



UNLEASH THE
FULL POTENTIAL
OF YOUR MOST
NATURAL TALENTS

ORDINARY SUPER POWERS



MARK
HENSON

DISCOVER YOUR ORDINARY SUPERPOWERS

You have *hundreds* of abilities, talents, and skills. For each one, you possess a current level of mastery, from novice to expert. Some of them you enjoy, and some you don't. Some you use every day; others lay dormant for long periods of time. You share some in common with almost everyone, and a handful are unique to you.

But which ones are Ordinary Superpowers? It can be hard to tell, especially when something doesn't quickly jump out at you.

I've met some people who have incredibly clear superpowers. They know exactly what they are, and they proactively use them to create powerful and positive results. How did they figure it out? A few of them were just blessed with self-awareness from an early age. But the majority of the people who understand their superpowers did some work to discover them. They may have recognized over time what works extremely well for them, or they may have explored books, workshops, or assessments such as *Strengthsfinder 2.0* by Tom Rath, *StandOut* by Marcus Buckingham, or one of the many other ways to discover strengths, motivation, and more. The book in your hands right now is (hopefully) one of those helpful resources, too.

It's time to start discovering what *your* Ordinary Superpowers are. But how? Well, that's exactly what this chapter is about. You'll start by examining your

life's activities and the talents you use frequently (maybe even more than you realize). Then you'll apply the simple test I explained in the previous chapter, along with some additional thinking, to help you narrow your list of potential superpowers down to your top three. I'll also explain why that is imperative.

THE 6 QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL YOUR ORDINARY SUPERPOWERS

There are six questions I've found helpful to begin identifying the abilities, talents, and skills that may be Ordinary Superpowers:

1. What are you always doing?
2. What do people always ask you for help with?
3. What do you always feel compelled to volunteer for?
4. What do you do that other people admire?
5. What do you do that makes a positive difference?
6. What do you enjoy doing the most in the whole world?

Let's look at these questions one by one.

1. What Are You Always Doing?

The first clue to an Ordinary Superpower is to take a look at what you're always doing. There are three things we find ourselves always doing:

1. *We always do what we absolutely have to do.* We have to go to work. We have to feed ourselves and our families. We have to transport ourselves from place to place. We have to take care of emergencies.
2. *We always do what's easy.* C'mon, admit it, we all tend to do the easy stuff. We're humans, it's how we operate. By the way, *easy* doesn't always mean "unimportant." There are many things we consider to be easy that are useful, important, and even necessary. But given the choice between easy and difficult, we will (almost) always choose easy.
3. *We always do what we're wired to do.* When something comes naturally to you, or you're particularly good at something, you tend to do it frequently because it's your default setting; it's what you gravitate to.

An ordinary superpower could fall into any of these categories and certainly could be a combination of two or more, particularly something that is both easy and comes naturally. While those two characteristics are independent of each other, they often go hand-in-hand. Makes sense, doesn't it? If something comes naturally to you, it's likely to seem easy.

Don't ever discount what comes naturally and easily to you. We tend to think that if something is easy for us, it's probably easy for everyone. That's simply not the case. What's easy for you may be mind-boggling for me. What comes naturally to me, you may struggle to develop competency in.

I use this example all the time: numbers, spreadsheets, and Quickbooks reports make my head spin. They're like a foreign language to me, and I struggle to wrap my brain around them. My long-time bookkeeper, Carol, though, can create, analyze, clean up, and completely understand numbers and spreadsheets in her sleep. I wouldn't be surprised if she dreams about them, and enjoys the dreams, too.

On the flip side, I have no fear of standing on a stage and speaking to 10 people or 10,000. When I was 24 years old, I emceed the 4th of July fireworks celebration in Lansing, Michigan in front of 50,000 people. Didn't phase me at all — it's just something I've never really had a fear of. I personally know dozens of people who would have a heart attack and die on the spot if I asked them to read a single sentence into a microphone in front of a crowd. It took me a long time to recognize how unique that talent is, but now I recognize it as one of my superpowers.

When we think it's natural or easy for everyone, we discount the value of that ability, and we don't realize how special, and unique, and powerful that ability may be. We simply think it's ordinary (hence the term "Ordinary Superpower").

2. What do people always ask you for help with?

When you review the types of tasks and activities that people ask you for help with, you'll probably see patterns quickly. You might even find yourself frequently wondering things like:

"Why do people always ask me to help them fix their computer?"

"Why do people always want to talk to me about how to deal with an unhappy toddler?"

“Why do I always get asked to join the committee to plan the company party?”

If you’ve ever asked yourself one of these kinds of questions, I’m willing to bet you just let it hang there and never really answered it. You may have even asked it out of frustration because someone asked you to do that thing AGAIN. If that’s the case, I’d like to challenge you to shift the focus of the question.

