

Reflected Best Self (RBS)

The article, [“How to Play to Your Strengths,”](#) by **Laura Morgan Roberts from The University of Michigan**, outlines a method for seeking and using feedback from trusted others, referred to as the Reflected best Self (RBS) exercise. Roberts recommends it as a tool to help you identify and build your strengths. The overall result provides a strength-based portrait to help you discover who you are at your best and what you can become in your career.

The framework for the RBS exercise comes from Positive Organizational Scholarship. Research from this area indicates that people tend to remember criticism, yet respond to praise. While criticism tends to make people defensive and less likely to change, praise produces confidence and the desire to improve.

The RBS exercise involves four steps, but there are some caveats to consider before proceeding. First, the tool is designed to help develop a plan for effective action, and is not an ego-building exercise. Second, to be effective, the RBS method requires commitment and follow-through. Finally, for those students who are working professionally, the method should be used at a different time of year than the traditional performance review to avoid interference from negative feedback.

Reflected Best Self Exercise – Directions


Step 1: Identify Respondents and Ask for Feedback About STRENGTHS, only

Solicit feedback from those who know you best -- family, friends, teachers and colleagues. This can be done effectively using electronic communication, whereby results can be easily copied and pasted into a table for analysis. Ask these individuals to provide information about your strengths , only, including specific examples of ways in which you used these strengths that were meaningful to them. You may be uncomfortable asking exclusively for positive feedback, but remember that the exercise will help you improve your performance.

Step 2: Recognize Patterns

Use the feedback from respondents to identify common themes or areas of strength. Add examples of your own and organize the information into a table following the general format of the following illustration:

- A table with examples of common themes – please use your own themes from the feedback that you receive.



Common Theme	Examples Given	Possible Interpretation
Ethics, and values		
Courage under pressure		
Curiosity and perseverance		
Adaptability		
Ability to listen		
Analytical ability		
Team building skills		
Creativity		

This analysis step can be very insightful. It will help you develop a larger picture of your capabilities and an opportunity to evaluate or reevaluate your career path.

Step 3: Compose Your Best-Self Portrait

Write a description of yourself that summarizes what the analysis revealed, weaving the themes from the feedback and your own observations into a composite of your “personal best.” It should be a prose composition approximately three paragraphs long. Please begin the first paragraph with the statement “When I am at my best, I...” This will take time and careful consideration but should provide an image of who you are now, and who you can become.

Step 4: Reflect. What Has Your Best-Self Portrait Revealed About the Career Path You Are On or Would Like to Define?

Schedule an individual appointment if you would like to discuss. Please complete the exercise, first.