, because it's free and in part because it really helps you identify all 24 of the things that are strengths for you, and we have all of those 24 strengths. We all have all of them. The question isn't whether we have them. The question is what are the ones that are most prominent for us. What are the ones that really are in VIA terms, our Signature Strengths, the ones that really define us? And, if we find ways to identify those, and to do those more over the course of the day we're going to feel better about what we do and we're going to be more effective at doing it.

Michelle: Yeah. You had told me about the ViaCharacter Strength Survey, that's v as in "Victor", VIA. You can Google it or we have some links on one of our webinars, but it is really nice to figure out what your extra good at. And, you know, when I took the survey I thought "oh my gosh, you know, number one for me was creativity and number, 25 was perseverance" and I thought, well, I don't really have any perseverance. Oh, give it up Michelle, like, you're never gonna get anything done.

Tony: Well, and you do have perseverance! It's just not what you lead with. Perseverance isn't what makes you feel good; creativity is. You may be able to do great stuff with perseverance, and it doesn't take care of you. It's not what defines you. You can do all kinds of things that require perseverance and make it happen. But you really want to make room for those things that are more definitional for you, that are your signature qualities.

Michelle: Well thank you, Tony. Yes, and I think that's helpful for our listeners too if they take any kind of strength survey to know that we all have these inside of us and even our least strong strength is something that we do have inside of us, and yet, we will get more enriched and enjoy our job more as you're saying, if we use those critical strengths that we have.

Tony: Well, that's right, and in almost any job, and almost anything that we face at work. You can approach it in different ways. You can do tasks and solve problems, leveraging a whole range of different strengths. Your strength around creativity is really important in solving all kinds of problems. But if somebody has a strength of perseverance, or a strength of love of learning, for example, or judgment, they can leverage those strengths and solve the same problems, doing the same tasks. They may approach them a little bit differently, though, but they can still leverage their signature strengths to get the work done.

Michelle: Oh, I just learn so much when we talked Tony and I feel like that's an important message too for helping professions when we think about why are we doing this work, trying to flourish and remembering that we all solve problems differently. We all use our different strengths and really finding those opportunities, as you were saying, to use those strengths and solve problems. I learned this term maybe you you've heard of it called "job crafting" where people so spend more time on the things that they love, and to use their signature strengths, and maybe try to spend a little less time of the things that are not quite as valuable to them or as fulfilling.

Tony: And I think that's right. When you're managing a team of people, you really want to understand the strengths of each of your team member members, so that you can work with them in a way that really leverages the best of who they are.

And it may fill in gaps for other people that have different strength profiles. I think it's a really useful thing to as a team to do things like the ViaCharacter Strength Survey and share with each other what your strengths are. The thing I always say to people is that everybody strength profile is perfect exactly the way it is. It's just who you are. There's no need for "strength envy" about it. We need to learn to appreciate our differences, as well as the ways in which we have things in common. But, by appreciating our differences, we can leverage those differences on a team and make one plus one equal three rather than struggle with each other over them.

Michelle: Yes, absolutely. I love that and when you said that I was thinking, yey, we are all snowflakes, And, our snowflakes are perfect and our strengths are exactly where we need to have them.

So, you know, as always, when we get to this section and I'm like, well then, so what Tony? How do we kind of leverage our strengths, and remember our purpose? What do you suggest?

Tony: I think that there are a couple of things that are valuable to do. I think it's really useful to have a personal mission statement, and to think about your personal mission statement against the work that you do. How do you understand your job and your mission at work and your personal mission statement? Where are the places that they overlap? So, doing that is really helpful. I like to plug my personal mission statement up on the wall right above my computer because I want to get reminded of that. Then the second thing is you want to understand what your signature strengths are, and you want to think about how can you exercise those strengths, every day. For me, things like judgment and love of learning and perspective, are things that turn up as signature strengths and and I have a good day when I get a chance to use those. And if I'm not using them, things don't feel like it's been quite as good a day. So, having written down my mission, and what my signature strengths are gives me the tools I need to think about how can I can be my best self and use my strengths every day to meet my personal mission at work.

Michelle: Oh, that is very wise wisdom. Thank you very much. Tony I think we're going to sort of end it there and just recap what we talked about today. We really talked about the importance of thinking about why am I doing this work and remembering your purpose to create that personal mission to think about why it is that you do the work? We also talked about the value of knowing our personal strengths, what those are and even being aware of those of our colleagues. If we're a supervisor, just knowing what our coworkers strengths are so that we can continue to leverage those to address any challenges that come up. Then we talked a little bit about finding those opportunities in the day to use those strengths, and also to remind yourself of your mission. Tony said he puts it up above his computer. I

have a simple version of the post-it of why am I doing my work, which reminds me to remember my mission. Then to create a plan in some way to address your strengths, and remember that mission.

So, Tony anything else you want to add before we end?

Tony: I just want to echo your comment about sparkle because we can all use more sparkle in our lives. And if you want more sparkle in your life, being able to do the things that are you're best at and to do them in a way that really reflects your best self, your signature strengths, is really going to add sparkle in everything you do.

Michelle: Nice, nice. All right, well, we're going to leave you with some challenging questions, and that is to first of all to think:

Why am I doing this? What is your personal mission, and your reason for getting out of bed? So, really think about that, why am I doing this work, what's your personal mission? And then also, we'd love for you to think about what makes your work important for you, and even further, digging into what parts of that work really matter to you. What parts of your job take care of you and kind of build up who you are? And lastly, we invite you to consider your signature strengths. Can you build a plan to increase your use of strengths at work?

So, next time, we hope you'll join us and we'll be talking about learning to let go, another really important topic for flourishing at work, what that means and how it can help you flourish.

I really hope you can join us. Thanks for listening, I'm Michelle Zechner and I'm with Dr Tony Zippel and we're grateful for the important work you're doing. Remember to make time for some self-care today. You matter!

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