What's Strong With You

Remembering and re-membering our strengths

COGNITIVE · CHARACTER · CULTURAL

THIS BOOKLET BELONGS TO

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WHERE WE BEGIN

From What's Wrong to What's Strong

Most of the systems we work in were built to look for what is wrong. Medicine asks what causes disease. Organizations ask what is broken and how to fix it. Leaders in justice work are asked again and again to name the harm, the gap and the deficit. This is a **pathogenic** lens: it starts from what makes us unwell.

The medical sociologist Aaron Antonovsky turned the question around. Instead of asking what makes people sick, he asked what keeps people well, even in the middle of stress and hardship. He called this **salutogenesis**, from *salus* (health) and *genesis* (origin): the origins of health. At its heart is a **sense of coherence**, made of three threads:

COMPREHENSIBILITY
"My world makes sense to me."

MANAGEABILITY
"I have resources to meet what life asks."

MEANINGFULNESS
"This is worth my care and effort."

A PATHOGENIC LENS ASKS	A SALUTOGENIC LENS ASKS
What is wrong?	**What is strong?**
What is missing?	**What is already here?**
What caused the harm?	**What has kept us well?**
How do we fix it?	**How do we grow what works?**

WHY WE START WITH WHAT'S STRONG

This is not a way of looking away from what hurts. Harm is real, and so are the systems that cause it. But when we begin only with what is wrong, we forget what has carried us. Our strengths are part of how we stay well. Starting from what's strong is how we remember them, and re-member them: put ourselves back together, and back in relationship with each other.

THREE THREADS, ONE CLOTH

Let's imagine our lives as a weaving.

This image is inspired by the T'boli people of South Cotabato, Mindanao, whose t'nalak cloth is woven from abaca by dreamweavers.

THE WARP · 45 STRENGTHS

Cognitive strengths: how my brain works

The steady, underlying patterns of our brain and body: the quiet ways our nervous system takes in the world, processes information, notices patterns and tunes into rhythm. Not always visible to others, but foundational.

THE WEFT · 42 STRENGTHS

Character strengths: who I am

The choices and values we bring into our days: the compassion in our conversations, the courage in our decisions, the creativity in how we meet challenges. We choose them again and again.

THE COLOR AND PATTERN · 35 STRENGTHS

Cultural strengths: where I come from

The stories told around kitchen tables, the lullabies passed down, the rituals that mark transitions, the quiet codes of respect and relationship. They connect us to those before us and those who will come after.

CHOOSING YOUR TOP FIVE

1. Read slowly through the strength pages for each thread: the icons first, then the one-line descriptions.
2. Notice the strengths that feel like home, and the ones other people have named in you, even if you were not sure you believed them.
3. Choose your **top five** for each thread. Choose with your body as much as your mind: which ones make you feel steadier, more yourself?
4. Write them on your loom near the end of this booklet: cognitive on the hanging tags, character along the threads, and cultural in the diamonds.

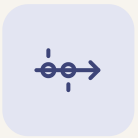
There are no right choices. Some strengths will show up in more than one thread. That is part of the weaving.

Cognitive Strengths

The steady patterns of how your brain and body take in the world. Which of these do you recognize in yourself?

