

# Strength Discovery Assessment for Transition-age Youth and Young Adults

Robin Wagner, Karen Blase, & Hewitt B. “Rusty” Clark  
University of South Florida  
Tampa, Florida

[Clark@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:Clark@fmhi.usf.edu)

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FILE: Mod Strength Discovery ppt Handout 091206

**NOTE:** Print this off as a HANDOUT with 3 slides per page.

Participants will then be able to make notes on this doc.



# **Strength Discovery Assessment for Transition-age Youth and Young Adults**

**Hewitt B. "Rusty" Clark, Ph.D.  
Lead Workshop Facilitator  
clark@fmhi.usf.edu**

**Mason G. Haber, M.A.  
Workshop Co-facilitator:  
mhaber@fmhi.usf.edu**

**University of South Florida  
Tampa, Florida**



# Learning Objectives

- After this presentation, you should be able:
  - To distinguish between strength-based and traditional assessment
  - Explain *why* Strength Discovery is conducted, and how it supports person-centered planning
  - Describe *what* Strength Discovery is & how it is conducted
  - Describe *when* to use Strength Discovery
  - Demonstrate use of Strength Discovery through a role play

# Strengths Discovery Assessment & Person-Centered Planning

- Strength Discovery identifies strengths and resources of EBD youth, their families, and their support system
- Other assessments often include only a limited piece on strengths and resources
- Strength Discovery assesses strengths and resources *as a primary focus*.
  - These serve as the foundation of the person-centered Transition Plan

# Strengths-based vs. Deficit-based

- Assessments with EBD youth often focus on deficits & see the person as the problem.
- This approach focuses on “what is wrong, what is missing, & what is abnormal”<sup>1</sup>
- Strengths-based assessment views the person as a resource not a problem and values the input of the EBD youth

Clark (1998) Strength-based practice: the ABCs of working with adolescents who don't want to work with you. *Federal Probation*, 62, 45-53.



# Differences between Strengths-based and Deficit-based

- Youth is solution, not problem
- Focuses on concrete solutions to specific problems vs. addressing the “disorder”
- Identifies “natural helpers” – family, teachers, coaches, etc. rather than relying on professionals
- Focuses on future, not past
- Identifies possibilities and options vs. limitations

# How will Strength Discovery Help?

- The purposes of SD are three-fold:
  - 1) Facilitates collaboration and breaking down barriers by getting input from youth on options.
  - 2) Demonstrates interest in youth and the people who are important to them.
  - 3) Helps the facilitator and more importantly, the youth and others in the youths' life to see them in a positive way.

# Strengths Discovery: When is it done?

- Should happen ASAP to “set the stage” for person-centered planning
- Initial interviews are one-on-one with youth
- Since it is important to have a “chat”, not an interrogation, usually occurs informally, in multiple brief interviews
- Later, other players IDed by youth as important in their lives will be interviewed.
  - These occur either one-on-one or in small groups

# How is Strength Discovery Done?

- Informal in tone
- TF *does not*.
  - Ask a series of questions from a form, as in a formal interview.
- TF *does*
  - Keep the interview conversational
  - Keep conversation open-ended, and ideally, follows the lead of youth & key players
  - Validate the observations of youth and others, reflect, and help make more focused, specific

# Strengths Discovery Topics

- Interests and preferences
- Values and traditions
- Skills, abilities, and competencies
- Other helpful personal attributes (sense of humor, resilient).
- Dreams and aspirations
- Strategies that have worked well in past
- Settings that are most comfortable
- Family members, relatives, friends, other people valued by youth, as well as formal players
- Priority needs and goals across transition domains

# Strengths Discovery Practice #1

- COUNT off: Ones=youth, twos=TF, threes= observer.
- TFs
  - You may use Strength Discovery Assessment Protocols (p. 4 in “Worksheets” booklet) for to guide interview or take notes.
  - Try to start conversation with a relevant situation
    - e.g., TF could ask who dropped the youth off, and this could lead to questions about family.
  - Try to keep tone natural, conversational

# Strengths Discovery Practice #1 (cont.)

- Youth
  - You may base your role-play on someone you have worked with (protecting confidentiality by changing certain details)
  - You may also base on a youth from your personal life, or even yourself as a youth
- Observer
  - Watch role-play interaction and be ready to provide constructive feedback

# Strengths Discovery Practice #1 (cont.)

- Observer
  - Some things to watch for:
    - Is interview warm and conversational in tone?
    - Does the interviewer seem interested in positive aspects of youth?
    - Does the TF follow the youths lead and ask follow-up questions as appropriate?
    - Are appropriate reflecting and summarizing statements used?
    - Does the interview focus on strengths?
    - Does the interview identify key resources?

# Strength Discovery Practice #1 (cont.)

- After 5-10 minutes, youth, TF, and observer should break to discuss what went well about interview and what could be improved.
- What information was shared? What would be good to ask more about later on?
- How can this information be used to further the person-centered transition plan?
- Rotate roles (youth becomes TF, TF becomes observer, observer becomes youth).

# Strength Discovery Practice #2

- For this role-play, the interview is with a “key player” (perhaps one mentioned in one of the previous role-plays).
- Person who has not yet been a youth will take the key player role, youth from last role-play becomes the TF....
- After 5-10 minutes, break and discuss how the role-play went.
- Other questions:
  - How can information from interview be used to contribute to Transition Plan?
  - What information would be helpful to have?
  - Who else could be interviewed to reveal further strengths and resources?

# Please consider visiting our websites

- Transition to Independence Process - TIP website
  - <http://tip.fmhi.usf.edu>
    - TIP System Development and Operations Manual
    - Personnel Training Modules
    - Theory and Research Basis for TIP System
- National Center on Youth Transition – NCYT website
  - <http://ncyt.fmhi.usf.edu>
- Contact us for agency and systems capacity building.  
[clark@fmhi.usf.edu](mailto:clark@fmhi.usf.edu)
  - Community systems development on program planning.
  - Technical assistance on program implementation and evaluation.
  - Competency-Based Training and Training-of-Trainer Workshops.

