

CYNTHIA ULRICH TOBIAS

BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *THE WAY THEY LEARN*  
AND *YOU CAN'T MAKE ME*

THE WAY  
WE  
WORK



TAKING CHARGE OF  
YOUR OWN SUCCESS



PRAISE FOR  
CYNTHIA ULRICH TOBIAS &  
THE WAY WE WORK

Cynthia Tobias has a unique talent of taking emotionally charged situations and offering simple yet effective solutions which allow all to save face and productively move on. Few speakers have won the respect and following of our work group. She's the first who is getting return engagement requests.

**LEE SOPTICH**

CHIEF (RET.), EASTSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE  
ISSAQUAH, WASHINGTON

Thank you again Cynthia! You were an absolute hit! I've never heard or seen such an engaging response from a police training session. The command staff is already talking about styles and our advanced training techniques. I will encourage them to call on you again.


**SGT. TERRI MACMILLAN**

SEATTLE POLICE DEPARTMENT (RET.)  
RECRUITING & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

I wanted to thank you again so much for doing the trainings for our mentors last week—it was amazing how many people were so moved by your words and commented to me in emails about how great it was!

**JENNIFER YOUNGBLOOD**

MENTOR COORDINATOR, COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS  
FEDERAL WAY, WASHINGTON



I want to extend the most heart-felt thank you to you for your training Friday. Several teachers are very excited about trying your techniques with some students they feel they have no influence over. Your techniques give us hope with the most challenging students.

### **STEVE BACKMAN**

ADMINISTRATOR, LAWRENCE GARDNER HIGH SCHOOL—  
TOPEKA JUVENILE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Those who sat under your leadership were inspired, affirmed, and challenged. They returned to their place of service with new understandings, ideas for implementation, and resources as they minister to children and their families. Thank you for sharing your talent, insight and time with us.

### **BARBARA LYON**

CONFERENCE CHAIR, THE CHILD DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE  
ORANGE PARK, FLORIDA

I never had so many wonderful comments and compliments about any of our speakers as I had about Cynthia. Our board members were receiving the same compliments—it was wonderful! I do not think I will be able to top her—that will be impossible.


### **CAROLE PETERSON**

FRIENDS OF WEATHERFORD LIBRARY  
DALLAS, TEXAS

There are no words that can express my gratitude for what you were able to accomplish with my Board of Directors. The tools you gave us helped to accomplish more than I could have hoped

### **LARRY WIEDA**

PAST PRESIDENT, CRIME STOPPERS INTERNATIONAL, INC.  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



*The Way We Work*

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PART I

# KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS



# A QUICK OVERVIEW

For years we received a company news letter from a large company in our area. I always looked forward to just one thing: page one. On page one there was a section boxed off and inside was a quick tip for help with some technology problem. For example, one month it was how to recover lost data on your hard drive. The tip was short and to the point, but at the bottom was this line: *If you want to know why this works, turn to page six.* My husband would immediately go to page six and begin reading several paragraphs of explanation. I never went to page six. I didn't want to know why it worked—I was just glad it did.

This is one of the most practical books you'll ever read. It's short so you can pick it up and digest it quickly, but it's powerful when you use what's in it. Best of all, the strategies in it *work*. Sort of like page one. But don't think for a minute that I made all this up. It's grounded in decades of solid research, a lot of graduate work, and over thirty-two years of a career in education, law enforcement, and business—and seeing proof of how this works. You'll find references and resources that can serve as your “page

six,” but the rest of the book is written in an easy, conversational style and packed with immediately useful ideas and strategies.

Each of us is created as a unique, complex individual—one who can’t be simply analyzed or labeled. And yet, we’re constantly searching for answers about who we are, what we’re supposed to be doing with our lives, and why other people sometimes can’t seem to understand us.

If you’re in the workplace, you may have already taken seminars designed to help you see where you fit in the world. You took a test and then had to identify which category you fall into, even though you weren’t clear on why you were supposed to take the test in the first place. You compared your results with others and sometimes found yourself wishing your categories were more like those of someone else. After all, you weren’t really comfortable with being just one category—it seems like you fall into several. Within a day or two, you can’t remember exactly what those labels were called anyway, and within a year or two, you have to take all new tests and learn new labels.

There are some excellent books and programs out there that try to help you categorize your personality, your brain, or your mental health. Unlike those books, this one focuses on something much more basic and easy to identify. Most of us, when presented with a puzzle that has so many parts, like to start by putting the border together, then attach the pieces that are pretty obvious. Many of us keep the lid of the puzzle box nearby, just in case we forget what the big picture is supposed to look like.



Once you read the book, you can't be the same. You'll look with new eyes at situations that only frustrated you before, and you'll recognize that more often than not, other people aren't annoying you on purpose. Best of all, you can share what you've read with others who need the good news but don't want to wade through lots of words and tests to get it.

You won't figure everything out about yourself—it takes a lifetime to learn and appreciate all you're capable of being and doing. But you're going to enjoy this quick and practical approach to understanding why you're such a wonderful and capable human being.

This book is the border to your thousand-piece puzzle.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

He was one of the managers for the large corporation where I was presenting a training seminar. It was the morning break, and he was headed in my direction with his handouts in his hand and a frown on his face. He was frustrated. He stood close to me and pointed his finger.

“Why did I have to be fifty-four years old before I found out I was smart and valuable?”

