

NOE BARTMESS (TOP 5 STRENGTHS)

COACHING USE ONLY

BECCA SYME



INPUT

BECCA'S DEFINITION

IF YOU IMAGINE ALL THE INFORMATION IN THE WORLD, INPUTS ARE sponges to soak that information up. But they also have little compartments where everything should get stored, so they can retrieve it. This is why I will often talk to Inputs about their internal label-maker. If you can label things as they come in, it can be helpful in retrieving them.

Most Inputs (although--again, not 100%, because... reasons) also have a high capacity to take in information, and that information well is like a tank that needs to get filled. So if you shut off sources of Input for them, they'll find more. Some Inputs' sources are people. Some are websites. Some are books. Some are a combination of all three. And depending on the supporting Strengths, they might not have any interest in one of these.

The most common Input pair (Power Pair, btw) is with Learner, and with the Input/Learner, these traits can sometimes be harder to pull apart. If you think of a firehose, spewing out

water. Input is the width of the spray (how wide the sources of information will be to take in) and Learner is the breadth/depth of the spray (how deep into a particular source or concept the person will want to go).

Inputs are primarily concerned with remembering useful things. That's part of the "why" behind why Inputs do their development. I've heard Input/Woo/Includers talk about "collecting" friends the way I collect nonfiction books about personal development. I've heard Input/Intellection/Learners talk about "collecting" courses or talents. (I know an Input/Learner/Intellection/Developer who was not only fluent in, but also ****taught**** multiple languages at a collegiate level.) Several of you are Input/Learners who have taken every class in the known world. There's nothing wrong with that width and breadth. Because other people don't do it, we think it's weird, and we apologize for it. But it's part of what makes us who we are. Inputs know something about a lot of things. Input/Learners know a lot about a lot of things.

At its best, Input is like a library (or rolodex) in your head. I often joke about the Taj Mahal in my head. Large, sprawling rooms, each crammed with their own little files of information. Input/Learner, intentionally developed for 14 years (and unintentionally developed for the 25 before that--I came from a long line of HS/Uni teachers) yields an insane capacity to take in, file, retrieve, and use information. That's why, every time someone asks for something, I have a guy for that. This is the benefit of being Input. In fact, if you're not high Input and you're reading this, find the high Input in your life who would LOVE to be helpful to you, giving you all the information and all the things, and let them do it. I promise you, they would love nothing more.

Please watch the Input video [here](#).

IF YOU HAVE HIGH INPUT

First of all, I love this Input guy, and I want to be his friend. I love how enthusiastic he is about the information he's collecting, and how helpful it will be. Every single word of this video resonated with me. This is a Strength that I get pretty excited about, because of just how helpful it can be, and how it can take the pressure off of other people.

This is also part of why I encourage people that if they ever have questions, to come into the WBF Facebook group and ask them, instead of spending time researching themselves. It's because there are SO many of us high Input people in there, we'll have an idea for where they can look or what they can try, and they don't have to go searching everywhere for it.

And this is my one exception to the "thou shalt Google thine questions" rule that I have. If you have a question about the writing industry, just ask in the WBF group. I promise you, the Inputs in there would love to tell you about the information they've collected.

The most important piece of this, for me, is that collecting information is so easy for Inputs. They do it in their spare time. They absolutely adore being able to help people with their collections, experiences, or friends. Why waste time looking for things when you don't enjoy it? We're all happy to do it for you.



If you have Input, you are inquisitive and curious. This is an asset to you and all the people around you. Whatever you

collect, the collection itself has a purpose, which is often because it interests you. And you find **so** much interesting. 🤔

Everything in the world has infinite variety and complexity, and that excites you. It makes you want to try new things, read new books, research new opportunities, go new places, maybe meet new people, depending on your supporting Strengths. "New" is always interesting.

At the time of collection or storing of the things you collect, it's often not apparent to you exactly why you want to keep the things. But at some point, you know it will be useful. So you keep acquiring and compiling and filing stuff away. It's interesting. It keeps your mind fresh. And you hope that at some point, it will all prove valuable.

BALCONIES, BASEMENTS, AND BARRIER LABELS

BARRIER LABELS

PEOPLE USE THEIR TALENTS TO FILTER THEIR INTERACTIONS, drawing them toward or away from decisions or activities. As such, people's talents can sometimes leave them vulnerable to their own thoughts and behaviors and to others' perspectives. A barrier label is a term used to describe when a talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed as a weakness.

Some common Barrier Labels for high Input:

"She spends a lot of time collecting information that is not very helpful."

"He is a packrat. He has too much stuff lying around."

"When you talk to her about a problem or situation, she goes off on tangents that waste a lot of time."

"Cluttered house, cluttered mind."

One of the ways to combat the way that barrier labels get assigned to Strengths is to understand how we can manage the perception of the way that our actions might be barriers to other peoples' understanding of our capacity.

The first thing we need to do, of course, is recognize that these are, indeed, misperceptions. There's probably even something inside you that responds to these labels (if you have high Input) with "but that's not true".

Let's reverse or re-interpret those barriers.

She spends a lot of time collecting information that is not very helpful.

becomes

The information she collects will someday be helpful to someone, even though I don't see it today.

He is a packrat. He has too much stuff lying around.

becomes

He must see the potential benefit in keeping these things, and I will wait to see if he is right.

Side note: Of course, one of the basements of having high Input is basically being a hoarder. So there is definitely a line here that we want to stay on the other side of. Unfettered Input is going to drown you and your house and your family in stuff, and physical stuff has weight. So, whenever possible, I suggest to high Input people that they go through some sort of intentional (and SLOW) decluttering process. Weigh the potential benefit of keeping things with the potential weight of having them around. Have someone else help you who is not high Input. Have some kind of rules that you set for

yourself about how much you will keep and how much you will give/throw away. I will speak from experience of having to declutter a packrat's house after they passed away... please don't leave this responsibility to other people eventually if you can help it. I'm maybe a little harsher with Input people here than I would normally be, but I think that our desire to be useful is SO guiding, we don't think that sometimes, the clutter is hurting us and other people, and the last thing most Input people ever want to do is hurt people with our Input. So again, take with a grain of salt. But because it's definitely a hard line to walk, I always like to bring it up.

When you talk to her about a problem or situation, she goes off on tangents that waste a lot of time.

becomes

When you talk to her about a situation, she's giving you information that she thinks is helpful, even if it doesn't seem helpful to me.