Abstract Connector

System Builder


Temporal Thinker

Global Thinker

Narrative Mapper

Discrepancy Detector

Curious Learner

Creative Maker

Imaginative Dreamer

Playful Experimenter

Novelty Seeker

Associative Connector

Lateral Leaper

Empathic Sensor

Justice Guardian

Relational Thinker

Candid Communicator

Humor Bringer

Vital Presence

Feeling Thinker

Detail Noticer

Intentional Organizer

Tenacious Finisher

Spontaneous Improviser

Non-linear Planner

Sensory Integrator

Embodied Thinker

Rhythmic Organizer

Deep Diver

Parallel Processor

Non-linear Time Navigator

Monotropic Explorer

Rule Interrogator

Convergent Solver

Hyperlinking Mind

Intuitive Synthesizer

Absorptive Receiver

Subtext Listener

Narrative Listener

Somatic Signal Reader

Whole-Body Listener

Deep Context Reader

Literal Receiver

Frequency Tuner

Paced Processor

Cognitive Strengths at a Glance

- **Abstract Connector:** Seeing patterns and meaning beneath the surface.
- **System Builder:** Building structures that help make sense of the world.
- **Temporal Thinker:** Thinking in timelines and sequences to plan ahead.
- **Global Thinker:** Seeing the bigger picture and how everything connects.
- **Narrative Mapper:** Making sense of life through stories, memories and meaning.
- **Discrepancy Detector:** Noticing quickly when something doesn't add up.
- **Curious Learner:** Loving to explore, question and discover.
- **Creative Maker:** Coming up with fresh ideas and new ways of doing things.
- **Imaginative Dreamer:** Envisioning possibilities beyond what currently exists.
- **Playful Experimenter:** Learning through play, trial and hands-on discovery.
- **Novelty Seeker:** Thriving on new experiences, sensations and challenges.
- **Associative Connector:** Leaping between ideas others don't see as related.
- **Lateral Leaper:** Solving problems from unexpected angles.
- **Empathic Sensor:** Sensing and responding to what others are feeling.
- **Justice Guardian:** Caring deeply about fairness, dignity and equity.
- **Relational Thinker:** Understanding how people and ideas are connected.
- **Candid Communicator:** Speaking openly and honestly, even when it's hard.
- **Humor Bringer:** Bringing lightness and laughter into serious spaces.
- **Vital Presence:** Showing up with energy, authenticity and aliveness.
- **Feeling Thinker:** Using emotions as information, not just experience.
- **Detail Noticer:** Noticing the little things others might miss.
- **Intentional Organizer:** Creating order, flow and clarity.
- **Tenacious Finisher:** Keeping going, even when things get difficult.
- **Spontaneous Improviser:** Adapting and responding creatively in the moment.
- **Non-linear Planner:** Finding your own path to completion, and getting there.
- **Sensory Integrator:** Tuning into the sensory details around you.
- **Embodied Thinker:** Listening to your body to guide your decisions.
- **Rhythmic Organizer:** Thinking and moving in patterns, beats and flow.
- **Deep Diver:** Becoming fully immersed in what matters most.
- **Parallel Processor:** Holding many threads at once and weaving them together.
- **Non-linear Time Navigator:** Living richly in the present, moving through time your own way.
- **Monotropic Explorer:** Going deep into what you love, where depth is the gift.
- **Rule Interrogator:** Asking why the rules exist and whether they still should.
- **Convergent Solver:** Finding the best answer by bringing ideas together.
- **Hyperlinking Mind:** Following threads of meaning across time, space and domain.
- **Intuitive Synthesizer:** Arriving at whole knowing before you can explain it.
- **Absorptive Receiver:** Taking everything in, and needing time to come back to yourself.
- **Subtext Listener:** Noticing what isn't said as much as what is.
- **Narrative Listener:** Receiving information best as story, not summary.
- **Somatic Signal Reader:** Knowing through the body before the mind catches up.
- **Whole-Body Listener:** Listening with your whole self, not just your ears.
- **Deep Context Reader:** Hearing what lies beneath what is being said.
- **Literal Receiver:** Hearing exactly what is said, and holding it precisely.
- **Frequency Tuner:** Tracking tone, energy and emotional charge beneath the words.
- **Paced Processor:** Doing your deepest receiving afterwards, given time.

Character Strengths

The choices and values we bring into our days. Which of these do you recognize in yourself? Which might someone else see in you?

