

Volume 02, Issue 24: Playing to Our Strengths

Growing up, our parents and teachers pushed us to get A's in all subjects. Like everybody else, there were subjects that were obvious A's and B's for you. But there was at least one notorious subject where you scored a D. Taking home the report card on closing day, our parents would drill us and even spank us for getting a D, sometimes neglecting to praise us for the A's that populated our report cards. The focus was on our areas of weakness.

We were expected to be good at everything. So, we grew up thinking that fixing our weaknesses was the way to go. Having grown up that way, some of us are finding ourselves applying the same principles to our children, pushing them to turn their one or two notorious D's into A's. We even experience it at work as supervisors and supervisees where we are expected and expect others to work on improving their fault lines.

But think about it. Isn't building on our strengths as opposed to fixing our weaknesses what will make us more successful? We can't ignore our weaknesses but they will never become areas of our greatest opportunity. We grow most where we are already strong.

You need to become really specific about what your strengths are. Your personality doesn't change as you grow older. As you grow older you become more of who you already are now. Your values, dreams and aspirations will change but the core of who you are and your personality remains the same.

Your weaknesses are not your areas of opportunity. You grow most in your areas of greatest strengths. Address your weaknesses but they are areas of your least opportunity. Build on your strengths and manage around your weaknesses.

In this light, shouldn't we put more emphasis on the subjects that our children score highly in;

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and instead of pushing them to work harder on their D subjects, try and find out why they are doing poorly in them? We may find that the problem is in the method of teaching by a particular teacher, or something else; and addressing that could improve the D to a C, and be ok with that as we support them to get better and better in the areas they are already good at.

You will be your most creative, most productive, and most fulfilled when you discover how to play to your strengths.

Lillian Chebosi