*Side note: Again, here, there's a basement place that could be happening. And only you, as the Input person will be able to tell if you're doing this. This is a particular area where I struggle because of my Input/Connectedness pair, and I constantly am working on refining it. But it's quite a bit of work because it requires being vulnerable with people when you see them checking out of what you're saying. If you want to talk about this in your one-on-one, let me know. But I just wanted to chime in that this might not be **only** a barrier label happening here. It might also be a basement.*

Cluttered house, cluttered mind.

becomes

[silence]

Yeah, this is something that, if you've ever thought this about a person, you should never--ever--say it to or near them. There is nothing helpful about saying this to someone. This is only derogatory, and will likely be a trigger for high Input people. First, it assumes that having a full mind is a bad thing. Second, it assumes that just because there's a lot of stuff, the Input person can't find things in it. Everyone I know who likes to have a lot of stuff or information who has high Input can find things just fine. So, again, I don't doubt that people think this. But I hope they keep the sentiment inside and then ask themselves if it's appropriate to be judging someone else for how much information or collecting they like to do. Only the person on the inside of the Input brain (or their spouse/kids) should really ever personally address this with them, so if you need to do that, then there are kinder, better ways to do that, for sure. 😊

In general, we really need to be aware of how we label other people, and how those labels are built out of our own assumptions. The reason that someone will use a barrier label often comes out of an opposing value that they hold tight, but one that the person they're criticizing doesn't hold. I'm not of the mind that we all have to hold the same opinions [Always Individualization, I know, but of course, even I can't help wanting everyone to see the world the way I do...even coaches are not immune to Strengths Blindness]. So Barrier Labels probably bother me more than others. But I hope that doing this exercise can help those of us without a high Strength to see how our assumptions might be getting in our way.

BALCONIES AND BASEMENTS

While it's important to think about how to manage vulnerability and reinterpret behavior, we also want to

acknowledge that not everyone who has high Input as a theme is always operating in the balcony of their Strength. So, how do you tell?

When Input is at its best (Balcony), it produces:

- A great resource on many topics.
- A knowledgeable friend with an excellent memory.
- Someone with a mind for detail.
- A person who collects interesting things or experiences.
- An excellent conversationalist.

When Input is at its worst (Basement), it produces:

- Someone who knows a lot of worthless information.
- A packrat.
- Someone whose clutter takes over their life or gets in the way of their relationships.
- A boring conversationalist who always injects trivia, no matter the audience receptivity.
- Someone so consumed by details, they're never able to break free from that.

In order to balance out some of these basement behaviors, it is first important to start noticing when they are creeping in. As you live out your high Input life this week, start to notice when you're circling the drain with inputting. The best way to tell this is when you're not outputting. Good Input should produce solid output.

INPUT FOR WRITERS

YES, INPUT WRITERS TAKE ALL THE INFORMATION IN, BUT THEN, they want to do something with it. So they are not only "input" people, but also "output" people. They want to give the information away or utilize it in some important way. The best and most interesting way they can do this, as writers, is to somehow put this information into their books.

This can produce two things: (1) an awesome, memorable, unique, interesting piece of data that other curious people will adore. (2) an over-full manuscript with more information than anyone could possibly wade through.

How to balance this balcony with this basement?

Two things. You absolutely have to learn how to edit yourself. I almost always encourage high Input writers to write things and leave them aside, and come back to them later. When you start to edit that manuscript, ask: is it necessary to know this right

here? (This can also happen with high Context writers, and ****especially**** with Context/Input writers.)

The second thing is: find an editor who understands this about you, and will ask you questions when you've added too much information. *Does this slow down the narrative here? Do we need to know this?* And also, push you in places where you haven't done the Input thing. *Could you tell me X about this character? What kind of Y would they bring on this trip? etc.*

When you have high Input, you're going to output all the things you take in, into a book, and when you're done, there's a good chance you're going to need to Input for awhile until you can fill the well. Some of you who are extroverted or who have relational Strengths high might need to Input the people well in addition to the information well. Or the "new experiences" well. It's definitely important to know, strategically, what tends to fill you up. The more you can do those things, the quicker you'll get back to outputting.

High Input writers are fantastic at finding the research detail that no one else will look far enough to find. Often, the high Input writer will go down the rabbit hole so far, they find something at the end that makes the whole trip worth it. Or they'll find some little detail that they need

The most common place for high Input writers to get stuck is when they don't have enough information yet. For this reason, I often argue with the label of "I've been procrastinating when I should be writing" because with the **width** of information that an Input needs to satisfy their curiosity, it's sometimes a necessary part of writing to do that Inputting. The key is, you have to start to be curious about when you've crossed the line from genuine research to procrastination. But for the most part,

Input writers are going to need more information in order to be able to output. Have to input in order to output. 😊

Of course, like all Strengths, there are balconies and basements, but this one has such fun upsides for the readers (if they have any level of Input as well) because of the level of curiosity you will assuage for them. So definitely lean into that, and then work on editing out the basements.

STRATEGIC

BECCA'S DEFINITION

THIS STRENGTH OFTEN GETS CONFUSED WITH A FEW OTHERS. Adaptability, because of Strategic's mobility. Focus, because of Strategic's talk about goals. Arranger because of Strategic's trying out multiple options until the right one presents itself. Deliberative because of the anticipation of obstacles. Futuristic because of a consistent focus on the future. Restorative because of the tendency toward problem-solving. And Analytical because of the seeing of patterns.

But Strategic isn't as actively go-with-the-flow as Adaptability. And it isn't as focused as Focus. It's not as efficiency-minded as Arranger. It's not as careful as Deliberative. Not as future-minded as Futuristic. Not able to see all problems like a Restorative. And it's not as complete (or reality-centered or date-driven) as Analytical. Yet it shares traits with these Strengths. It's not uncommon, of course, for Strengths to share traits, but Strategic is the one that I see most commonly mis-self-diagnosed. Partly because, if you've ever operated in the

corporate culture, "strategic thinking" is a highly valued capacity in leadership.

This can lead to some work issues for the high Strategic person who either doesn't have good standing in the company, or doesn't have any power to effect change or make their voice heard. I can't tell you how many third- or fourth-in-command people I've seen with high Strategic who get marginalized in their job because they can't communicate how they got from A to Z so quickly, and their boss ignored their insight because of it. The boss didn't have high Strategic, and wasn't comfortable deferring to what they deemed to be "an underling" who couldn't possibly have the capacity to be a strategic thinker.

The other place this can be difficult is in the need for planning or forward-thinking. If a Strategic doesn't have all the variables, they can't make all the paths forward, and make their contingency plans. A lack of information can be very stalling for a Strategic. (I see this the most in writers with trying to make choices about what to do next, or about what path to choose. This can lead to a tremendous amount of indecision, which can eventually lead to stagnation. But if there are variables you don't have, that can sometimes stall out a creative thinking process for a high Strategic. And unknowingly, you'll go searching for those variables at the expense of the in-the-moment decisions.)

When a high Strategic is operating at his or her best, they are anticipating obstacles, moving around them in the agile way that only a Strategic can do, and making good in-the-moment decisions that will take them through the best possible route to their goal. When they are in a group, and they are too many steps ahead of everyone else, they are either finding ways to

communicate those steps, or slow down their thinking enough to explain how they got to where they got to, or they are holding off on making pronouncements until they have enough proof and language for people who are more reality-based than possibility-based. It is a constant dance, but it's worth it.

Please watch the Strategic video [here](#).

IF YOU HAVE HIGH STRATEGIC

"My Strategic theme helps me see the whole board..." This is such a resonant sentence for me. With a high Strategic, not only do I see the whole board, but if there's anything that's blocking my view, it makes me want to get around it so I *can* see the whole board. Lack of complete vision can be a difficulty for high Strategic, because there's so much about being "several moves ahead" that requires knowledge of everyone at the table and their motivations, and if I can't see those things, then I do whatever I can to be able to see them.