Abundance Orientation

Accountable

Attunement

Awe

Boundaried

Care

Collaborative

Compassion

Congruence

Courage

Creativity

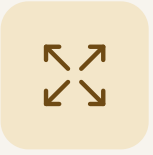
Curiosity

Devotion

Discernment

Embodied Wisdom

Emergence


Expansive

Fairness

Family Orientation

Flocking

Flow

Forgiveness

Grace

Hope

Humility

Inclusive

Interdependence

Learning

Lightness

Openness

Perseverance

Plurality

Presence

Radical Self-Acceptance

Receptivity

Reciprocity

Renewal

Resistance

Rootedness

Sovereignty

Tender

Trust

Character Strengths at a Glance

- **Abundance Orientation:** Trusting that what is already here is enough.
- **Accountable:** Owning the impact of your choices and choosing repair.
- **Attunement:** Sensing what is alive within you and between people.
- **Awe:** Being humbled by beauty, mystery and the vastness of life.
- **Boundaried:** Knowing and honoring your edges as an act of care.
- **Care:** Tending to what others need, quietly and consistently.
- **Collaborative:** Trusting that what we make together is richer than what we make alone.
- **Compassion:** Staying present with pain without needing to fix or flee.
- **Congruence:** Being the same person in every room.
- **Courage:** Moving forward from the strength of who you are, even when afraid.
- **Creativity:** Imagining and making what does not yet exist.
- **Curiosity:** Moving toward the unknown with delight rather than anxiety.
- **Devotion:** Showing up again and again as an act of love.
- **Discernment:** Sensing what is true, aligned and ready to be released.
- **Embodied Wisdom:** Trusting the body as a site of intelligence and memory.
- **Emergence:** Creating the conditions and letting what is needed arise.
- **Expansive:** Imagining beyond what is and making room for paradox.
- **Fairness:** Giving each person what they genuinely need, and naming inequity.
- **Family Orientation:** Holding family, blood and chosen, as a place of belonging.
- **Flocking:** Letting yourself be held, and carrying others in return.
- **Flow:** Moving with what arises rather than against it.
- **Forgiveness:** Releasing resentment as an act of liberation.
- **Grace:** Moving through life with ease, dignity and generosity of spirit.
- **Hope:** Staying oriented toward what is possible, even when evidence is scarce.
- **Humility:** Stepping back to make room for others, without erasing yourself.
- **Inclusive:** Designing from the margins so no one has to ask for a seat.
- **Interdependence:** Knowing that needing others, and being needed, is strength.
- **Learning:** Being changed by experience, mistake and beauty.
- **Lightness:** Carrying the weight of living with humor and buoyancy.
- **Openness:** Welcoming the unfamiliar and letting it change you.
- **Perseverance:** Staying with what matters, returning after difficulty.
- **Plurality:** Holding many truths as valid without ranking them.
- **Presence:** Being fully here, with this moment, without agenda.
- **Radical Self-Acceptance:** Inhabiting your full identity without apology.
- **Receptivity:** Letting feedback, wisdom and care truly land.
- **Reciprocity:** Giving and receiving in ways that restore balance.
- **Renewal:** Tending your own restoration so your giving can last.
- **Resistance:** Refusing to be erased, and choosing joy and rest as defiance.
- **Rootedness:** Knowing where you come from, so you can bend without breaking.
- **Sovereignty:** Claiming your right to define your own good life.
- **Tender:** Remaining soft in a world that asks you to harden.
- **Trust:** Choosing faith in people and in what cannot yet be seen.

Cultural Strengths

The stories, rituals and quiet codes of respect we carry from those who came before. Which of these live in you? Which did you hear in someone else's story?

