

LEARNING STRENGTHS PROJECT

COMPONENT THREE: THE LEARNING STRENGTHS CONFERENCE

Meet with the student one-to-one following the steps listed below:

COMPONENTS	CONTENT
Destigmatization	Provide assurance that all individuals have strengths and weaknesses; the sooner one learns about oneself the better; possibly cite examples of one's own dysfunctions; point out that even honor students are imperfect. Cite examples!
Strength Delineation	Provide a description of student's strengths: this must be concrete, honest, offered with evidence, and if possible, compared to peers
Weakness Enumeration	Cite the number of dysfunctions (e.g., "there are 3 areas that are a problem for you") and their observable effects: use graphics and analogies, elicit examples from the student if possible
Induction of Optimism	Provide a profile projection of the future to show how these strengths can work well in adulthood; restoration of self-esteem and hope for the future
Alliance Formation	Focus on communication of interest and a willingness to be helpful and supportive in the future – "we're in this together."

- Individualized demystification usually requires periodic follow-up "booster" doses.
- It can be very helpful for parents to be present during the demystification session, so that they can make use of the same terminology and frames of reference at home. Alternatively, a cassette recording could be made available to the student to share with his/her family.
- It is essential that the overall tone be supportive, non-accusatory, and not "preachy."
- Students should be helped to understand that she or he is accountable for work output, etc.; i.e., one cannot use the identified weakness as an excuse for poor performance.

* *Adapted with permission from the work of Dr. Mel Levine, M.D.*