In a lot of ways, my attraction to Strengthsfinder is really born out of this Strength. Once I realized how completely the language could describe me, I started to want to know these things about my friends and family, about anyone I came into working contact with. Knowing someone's Strengths helps me see the whole board when they're at the table with me. It helps me know what they can do or bring, and what their unique perspective is on life.

If you are high in the Strategic theme, you are a quick thinker. You like to anticipate what's coming and be prepared for the eventualities. This may seem like a "no-brainer" to you, and I hear "is this really a Strength" from more than one Strategic, but

it really is. The ability to process variables quickly and look for the easiest and quickest way around obstacles is definitely a Strength, and one that is utilized by some of the best-of-the-best in every field to get to the top.

In its raw form, Strategic can sometimes feel like a burden, because you are always thinking ahead of other people. We like to say, the Strategic will go from A to Z while everyone else needs to go from A to B to C to D, and Strategic is up ahead saying, "why aren't you here yet?" But they're not. And one of the big challenges for the high Strategic person is to slow down their thinking process enough to be able to explain to people why "we're going to end up at Q instead of Z if we do B" is not a guess. It's not even a "best guess". It's what will happen if we keep on this course. That's why the gift of the Strategic is the "What If". What if this happens (then we'll end up at R) and what if that happens (then we'll end up at L), etc. This creative thinking Strength is about paths forward and paths around obstacles, as much as it is about coming up with new ways to do things.

The Strategic theme enable you to sort through the clutter and find the best route. It is not a skill that can be taught. It is a distinct way of thinking, a special perspective on the world that you have and others don't. Sometimes, freeing them up from this expectation can save you a lot of grief.

This perspective allows you to see patterns where others can't, or where others see only a cloud of information. Mindful of these patterns, you play out alternative scenarios, always asking, "What if this happened? Okay, well, what if this happened? And that?" This recurring question helps you see

around the next corner. There, you can evaluate accurately the potential obstacles.

Guided by where you see each path leading, you start to make selections. You discard paths that lead nowhere. You discard the paths that lead straight into resistance. You discard the paths that lead into a fog of confusion.

You cull and make selections until you arrive at the chosen path--your strategy. Armed with your strategy, you strike forward. This is your Strategic theme at work: What If? Select. Strike.

BALCONIES, BASEMENTS, AND BARRIER LABELS

BARRIER LABELS

PEOPLE USE THEIR TALENTS TO FILTER THEIR INTERACTIONS, drawing them toward or away from decisions or activities. As such, people's talents can sometimes leave them vulnerable to their own thoughts and behaviors and to others' perspectives. A barrier label is a term used to describe when a talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed as a weakness.

Some common Barrier Labels for high Strategic:

"She has a hard time deciding on an option."

"He always has to try something different."

"She jumps to quick decisions."

"You never know what he is thinking."

"She is a naysayer, always quick to criticize existing processes and ideas."

One of the ways to combat the way that barrier labels get assigned to Strengths is to understand how we can manage the perception of the way that our actions might be barriers to other peoples' understanding of our capacity.

The first thing we need to do, of course, is recognize that these are, indeed, misperceptions. There's probably even something inside you that responds to these labels (if you have high Strategic) with "but that's not true".

Let's reverse or re-interpret those labels.

She has a hard time deciding on an option.

becomes

She sees all the options.

He always has to try something different.

becomes

He is always looking for ways to improve.

She jumps to quick decisions.

becomes

She makes decisions quickly.

You never know what he is thinking.

becomes

You can count on him to surprise you with his ideas.

She is a naysayer, always quick to criticize existing processes and ideas.

becomes

She sees the roadblocks quickly and can help me process where they are without spending the time analyzing them for myself.

In general, we really need to be aware of how we label other people, and how those labels are built out of our own assumptions. The reason that someone will use a barrier label often comes out of an opposing value that they hold tight, but one that the person they're criticizing doesn't hold. I'm not of the mind that we all have to hold the same opinions [Always Individualization, I know, but of course, even I can't help wanting everyone to see the world the way I do...even coaches are not immune to Strengths Blindness]. So Barrier Labels probably bother me more than others. But I hope that doing this exercise can help those of us without a high Strength to see how our assumptions might be getting in our way.

BALCONIES AND BASEMENTS

While it's important to think about how to manage vulnerability and reinterpret behavior, we also want to acknowledge that not everyone who has high Significance as a theme is always operating in the balcony of their Strength. So, how do you tell?

When Strategic is at its best (Balcony), it produces:

- Someone who anticipates alternatives quickly.
- An intuitive person.
- Someone who sees ahead of where we are.
- A person who anticipates the different paths we could take.

When Strategic is at its worst (Basement), it produces:

- Someone who doesn't deal well with reality, only with possibilities.
- A person who jumps to decisions too quickly.
- Someone whose thinking is difficult for others to understand.
- A closed-minded person.

In order to balance out some of these basement behaviors, it is first important to start noticing when they are creeping in. As you live out your high Strategic life this week, start to notice when others get frustrated with your future planning or quick thinking. Are you spending too much time thinking ahead, so you're not involved with where you are today? Are people pushing back against the way you think, or is this a perception issue? Only you will really know.

STRATEGIC FOR WRITERS

THIS IS AN INTERESTING WRITING STRENGTH BECAUSE IT HAS ONE of two paths it can take in your brain. The first is that it can help you be a fantastic plotter (and not just in the "plot ahead of writing the book" way, but more in a live-time way; almost like, when you get into the book, it can help you to make the decisions that would feel the most real to the character in the moment, as you're involved in the plot). Strategic is one of the places (Ideation is the other) that can help with excellent plot twists. It's mostly about being in the moment and thinking "what if this happened" inside your book, though. Not necessarily about planning ahead, or needing to know the end.

The other path is that a high Strategic can make you very aware of the fact that there's always a better path you *could* be taking. This is one of the basement behaviors of Strategic that can cause indecision. There are logic paths around this, for sure, but they take mental discipline, and it's not simply a situation where you can "understand" that your brain is doing this and

then shut it off like a fire hose. If you are used to indulging these patterns, they're going to be used to firing, and on some level, you have to stop them from firing, which takes intentional work and time. Not that it isn't possible, or worth it. It's just, it's not something you do while you're in the middle of changing a lot of other things, because you'll hit the crisis point with it, and it'll end up being much easier to just give in and indulge, and then you will, because you'll run out of willpower stores. Willpower is finite.

If you find that this is your biggest road block (the what-ifing), then this is for sure a place you'll want to do intentional time and development. Because as huge of a benefit as it can be to be a creative thinker, it also has an equal amount of power to derail you because you are always thinking of ways to improve or thinking of new paths. This is definitely a basement of Strategic.