I shook my head and smiled at him. “I don't know. But I know we're trying as hard as we can to reach as many as we can as early as we can to let them know they are smart and valuable, and they have so much to offer.”

He nodded. “I just wish I could have known this when I started out so many years ago. . . .”

So what is this thing that can change your life and yet be so basic and easy to identify and remember—this border to your puzzle of so many pieces?

It's the fundamental concept that helps you identify and understand the inborn, natural strengths you have when it comes to how your mind interacts with information. One formal term is "Cognitive Style." In other words, how your mind takes in, remembers, and processes the information it receives. Regardless of what you thought when you were in school, you have unique strengths and preferences that greatly affect the way you learn.

Some students have learning strengths that just naturally match what a formal classroom demands. Others, even though they are just as smart and capable, struggle with how they are made to learn. Even the most interesting and compelling information can get lost in the frustration of not being able to concentrate, remember, or understand what's being taught.

**What does every job have in common?**

*A need to learn and exchange information.*

**What do most jobs have in common?**

*The need to work with other people who don't think and act the same way you do.*

**When can you stop learning and acquiring new skills?**

*Only when you make that decision.*

Even if you were an excellent student, you can find yourself at a disadvantage in the workplace if you don't know how to adapt to and accommodate the myriad of real-life learning you have to do for the rest of your life. On the other hand, if you know and understand your natural learning strengths, you can use them not only to succeed, but to accommodate and adjust to almost any situation or circumstance.

This book will guide you through a quick and practical process of identifying what you naturally do best when it comes to taking in and making sense of information. Even though that may not sound all that earth shaking, you'll be surprised to find out what a huge difference it can make in virtually every area of your life.

## THREE CORE CONCEPTS

- 1. There will never be a time in your life when you aren't learning something.**

Until you draw your last breath, you're learning something new every day. From the smallest detail to your grandest discoveries, your mind is constantly taking in and processing information. It's the foundation for virtually everything you do—and your cognitive style serves as a filter for what you understand, what you remember, and how you make decisions.

Knowing this can have a powerful effect on what you choose to do with your life. Whether it's a job to pay the bills or a career that grows into a lifetime journey, you'll be able to recognize what you need to do to succeed.

It's been said that one of the true tests of a person's character is how they deal with Plan B when Plan A, with all its dreams and visions, suddenly goes sideways or falls apart. It's then you can use your knowledge of yourself to change course and succeed anyway.

According to the World Economic Forum, more than five million jobs will be lost by 2020 as a result of automation, artificial intelligence, and technological progress.<sup>1</sup> In a report published by Dell Technologies Today, there's this statement: "An estimated 85 percent of jobs in 2030 haven't been invented yet. . . . The ability to gain new knowledge will be more valuable than the knowledge itself."<sup>2</sup>

What can you count on? Change. But if you know how to keep learning, you can stay in control of the steering wheel on even the most winding career paths you travel.

## **2. Learning and communicating are inextricably linked.**

*It is well to remember that the entire population of the universe, with one trifling exception, is composed of others*  
(J.A. Holmes).

Every conversation, presentation, or interaction involves communicating information so that the other person will understand it.

Most people talk to you the same way they want you to talk to them. If you're busy doing the same thing—trying to get them to talk to you your way—neither of you will reach common ground in your communication. On the other hand, learning how to listen and respond to someone who

thinks differently from you will be one of the most valuable skills you'll ever develop.

Awareness is half the battle. Understanding the reasons behind the differences can build relationships with even the most difficult people, and you could end up being one of the most valued resources in your workplace.

### **3. We are all equal in worth and value, but none of us can do all things equally well.**

*If the mission of your company is to climb a tree, would you rather hire a squirrel or train a horse?*<sup>3</sup>

We're drawn to those with opposite strengths—we're designed that way. This is true with your personal as well as your professional relationships, and the better you understand yourself, the easier it will be to recognize and appreciate complementary strengths in others.

We have a right and a left hand, and most of the time they work together to accomplish tasks that are almost impossible for one hand to do. If the right hand were to insist that the left hand be identical to itself, you wouldn't get much done with two right hands. You need both right and left, even though they are opposite of each other.

Teamwork is never as easy as it sounds. The very things you appreciate in someone who is an opposite of you can also drive you crazy. It's frustrating to say exactly what you mean and still have the other person completely misunderstand you.

We need each other's strengths. If you figure out how to get your point across to someone who doesn't think like

you do, you'll quickly become one of the most valuable players on your team.

**When I talk to high school students, I always tell them:** There will be times when you'll get a teacher who teaches just the way you like to learn. Enjoy that gift, because it won't happen very often. Once you leave school and enter the world, sometimes everything will work just the way you want it to—but not often.

You can't count on everyone else doing what works for you. You need to know how to motivate yourself to take charge of your own success. When you walk into a college classroom or a job situation and realize, "Uh oh—nothing here fits what I need," you have a choice. You can give up, or you can stop and figure out what you need to do in order to succeed.

If you know your own learning strengths, nothing needs to overwhelm or daunt you. When others will not accommodate or adjust to you, you'll have the knowledge and ability to use your strengths in ways that will overcome temporary limitations. It's a powerful tool.

## THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

1. Know your strengths.
2. Figure out what you need in order to succeed.
3. Be ready to prove it works.

Are you ready to put together your puzzle border? Let's get started.