Adaptability and Improvisation

Agency and Autonomy

Art and Creativity as Cultural Memory

Celebration and Joy in Community

Collective Grief and Mourning

Collective Orientation

Communal Care and Reciprocity

Conflict Transformation and Peacemaking

Cyclical Time Perception

Deep Time / Ancestral Time

Direct Expression / Radical Candor

Food as Sacred Nourishment and Belonging

Healing as Wholeness

Hospitality and Generosity

Imagination and Dreaming

Intergenerational Wisdom

Kincentric Worldview

Living Language

Naming and Renaming as Power

Oral Tradition and Storytelling

Place-Based Knowing

Playfulness and Humor

Polychronic Time Orientation

Relational Decision-Making

Resilience

Respect for Elders and Ancestors

Reverence for Nature

Ritual and Ceremony

Sacred Economics and Gift Economy

Silence as Communication

Solitude and Contemplative Traditions

Somatic Embodiment

Spiritual Grounding

Time Integrity

Volunteerism and Civic Engagement

Cultural Strengths at a Glance

- **Adaptability and Improvisation:** Making do with limited resources through creative problem-solving.
- **Agency and Autonomy:** Honoring self-direction and personal freedom.
- **Art and Creativity as Cultural Memory:** Making, crafting, and creating as acts of transmission, resistance, and healing.
- **Celebration and Joy in Community:** Communal expressions of life through dance, music, and ritual.
- **Collective Grief and Mourning:** Holding loss together as a communal act of love, memory, and solidarity.
- **Collective Orientation:** Centering the whole over the individual.
- **Communal Care and Reciprocity:** Practicing mutual aid and shared responsibility.
- **Conflict Transformation and Peacemaking:** Moving through harm toward healing, accountability, and restored relationship.
- **Cyclical Time Perception:** Aligning with seasons and natural rhythms.
- **Deep Time / Ancestral Time:** Living with past and future generations in mind.
- **Direct Expression / Radical Candor:** Speaking truth with clarity and care.
- **Food as Sacred Nourishment and Belonging:** Feeding each other as an act of identity, memory, sovereignty, and love.
- **Healing as Wholeness:** Honoring body, mind, spirit, community, and land as inseparable in healing.
- **Hospitality and Generosity:** Welcoming others with abundance and dignity.
- **Imagination and Dreaming:** Visioning beyond what is, rooted in ancestral dreaming.
- **Intergenerational Wisdom:** Knowledge passed through elders, not just institutions.
- **Kincentric Worldview:** Seeing nature as kin, not resource.
- **Living Language:** Language as worldview, memory, and care.
- **Naming and Renaming as Power:** Names as identity, resistance, and reclamation.
- **Oral Tradition and Storytelling:** Passing values through voice and memory.
- **Place-Based Knowing:** Knowing rooted in land and ecology.
- **Playfulness and Humor:** Laughing to cope, to connect, to carry on.
- **Polychronic Time Orientation:** Time as fluid, relational, layered.
- **Relational Decision-Making:** Choosing with others in mind.
- **Resilience:** Capacity to adapt, persist, and thrive despite adversity.
- **Respect for Elders and Ancestors:** Honoring those who came before.
- **Reverence for Nature:** Living in sacred relationship with earth.
- **Ritual and Ceremony:** Marking transitions through symbolic acts.
- **Sacred Economics and Gift Economy:** Wealth as what flows through giving, not what is held.
- **Silence as Communication:** Listening as reverence and resistance.
- **Solitude and Contemplative Traditions:** Turning inward to listen more deeply and return more fully.
- **Somatic Embodiment:** The body as a primary site of intelligence, memory, and meaning-making.
- **Spiritual Grounding:** Aligning life with spiritual cosmology.
- **Time Integrity:** Respecting time as presence and care.
- **Volunteerism and Civic Engagement:** Participating in the well-being of the community.