On one hand, this Strength can be great for any genre, but there are some genres that like true surprises less than others, and some where the surprises and twists are HIGHLY rewarded. If this is a true Strength for you, and you really like to write books with twists, it would be a good idea to head towards those genres where twists and surprises are a reader wheel (and not just tolerated because there's crossover readers).

In non-writing industry-related discussions, Strategic can be extremely helpful to other writers. (Sometimes, your brainstorming will be too much for other writers in writing and plot because they won't be able to see how they can get where you want to go from where they are. But in career stuff, it can be super helpful, if you're able to articulate the why, and you're not missing any information.) Here's my one caveat about using

high Strategic as a platform to give career advice to other authors. If you don't have a high Input or a high Analytical, then your "you don't know what you don't know" attitude to possibilities can be a detriment.

Because 90+ percent of the time (sometimes I say 98, sometimes 95, depending on what person I'm talking to and how well I understand their Strategic Strength), you're right. But that 2%-5% can be... dangerous. I mean, dangerous. Here's a quick personal story to sort of land this home. I was coaching someone who was considering moving into Kindle Unlimited. She was not able to write a book a month, so I said, "Oh, then KU isn't for you." We talked about why that was, and she wasn't convinced, even though I was very convinced. She ended up going into KU anyway.

I got an email from her after about six months, and she was making bank. She told me, sheepishly, that she went into KU anyway, and I assured her I didn't have a stake in whether or not she went into KU, I was just trying to give her the facts, and she said, "as you knew them." I sort of pulled back for a second and asked what she meant by that (as non-defensively as I could--which was probably not very non-defensive). She said, "Well, you only knew people who were successful doing a book a month. And you didn't know of people who were successful doing it the other way, but I did. So I took the facts as *I* knew them, and not the facts, as *you* knew them."

That changed how I gave career advice after that. I hit **hard** from then on that these were the facts as I knew them, and that I could be wrong. But I was also always on the lookout, after that, for things that disagreed with my version of the facts, just in case I was wrong about things.

If I had been a less self-aware Strategic, I might have stuck to my guns and said, "you're a fluke" and I'm glad I didn't, because I later realized that she wasn't a fluke at all. She just wrote really fantastic books that hit all the readers' reader-wheels, and then they talked about her. In that way, she was a fluke, but she wasn't a once-in-a-lifetime fluke. Because I've met several authors since then who make six figures releasing less than monthly (some, a LOT less than monthly) into Kindle Unlimited.

The thing I didn't know was very dangerous. This is why Strategic can sometimes be dangerous in giving career advice, because you're giving long-term forecasting information in enough of a vacuum that it might end up being the wrong advice in six months or a year (or next week) and you won't know what you didn't know. But the person has already made the decision. So again, just be very careful about using Strategic too much, because there is at least 5% of the data that you can't extrapolate from patterns alone. Sometimes, there's more (depending on who you trust to explain analytics to you).

But, from a purely writing-only perspective, Strategic is a powerful inside-the-situation decision-maker. Writers with high Strategic tend to do well when they write into the book and need to come up with creative ways to get out of a situation. Lean into this, especially in the way you pace your books.

LEARNER

BECCA'S DEFINITION

LEARNER IS, OF COURSE, ABOUT LEARNING. THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE this theme often describe themselves as a "life-long learner". Some Learners are advanced-degree people, wanting to learn everything about a particular subject. And some are Learner-collectors, wanting to learn all the time and it doesn't matter what they're learning about, as long as they're learning something.

In the case of a very strong Learner, to stop growing is to die. The opposite of growth is death. They will have a hard time putting themselves in the shoes of people who don't want to learn about anything.

Additionally, Learner presents slightly differently based on what's around it. (All Strengths do this, to some extent, but of course, some are more obvious than others. Learner is one of these.) If you have a Learner/Achiever pair, you're more likely to want to take action on what you learn. If you have a Learner/Input pair, you're more likely to take in a lot of

information and have stored places of resources or information on everything you've learned. If you have Learner/Responsibility, you're more likely to feel responsible for what you've learned, and want to make sure you apply it somewhere. If you have Learner/Activator, you're more likely to start a lot of different projects whenever you feel like action is necessary to take. Learner/Context is more likely to want to study history and Learner/Connectedness will be a system-studier and a systems thinker, most of the time. A Learner/Relator or Learner/Individualization will likely also be a studier of people (to their depth). It's sort of amazing how adaptable Learner is, and yet how consistently it presents as a voracious curiosity to learn and improve.

Similarly to the Input theme, a Learner theme will enjoy being able to help a project or cause or group with what they have learned, and Learners often make ****great**** teachers, especially if they also learn even a rudimentary pedagogic process of any kind. Or development process. Learners will always have questions, and they will enjoy finding the answers to those questions.

The Learner is the person who sees that we as a group don't know something about something and wants to go learn that and bring their thoughts back to the group. Or the person who comes up against a problem and thinks there's something they can learn that will help them with this problem. Or the person who sees every class or book as an opportunity to grow and develop. The perpetual student, and also likely the perpetual teacher.

Please watch the Learner video [here](#).

IF YOU HAVE HIGH LEARNER

Some of my favorite Learner stories are about the way that a particular person was valued for the Strength of Learner, before they really had the "role" of educator or teacher. One of the first teams I coached had a woman on staff who was an assistant and had no power role at the table. When I first introduced her to Strengths, she would talk with me about it for hours, and then she would take that information back to her workplace and apply it to her own personal work environment. When her boss realized that she was having such a changed impact, he asked her how she'd done it, and she pulled out all these references that she'd learned through Strengthsfinder, and the boss was so excited by her improved performance, he decided to have the whole team do both individual and team coaching. And from then on, she became the unofficial Strengths ambassador on that team, because she'd been the first one to apply her learning to her own role.

I coached a writer with high Learner who decided she wanted to switch to a new genre, and we came up with a learning plan for the genre switch. She had a list of genre conventions she wanted to learn about in the new genre. So she read a couple of manuals on how to write books in that genre, and she read several of the best-selling books in that genre, and then talked to a few authors about their writing experience that she'd been friends with. Once she felt comfortable with it, she started her first book and it went so smoothly, she kept going, and has been publishing there ever since. Interestingly, since that time, I've seen a couple of other high Learners start new genres by doing exactly the same process with a few tweaks, and it's been cool to see their progress.

It's exciting to see learning rewarded, because the Learner will do it, even if the knowledge or competence is its own reward.

Because if you are a Learner, you love the whole process of learning. The spark of not knowing, the finding of resources or teaching, the process of moving from ignorance to competence. The entire process is fun for you.

The thrill of the first few facts, the early efforts to recite or practice what you have learned, the growing confidence of a skill mastered--this is what you love. Your excitement leads you to engage in adult learning experiences--be it yoga or piano lessons or graduate classes. It enables you to thrive in dynamic work environments where you are asked to take on short project assignments and expected to learn a lot about the new subject matter in a short period of time and then move on to the next one.

(I hope all the writers in the room are perking up there...🤔)

This Learner theme does not necessarily suggest that you need to become a subject matter expert, or that you are striving for the external recognition of a professional or academic credential. The outcome of the learning is less significant than the 'getting there'.

BALCONIES, BASEMENTS, AND BARRIER LABELS

BARRIER LABELS

PEOPLE USE THEIR TALENTS TO FILTER THEIR INTERACTIONS, drawing them toward or away from decisions or activities. As such, people's talents can sometimes leave them vulnerable to their own thoughts and behaviors and to others' perspectives. A barrier label is a term used to describe when a talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed as a weakness.

Some common Barrier Labels for high Learner:

"She is overly curious and asks far too many questions."

"He takes too much time trying to learn things that have no bearing on his job."

"She thinks she knows it all."

"He learns a lot, but produces little."

"She is a little bookish."

One of the ways to combat the way that barrier labels get assigned to Strengths is to understand how we can manage the perception of the way that our actions might be barriers to other peoples' understanding of our capacity.

The first thing we need to do, of course, is recognize that these are, indeed, misperceptions. There's probably even something inside you that responds to these labels (if you have high Learner) with "but that's not true".

Let's reverse or re-interpret those labels.

Just a quick note about the LEARNER labels here. Some of these aren't just labels, but they could potentially be work issues, if they happen in a corporate environment where you are responsible for deliverables that are out of your control. So where that happens, I will note it. But otherwise, I want to talk about the labels themselves.

She is overly curious and asks far too many questions.

becomes

She asks more questions than I would ask, but why is that too many?

He takes too much time trying to learn things that have no bearing on his job.

becomes

He learns a lot.

Side note: It is not uncommon for a Learner to "waste" time in a corporate environment, learning things that have no bearing on their job. If this is something that you've struggled with in a corporate environment, then it would be worth having a chat with your boss about whether you could use some of that learning to help

the team. Teams need to be good learning teams, as well, to be able to adapt and grow. So sell your talent to the boss in that way. But it's also important to note that, if you're learning things you don't need to learn, you'll need to develop a rubric for discerning when you need to learn something and when you don't.

She thinks she knows it all.

becomes

She knows a lot of things.

Side note: This is a common accusation leveled at Learners by people who either don't like to learn and so can't imagine knowing as much as you know, or by people who don't like being corrected. It also comes at Learners from people who think that adding information to a conversation is correction, instead of learning. (And even as a high Learner myself, sometimes I even have a hard time when people add information to what I'm teaching, because it can make me feel like I've done a poor job of teaching. But that's my own crap to handle. It's one of my big development areas in my teaching.) If this is something that you've said to people, please know that the reason this hurts is because the intention of delivering information or providing resources, as a Learner, is never to seem smart or to look competent. It's always because I think people would find it interesting, or because I'm trying to be helpful. People who need to spout information to "appear smart" are different from people who have high Learner. (Not saying the two Venn bubbles will never overlap... just saying, there's a very clear basement to Learner, which we'll get to in a minute, but it is definitely not "trying to look smart" which is what I think this comment can come across as, at times. And for the individual Learner, the goal has to be: don't be that person who needs to be the smartest one in the room. 🤔❤️🤔)

He learns a lot, but produces little.

becomes

He learns a lot and I'm going to help him execute production.

I worded this "flip" in this particular way because it's often the high executors who have the issue with how long the Learners take learning. But the best possible partnership on a team like that would be someone who likes to learn partnering with someone who likes to execute so that the learning will always be for some purpose and will aid in productivity.

She is a little bookish.

becomes

She likes to read.

In general, we really need to be aware of how we label other people, and how those labels are built out of our own assumptions. The reason that someone will use a barrier label often comes out of an opposing value that they hold tight, but one that the person they're criticizing doesn't hold. I'm not of the mind that we all have to hold the same opinions [Always Individualization, I know, but of course, even I can't help wanting everyone to see the world the way I do...even coaches are not immune to Strengths Blindness]. So Barrier Labels probably bother me more than others. But I hope that doing this exercise can help those of us without a high Strength to see how our assumptions might be getting in our way.

BALCONIES AND BASEMENTS

While it's important to think about how to manage vulnerability and reinterpret behavior, we also want to acknowledge that not everyone who has high Learner as a theme is always operating in the balcony of their Strength. So, how do you tell?

When Learner is at its best (Balcony), it produces:

- Someone who is always learning.
- A person who catches on quickly.
- Someone who is interested in many things.
- A person who finds life intriguing.

When Learner is at its worst (Basement), it produces:

- A perceived know-it-all.
- Someone who lacks focus on results.
- A person who spreads their learning too thin.
- Someone who doesn't execute on the results of their learning.

In order to balance out some of these basement behaviors, it is first important to start noticing when they are creeping in. As you live out your high Learner life this week, start to notice when you're staying in learning mode when you know you should be in producing mode. Are you taking too much time on classes, books, and websites, and not enough in your manuscript? Are people around you resenting the fact that you're always pushing them to learn? Watch out for the way they respond to your drops of knowledge or your help. Make sure they're receptive.

LEARNER FOR WRITERS

THERE ARE A COUPLE OF DIFFERENT APPLICATIONS OF LEARNER that are pretty exciting when it comes to writing.

One is that if you find the right genre (or series), you can stimulate your high Learner by having to do research for each book. Either for a location that's new, or for a new type of character occupation, or (if you write episodic) a whole new environment. In fact, one of the benefits of writing in certain kinds of suspense, mystery, or adventure genres is that you have a whole brand new set and a brand new cast of minor characters to learn about every single book.

The momentum that research provides to the high Learner should not be discounted. It's one of the easiest ways to get unstuck when you get stuck. It can provide a lot of forward motion and energy to a process that can sometimes be a little stuck in the mud.

The other really fun part of Learner is that you can probably write non-fiction books, if you're willing to do so without needing academic credentials or professional credentials. Most Learners have a good sense for the learning process, and they know when they've learned enough to be considered a teacher of any one thing. So, every person who hasn't already found their fiction niche, I always like to mention the fact that non-fiction should also be considered (especially with high Analytical alongside--or potentially Strategic, depending on how it fits in with career goals).

Now, there are also a couple of things to be aware of in the "Learner-Writer" process that I just want to throw out there.

A lot of self-confidence issues can be traced back to Learner. While Gallup only likes to use Strengths as examples of how you can be successful, I would be remiss if I didn't admit that there's also a big gaping wound in Learner, sometimes, because of the push to "competency" can create an assumption of "incompetency" until that standard is met. So you can be a perfectly competent and even successful writer (insert: learner, plotter, teacher, marketer, etc.) but still believe you have a long way to go, and that "long way to go" can sometimes produce a lack of confidence.

Especially if you are very aware (like high Compliances often are) of just how much learning you still have to do to be competent in that area.

The other thing to be on the lookout for, when it comes to high Learner in writing is career trajectory. It's more common for people with high Learner to "learn" their genres as much as they have to learn any other process or capacity.