WHAT'S STRONG WITH YOU

My Woven Strengths

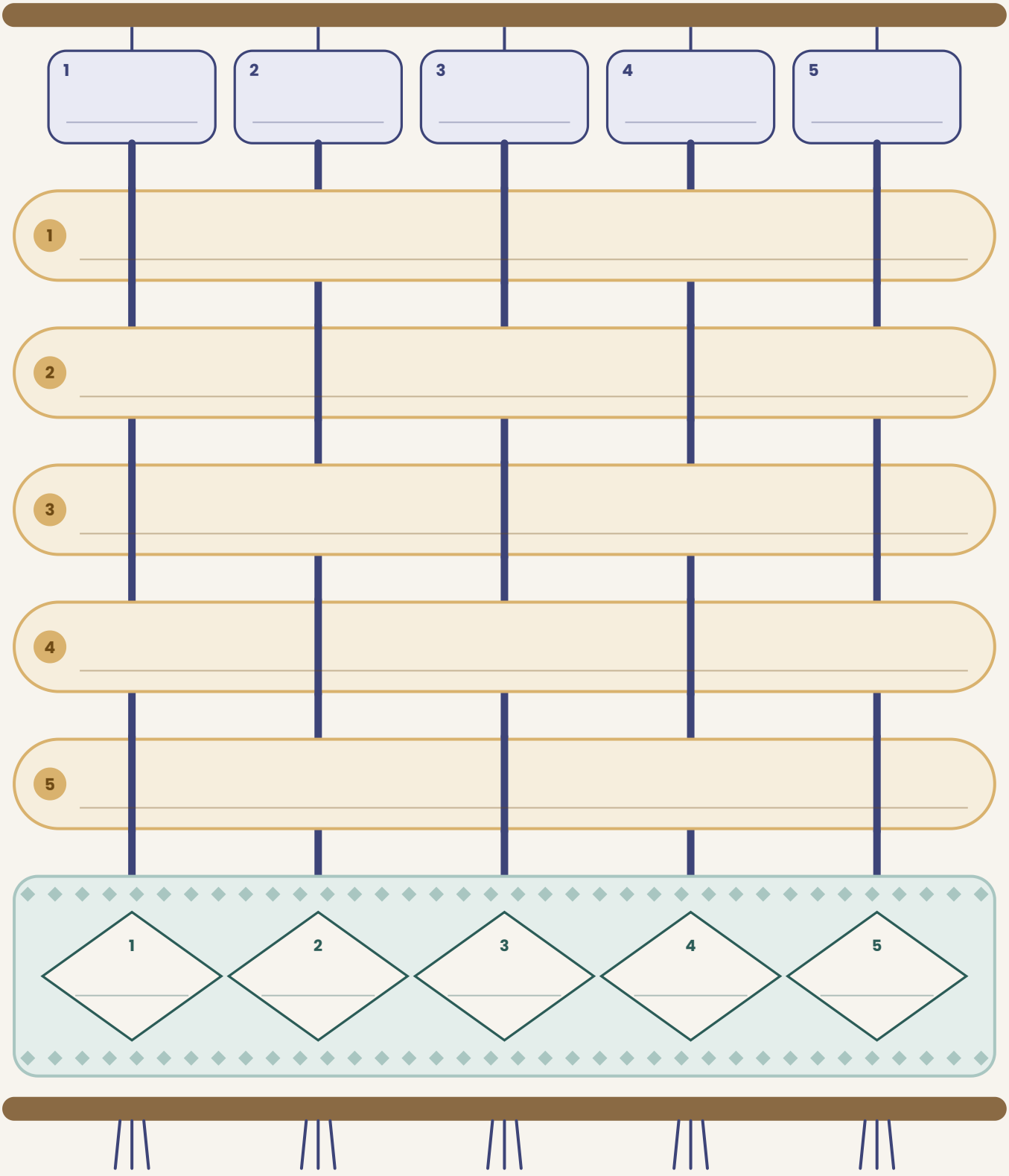
NAME

Weave your own cloth. Choose your top five strengths in each strand and write them on your loom.

THE WARP
5 cognitive strengths on the hanging tags

THE WEFT
5 character strengths along the threads

THE PATTERN
5 cultural strengths in the diamonds



WHAT'S STRONG WITH YOU

Reflecting on My Strengths

Take your time with these. There are no wrong answers, only threads to notice.

THE WARP · COGNITIVE · *How my brain works*

When do you feel most alive in your thinking?

What do people often ask you for that feels effortless to you?

THE WEFT · CHARACTER · *Who I am*

What do you do so naturally you forget it might be a strength?

What do you reach for when things get hard?

THE PATTERN · CULTURAL · *Where I come from*

What do you carry from your ancestors that you value most?

What do you know because of your people that others might not?

WEAVING IT TOGETHER · *Who I am becoming*

Which strength are you still learning to trust in yourself?

If you could strengthen one thread of your weaving, which would it be and why?

SEEN BY SOMEONE ELSE

A Strengths Interview

Some of our strengths are easier for others to see than for us. Ask someone you work with, or someone you love, to tell you what they see. Listen without explaining, correcting or deflecting. Just write down their words.