For instance, high Learners might need to jump to a new genre after they feel like they've learned what they can learn in the genre they're in. It's also likely that they'll write in multiple genres over their career. It's harder for Learners to follow the "one genre only" mantra that has taken over a lot of the publishing world right now, because the learning process is such a huge amount of energy for them. So, as always, be on the lookout for when the genre jumping is about feeding the Learner (which can be positive and strong and energy-producing), and when the genre-jumping is about fear. (Especially the Fear of Missing Out, which will probably be a bigger deal for Learners and Inputs than for anyone else.) They're looking for certainty.

INTELLECTION

BECCA'S DEFINITION

IF YOU THINK OF A COMPUTER, IT HAS A PROCESSOR THAT'S ALWAYS on. Even when you're not actively using it, the processor is always functioning while the computer is on. This is similar to how the Intellection brain works. There's always a low "hum" of thinking going on in the background. And high Intellection need to think about (and I mean *need* to think about everything). In fact, it's not uncommon for a high Intellection to not understand a concept at first-glance because they need to go and think about it in order to fully grasp it. This doesn't mean they're stupid (they get enough about it on the first pass, just... not as much as they want... not the way they can fully understand something).

The magic of Intellection is that process. Because as the Gallup definition above says, when they have time to honor the Intellection process, wisdom and clarity result. It is a part of their thinking. Intellection has a couple of governing metaphors, for me.

One is what I call the "thought baby." If you imagine taking in information as being "pregnant" with a thought, that thought has to grow to maturity before it's ready to come out as a clear concept. (Not all thought babies take nine months, don't worry.) But the upside of knowing this is that when you do feel "it's not ready yet", that's what it really is. It isn't fully gestated yet. It can't come out "clear" until you've given it the time it needs.

The other metaphor I like to use is mining for gold with an archeology brush. If you think of having a gold vein below the surface of the earth, and you know it's down there, not far from where you're standing. You know exactly where to stand to start looking for it, but if you explode your way down there, then you're going to end up with dirt and gold and rock and all kinds of junk you don't want. But you want just the gold itself, so you're going to go at it with precision. You sweep a little dirt off, and then you go back over that same spot, and you sweep a little more dirt off, and a little more, and a little more, going over and over that same spot until you've hit the gold vein.

You have a capacity to hit that gold vein, or have that clear, perfect thought baby in a way that other people don't have. Not everyone can produce gold from their brain like you can. It's okay, because not everyone needs gold. A lot of us are okay with a little dirt in our gold. (And of course, we all do have some capacity for Intellection, but it's just not the same as those with very strong Intellection.)

When you have this ability there is an upside and a downside.

Upside: If you take the time, you can produce the gold. Or the fully-formed clear thought.

Downside: It takes time to get the gold out.

Not always a *ton* of time. And not always the same amount of time with each thought (because some, you can think about for a few minutes, or a few hours, and some need a few days, weeks, or years...it just depends on the thought, and on how raw or immature it is when it comes into the brain). But it is a deliberate process. It's worth the time, though, for you. To get the gold.

Please watch the Intellection video [here](#).

IF YOU HAVE HIGH INTELLECTION

I hope that you all heard the emphasis on time alone. I find that one of the biggest difficulties in having Intellection is that most people with this Strength have been taught that time alone is a bad thing. They haven't been given the chance to embrace this Strength because some social person or extroverted person (all well-meaning) have encouraged them not to spend time on their own because the social extrovert thinks it can't possibly be good for you to spend this much time alone.

But it is. Good for you. It's so good for you.

It can feel isolating, as an extrovert who is friends with high Intellection people, because when they need time to think, they really do just need time alone. I can't count the number of conversations that have been cut off by my #1 Intellection significant other because he's gotten too much information and he needs time to think. It's hard not to see that (because of the way I'm wired) as a disconnection. But sometimes, he needs that disconnection.

His ideal life is living in an isolated cabin in the woods. It took me a long time before I was able to really understand that he

did see me in that cabin with him. Just, that when he thinks of his ideal life, he thinks of having the capacity to be alone as much as he can. He's more than happy to be with people. But if given the choice, he would much rather be alone. Or at least, if I'm there or another person is there, be in silence.

My old boss was a #1 Intellection, as well, and I used to come into his office to ask him a question and he'd be staring off into the middle distance, alone with his thoughts, and not even see me. I'd come back ten minutes later, and he'd be frozen there, in the same spot, and he still didn't see me. I eventually learned to give him the space to have these moments, because if I interrupted him, he'd have to start all over again. Thankfully, we had glass doors on our offices, so I stopped opening the door to ask him stuff, and always looked first to see if he was thinking.

But wow, with both my old boss and my significant other, the discussions we would have when they were done thinking. They were incredible. The thoughts they would have, because they gave themselves the time to get to that clarity... it was amazing. I still miss having those mid-afternoon coffee breaks with my old boss where we would talk about Bonhoeffer and Descartes and Bob Dillon, all in the same sentence. He inspired my mid-level Intellection to great philosophical heights. But I'd never be as excellent at thinking as he was. I still can't be. But it's a beautiful thing to watch.

Intellection needs time and space and isolation to do its magic. This can be on long walks, sitting in a chair, driving in a car, taking a bath or shower, or any number of other activities. Housework is a great one, as well. Anything that busies the front of your attention in a non-specific way. If you don't have to

think about what you're doing too much, then you'll be able to have Intellection time. But you'll need it.

Because you do like to think. You need it. You like processing thoughts and ideas, and you need mental activity. The exact focus of the mental activity will change, depending on a lot of factors, but you need the process. In a sense, you are your own best companion, as you pose yourself questions and try out answers on yourself to see how they sound.

This introspection may lead you to a slight sense of discontent as you compare what you are actually doing with all the thoughts and ideas that your mind conceives. Or this introspection may tend toward more pragmatic matters such as the events of the day or a conversation that you plan to have later. Wherever it leads you, this mental hum should be a nurtured constant in your life.

BALCONIES, BASEMENTS, AND BARRIER LABELS

BARRIER LABELS

PEOPLE USE THEIR TALENTS TO FILTER THEIR INTERACTIONS, drawing them toward or away from decisions or activities. As such, people's talents can sometimes leave them vulnerable to their own thoughts and behaviors and to others' perspectives. A barrier label is a term used to describe when a talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed as a weakness.

Some common Barrier Labels for high Intellection:

"He creates needless complexity in our discussions."

"There are times when she isolates herself from the rest of us."

"His rigorous approach to things intimidates others."

"She is slow to act. She wastes too much time thinking about things."

One of the ways to combat the way that barrier labels get assigned to Strengths is to understand how we can manage the perception of the way that our actions might be barriers to other peoples' understanding of our capacity.

The first thing we need to do, of course, is recognize that these are, indeed, misperceptions. There's probably even something inside you that responds to these labels (if you have high Intellection) with "but that's not true".

Let's reverse or re-interpret those labels.

He creates needless complexity in our discussions.

becomes

He has a complex approach to discussions that maybe I don't have.

There are times when she isolates herself from the rest of us.

becomes

Sometimes she needs to be alone to think and that's okay.

His rigorous approach to things intimidates others.

becomes

He doesn't mean to be intimidating, and doesn't think he's smarter than other people, he just likes complex discussions and wants to make sure we're doing the right things the right way.

She is slow to act. She wastes too much time thinking about things.

becomes

She is deliberate and wants to make sure she's processed everything that needs processing.

Side note: The slowness of the process of Intellection will frustrate people who don't have it high, and one of the things I always encourage high Intellection people to do is to have a story ready about a process that you've taken your time on, where the time really helped. I have hundreds of them, if you want some of mine. But it would be good to have a story ready with your own success attached, so you can really own it when you explain to people how much benefit it brings us to thoroughly process things.

In general, we really need to be aware of how we label other people, and how those labels are built out of our own assumptions. The reason that someone will use a barrier label often comes out of an opposing value that they hold tight, but one that the person they're criticizing doesn't hold. I'm not of the mind that we all have to hold the same opinions [Always Individualization, I know, but of course, even I can't help wanting everyone to see the world the way I do...even coaches are not immune to Strengths Blindness]. So Barrier Labels probably bother me more than others. But I hope that doing this exercise can help those of us without a high Strength to see how our assumptions might be getting in our way.

BALCONIES AND BASEMENTS

While it's important to think about how to manage vulnerability and reinterpret behavior, we also want to acknowledge that not everyone who has high Individualization as a theme is always operating in the balcony of their Strength. So, how do you tell?

When Intellection is at its best (Balcony), it produces:

- A thorough and clear thinker.
- Someone who enjoys alone time and being able to muse on things.
- Someone capable of deep and philosophical thought.
- A person able to work on their own..

When Intellection is at its worst (Basement), it produces:

- A loner.
- Someone who is slow to act or thinks too much.
- Someone who isolates themselves from everyone too often.
- A person who doesn't work well with others.

In order to balance out some of these basement behaviors, it is first important to start noticing when they are creeping in. As you live out your high Intellection life this week, start to notice when your close people are noticing your isolating. Notice when people are frustrated with the level of complexity you've brought to a situation. Are you overly-complicating something that doesn't need to be complicated? Are you over-thinking? Only you will really know the answer to these questions.

INTELLECTION FOR WRITERS

THIS ONE EXCITES ME, BECAUSE I THINK IT'S THE MOST COMMON frustration that drives people into the Write Better-Faster course, and it's one that I've seen the most growth in over the years. When people are feeling pressured to stop thinking, because the world is moving too fast, it can really damage the capacity of the high Intellection writer. So the first thing I want to say is: give yourself the time and the space to do your Intellection. The more intentional you are about setting yourself up for Intellection success, the quicker (better-faster) the process will get for you.

And of course, there's always the *but-Becca* questions. The *but everything moves so fast* question.

Yes. This is the essential pain of life. The industry moves at a fast pace. But there are also plenty of high Intellection writers making a lot of money right now, producing slower books that are a better reading experience for the readers who care about a better reading experience. These are the books that people will

wait for. They're worth it. So there's still a market for great books that aren't coming out every 30 days. Absolutely.

Additionally, if you think about the kind of career you want to look back on at the end of your life, are you going to be happy that you didn't produce the "gold" books you could have produced, because you were trying to keep up with market trends? Are you going to be happy that you didn't go get a part-time job somewhere so you could slow down if you need to? Or might you wish that you would have waited longer to quit your full-time job (even though it can be stressful to try to produce books and write full-time), so you could have spent more time on X and such book? Are you going to wish you had given yourself another month in your process, so you could produce the better book?

So much of thinking about how to be a high Intellection writer is about what will you be satisfied with later.

Because... Can you force the thought baby out before it's ready? Of course. It won't be fully formed, but it'll be out. Can you explode down to the gold vein? Of course. You won't get the same product you would with the precision and clarity of longer thought. But you can blow it up. (Sometimes--the honest truth is, though, sometimes you can't. Sometimes it just isn't coming out until it's ready.)

So, there are all these maxims that we believe as writers, and most of them fly directly in the face of the process of the Strategic Thinking Strengths (especially Intellection, Input, and Ideation).

"They" say: "writers write every day." *But do they? I know an awful lot of six-figure authors who don't write every day. Some of them*

*don't even write every week, if they're spurt writers. Some of the not-every-day people are thinking a lot and then writing a lot. Which is **also** valid.*

*"They" say: "you can't edit a blank page." But... can't you? Because I know an awful lot of high Intellection writers who edit everything in their head, and what they eventually put down on the page is something that they've already edited. So... you **can** edit a blank page. If you're wired to.*

But this stuff isn't intuitive. Questioning the premise isn't intuitive. It isn't even intuitive for me, and I've been practicing this concept for almost two decades, unintentionally. It's difficult to remember that we're making assumptions, all the time, that may or may not be good for us. But the biggest one, for me, when it comes to high Intellection writers is that: speed is better than deliberation.

When you have the opportunity to produce the kind of gold that you can produce as a high Intellection, I'm not sure that speed is ever your friend. Ever. I mean, yes, you have to meet deadlines, but the pressure of the deadline can be just the right thing to force the thought-baby-labor. And your readers, those of you with Intellection, I guarantee they'd rather wait for it to be right, than to have you try to hit a 30-day quick turnaround, because that's not where you're at your best.

Of course, so much of this depends on whether or not you want to wait for the best. And that's totally up to you. But you can short-circuit the thinking process by having some thinking supports. You have to build the time in, intentionally, to let your brain think. There's a lot of brain science out there right now about intentionally getting bored. You have to, on some level, get bored, and that will stimulate the Intellection. Give yourself

the space and time to think. Have a designated place where you go to do it. Have a list of activities you can do that will help you think. And then have those be your go-to. Don't have your go-to be trying to force the words onto the page. Let your brain roam free in the green fields of your thought process.

RESPONSIBILITY

BECCA'S DEFINITION

RESPONSIBILITY IS ONE OF THE STRENGTHS THAT PEOPLE ASSUME will correlate with Compliance (in the DISC), but actually, in my experience, it's not correlated. Responsibility is less about adhering to an external standard than it is about doing what you say you will do.

Interestingly, one of the most consistent things that Responsibility does is they say what they mean, and it is often a learning curve with people who are external processors, or low Responsibility people, that not everyone takes responsibility for what they say.

One of my best friends is #2 Responsibility, and I've learned that I have to be careful about how I plan vacations with her. I used to be the person who would say, "Let's go to Vegas this summer" in the morning and forget they said that by the afternoon. Meanwhile, she's looking at flights and hotels and putting it on her calendar. This applies to multiple ways of planning for me, and I've learned that I have to say, "I'm

spitballing here, but" or "this is just an idea--I don't know my calendar yet". Or just say, "I'd like to go somewhere this summer if we have time." Instead of making extroverted plan and then realize that I can't do any of that.

But if she said she wanted to go somewhere on vacation, she really meant that she'd considered it, and if I was up, let's plan. Very interesting for someone like me who is a verbal processor and often says things I don't realize I don't mean until I say them out loud. She's very conscious of what she says, and will usually stop herself talking if she's not certain yet. And once she says she'll do something, she'll do it. No matter what.