I SPOKE WITH

THEY KNOW ME AS

1. What strengths do you see in me?

2. Can you tell me about a time you saw me at my best?

3. What do you count on me for?

4. Which of my strengths do you think I underestimate?

AFTER THE CONVERSATION

Which of their words surprised you? Which strength will you add to your loom?

PRACTICES AT A GLANCE

Practices to Try

Strengths grow when they are used, named and shared. Here are three small practices for each thread, and a question to sit with along the way.

Cognitive

how my brain works

THE WARP

THREE PRACTICES

- **Notice your best conditions.** For one week, jot down when your thinking flows: the time, the place, the people.
- **Work with your wiring.** Shape one meeting or task around how your mind works best: time to process, a walk, a drawing.
- **Name what helps.** Tell one colleague a cognitive strength of yours and what helps you use it.

SIT WITH THIS

What conditions help my mind do its best work?

Character

who I am

THE WEFT

THREE PRACTICES

- **Evening strength spotting.** At the end of each day, name one moment you used a character strength.
- **Use it somewhere new.** Take one of your top five into a place you usually leave it out.
- **Name it in others.** Tell someone on your team a strength you see in them, as specifically as you can.

SIT WITH THIS

Which strength do I reach for when no one is watching?

Cultural

where I come from

THE COLOR AND PATTERN

THREE PRACTICES

- **Ask an elder.** Ask an elder or family member which strengths they see in your people.
- **Trace one thread.** Write the story of where one cultural strength came from in your family or community.
- **Bring it into the room.** Open a meeting with a practice you carry: a greeting, a food, a moment of gratitude.

SIT WITH THIS

What have I carried from my people that my leadership needs now?

Aspiration

who I am becoming

WEAVING TOGETHER

THREE PRACTICES

- **Start with your sentence.** Read your woven sentence each morning before you open your inbox.
- **Strength before struggle.** Before a hard conversation, name the strength you will bring into it.
- **Return to your loom.** In a month, look at your loom again. Notice which threads you have been weaving with, and which are still waiting.

SIT WITH THIS

Which thread is asking for more of my attention?

Choose one practice and try it for a week. Notice what changes, in you and around you.

Weaving It Together

You have looked at your strengths thread by thread. Now let them become one cloth. These pages help you anchor what you found, so it stays with you after today.

MY WOVEN SENTENCE

Choose one strength from each thread on your loom and weave them into a single sentence about who you are.

I am CHARACTER _____

with a mind that is COGNITIVE _____

carrying CULTURAL _____ from my people.

ANCHOR IT IN YOUR BODY

Read your sentence slowly, out loud or in silence. Notice where you feel it in your body. Place a hand there and take three slow breaths. This is a place you can return to.

Where did I feel it, and what did I notice?

AN IMAGE OR WORD

What image, word or object will remind me of this?

TENDING THE SHADOW

Every strength has a shadow side. Which one do I want to watch for, and what helps me notice it?

Carrying It Forward

A strength grows when it is used, shared and seen. Think about the places you lead and live.

IN MY LEADERSHIP

Where will I lean on my strengths more fully in the weeks ahead?

IN MY RELATIONSHIPS

How might I offer my strengths to the people I work with and love, and let theirs in too?

WHEN THINGS GET HARD

Which strength can I return to when I feel stretched or depleted? What will help me remember it?

A FIRST SMALL STEP

One thing I will do this week to tend a thread of my weaving:

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Lana Kristine Flores-Jelenjev is a Filipina healing-centered practitioner, facilitator, writer, systems weaver and companion to leaders and organizations working toward a more just world. For more than 20 years she has held learning and healing spaces across cultures and continents.

Today she accompanies leaders of international organizations and networks as they reimagine their organizations from the inside out. Her work weaves three ways of knowing: Sikolohiyang Pilipino (Filipino psychology), which understands the self as shared with others, as *kapwa* (shared self); neuroscience and nervous system literacy, which show how stress, safety and connection live in our bodies; and a systems-weaving lens that sees organizations as living webs of relationships, histories and possibilities.

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