It's also been interesting to watch a client of mine go through the process of developing her Responsibility basement over the years. She started off with a tendency to over-commit to things, and to become responsible for doing everything that certain people would ask her to do, because she knew she'd get it done. And she's been pulling up her basement, slowly over the years, because that desire to commit was so engrained in her, and she needed to improve her sense of what was and was not her responsibility to finish. It's been an inspiring journey.

Please watch the Responsibility video [here](#).

IF YOU HAVE HIGH RESPONSIBILITY

I love the way he describes the process of how he decides to take on a new project. That is absolutely the balcony of Responsibility! "I instinctively want to say yes, but I have to be selective. I have to make sure we can take it on, deliver on time, and do it right before I agree to a new project." And you can

hear the conviction in his voice. *Do it right*. That's his goal. Fulfilling exactly what he said he would do.

High Responsibility people always want to be known as the person who delivers on exactly what they promised, and it matters to them that they're able to do justice to their word. It's also why they will work so hard to get done what they have to get done to fulfill their word.

The interesting piece about this is that "do it right" can vary, depending on the basement or balcony of how Responsibility is showing up. For some Responsibility people, "right" means "perfect." And for others, who have a more refined sense of what it really means to fulfill what you said you would do, "right" means "as promised", which means that it meets the expectations of the person you committed to. The standard of perfection is a hard place that some Responsibility people can get stuck in, when they have an innate belief that only perfection is acceptable.

But in reality, perfection (absolute perfection) is unattainable, and being held to that standard requires time and energy that is not necessary to fulfill the "promise" of the work, which was that it would be as stated or as specified. So one of the growth edges of Responsibility can be the releasing of perfectionism.

I mean... in case you hadn't committed to any other Herculean feats this year...

But even without the perfectionistic streak, high Responsibility is still going to be pretty near perfect, when they commit to doing something, because it's about the thoroughness of what they know they have to deliver. What they said they will deliver.

Your Responsibility theme forces you to take ownership for anything you commit to, and whether large or small, you feel emotionally bound to follow it through to completion. Your good name depends on it.

If for some reason you cannot deliver, you automatically start to look for ways to make it up to the other person. Apologies are not enough. Excuses and rationalizations are totally unacceptable. You will not quite be able to live with yourself until you have made restitution.

This conscientiousness, this near obsession with doing things right, and your impeccable ethics combine to create your reputation: utterly dependable. When assigning new responsibilities, people will look to you first because they know it will get done. When people come to you for help--and they soon will--you must be selective. Your willingness to volunteer may sometimes lead you to take on more than you should. But the people around you know that they can count on you. Always.

BALCONIES, BASEMENTS, AND BARRIER LABELS

BARRIER LABELS

PEOPLE USE THEIR TALENTS TO FILTER THEIR INTERACTIONS, drawing them toward or away from decisions or activities. As such, people's talents can sometimes leave them vulnerable to their own thoughts and behaviors and to others' perspectives. A barrier label is a term used to describe when a talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed as a weakness.

Some common Barrier Labels for high Responsibility:

"She can't say no or let go."

"He micromanages everything."

"She is obsessive about the work she takes on."

"He doesn't give others the chance to take the lead."

One of the ways to combat the way that barrier labels get assigned to Strengths is to understand how we can manage the

perception of the way that our actions might be barriers to other peoples' understanding of our capacity.

The first thing we need to do, of course, is recognize that these are, indeed, misperceptions. There's probably even something inside you that responds to these labels (if you have high Responsibility) with "but that's not true".

Let's reverse or re-interpret those labels.

She can't say no or let go.

becomes

She is always willing to take on new work for other people.

He micromanages everything.

becomes

He cares about how the work gets done.

She is obsessive about the work she takes on.

becomes

She is so committed to the work she does.

He doesn't give others the chance to take the lead.

becomes

He is aware of what leadership takes and is willing to step up.

In general, we really need to be aware of how we label other people, and how those labels are built out of our own assumptions. The reason that someone will use a barrier label often comes out of an opposing value that they hold tight, but one that the person they're criticizing doesn't hold. I'm not of

the mind that we all have to hold the same opinions [Always Individualization, I know, but of course, even I can't help wanting everyone to see the world the way I do...even coaches are not immune to Strengths Blindness]. So Barrier Labels probably bother me more than others. But I hope that doing this exercise can help those of us without a high Strength to see how our assumptions might be getting in our way.

BALCONIES AND BASEMENTS

While it's important to think about how to manage vulnerability and reinterpret behavior, we also want to acknowledge that not everyone who has high Responsibility as a theme is always operating in the balcony of their Strength. So, how do you tell?

When Responsibility is at its best (Balcony), it produces:

- Someone who is committed.
- A person who is willing to be accountable for what they say they will do.
- Someone who can be independent, because you can trust them.
- A person who is conscientious.

When Responsibility is at its worst (Basement), it produces:

- Someone who tends to micro-manage.
- A person who tends toward being obsessive about their work.
- Someone who can't say no.
- A person who tends to bite off more than they can chew.

In order to balance out some of these basement behaviors, it is first important to start noticing when they are creeping in. As you live out your high Responsibility life this week, start to notice when others say that you are a workaholic. Are you really not resting? Or is that a misperception? When you over-commit, what suffers? Are you listening to the stakeholder in the places that suffer when you over-commit?

RESPONSIBILITY FOR WRITERS

THE HIGH RESPONSIBILITY WRITER IS THE WRITER WHO IS AWARE of what they commit to. If they work for a publisher, they meet their deadlines--come hell or high blood pressure. In fact, I have known a high Responsibility writer to actually write a book from a hospital bed. That kind of commitment is inspiring.

High Responsibility writers also take commitment seriously, so they write commitment seriously. They want their characters to take commitment seriously as well, and to honor their words. They tend to like men who have honor and women who say what they mean and don't play games. When they write characters who are not like that, it's a deliberate choice, because not everyone is the same. But innately, they tend to write characters who are honorable.

And of course, there are some genres that really reward writing characters who have high Responsibility.

You will also know that having high Responsibility (or a desire to honor commitments) can create a LOT of conflict and tension. Especially when the desire to meet a commitment or honor a vow conflicts with the goal or motivation to love/save/serve/honor a romantic partner. Or to solve a very difficult case. Or catch a difficult criminal. This is an endless source of conflict: commitment.

People who are committed will endure a lot to honor or meet whatever promise they made.

You will also have a very attuned sense of right and wrong (it may be a religious basis, or an ethical/philosophical one, but it will definitely be a code). Similarly to Belief, the code will likely include things like hard work and dedication, and you will have a hard time respecting anyone who doesn't honor their word. It will probably be hard to even see how that is redeemable.

The nice thing about high Responsibility, as a writer, is that all the lectures we've had about Intellections getting their thinking time and Deliberatives taking their time in their process will have paved the way for you hearing this: It. Is. Okay. To. Edit. As. You. Go. This obsession that we have about "don't edit-as-you-go" in the writing world is illusory. If you need to edit-as-you-write, then you do it. If it will make you feel uncomfortable to leave things wrong that could be changed, then take the time. It will be worth the gain of sanity at the end of the project.