When we’re frustrated by a request, we ask the question in a whiney, complaining tone. You know what I mean. As an example, read this sentence in your head in THAT voice, emphasizing the capitalized words:

“WHY do people always ask ME to help them fix their computer?”

Now, change the tone of your question. Ask it in the spirit of actually wanting to know the answer instead of using the question to vent your frustration. I’ll even rewrite it a little bit to help you shift the tone. Now try it again, using a much more inquisitive and pleasant tone in your head:

“Hmmm, I wonder...Why DO people always ask ME to help them fix their computer?”

What you’re asking with this rephrased question is, “What talents and skills do other people clearly see in me (that maybe I don’t even see in myself)?” This is such a great exercise because quite often other people see our uniqueness much more clearly than we do. They see the results our abilities produce, and they make the connection. We, on the other hand, see those things as just what we do, and often overlook them.

3. What do you always feel compelled to volunteer for?

Have you ever been in a charity, community group, or PTA meeting where a particular task or role is being described, and then they ask for someone to volunteer to take on that task or role? I’ve been there, and there are typically two reasons I feel compelled to actually volunteer:

1. Absolutely nobody else is volunteering for a task that needs to be done. As in — everybody is avoiding eye contact with everybody else, hoping no one directly asks them to take on the task. My sense of obligation, responsibility, or compassion usually prompts me to raise my hand in these situations.

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2. The task plays to my strengths. I know it could do it with one hand tied behind my back because it's right up my alley.

Volunteering for the first reason often leads to regret, frustration, and gnashing of teeth. However, when the second reason leads me to volunteer, that might be a nudge from the universe that maybe, just maybe, my Ordinary Superpowers are being called into action. When we know we're good at doing something, we gravitate toward opportunities that will benefit from that strength. We even feel compelled to volunteer for tasks that, on the surface, *might not even appear to be fun*, but we instinctively know we can perform them better than anyone else in the room.

4. What do you do that other people admire?

While some people actively seek out the admiration of others, I've found that most people have a hard time with this one. Unless we have an extraordinary superpower that clearly stands out to everyone, including yourself, it can be difficult to see what other people think is special about yourself.

Put yourself in someone else's shoes for a minute, particularly the shoes of someone who has a pretty decent opinion of you (we all have at least a few of those). Now that you're pretending to be someone else, what do you think that person admires about you?

Still struggling? Here are two alternative ways you could ask this question:

What do people consistently compliment you about?

When you hear multiple compliments about a particular skill, it's a pretty good indicator that skill stands out to others.

What do people often thank you for?

When people consistently thank you for something you do, they are often saying, *"I wasn't able to do that, but you were, so thanks!"*

People admire YOU for something. What do they see?

5. What do you do that makes a positive difference?

You have some talents that clearly make a positive difference in your life or the lives of others. Think about the things you do that result in an obvious improvement to something. Maybe it's a physical improvement in someone's life, such as when you build homes for Habitat for Humanity. It could be an improvement

in someone's financial situation when you buy their groceries. You might lift someone's mood when you write them an encouraging note, or when you secretly pay for the coffee of the next person in line at Starbucks. Maybe you improve your own well-being when you sing, or paint, or build, or organize.

I don't know a single person who doesn't have some skills that make a positive difference. I'm betting you have a bunch.

6. What do you enjoy doing most in the whole world?

This one may seem obvious, but it's also easy to overlook. We don't always equate the things we enjoy the most with actual talents or skills, probably because we focus so much on the enjoyment part; we don't ever stop to dissect how we arrive there.

Think about the activities you enjoy the most. What are you doing in those activities? What talents or skills are you using when you're immersed in that enjoyment?

Being entertained doesn't count. Pure entertainment, such as watching a movie or attending a sporting event, is passive. You're not doing anything but watching.

However, if what you enjoy about movies or basketball games is taking specific people with you because you know they'll enjoy it, that's different. Then the focus isn't about being passively entertained, it's about you using entertainment to serve someone else.

A talent or activity doesn't have to serve someone else to qualify here, though. It might serve only you, and that's fine. What lights you up? What makes you feel great? What gives you immense satisfaction? It might be writing short stories or rock climbing or mowing the grass (don't laugh, that one is on my list). The point is you enjoy it, period.

THE TASK OR ROLE MAY (OR MAY NOT) BE THE SUPERPOWER

When you answer the questions...

What are you always doing?

What do people always ask you for help doing?

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What do you always feel compelled to volunteer for?

What do you do that other people admire?

What do you do that makes a positive difference?

What do you enjoy doing most in the world?

...the tasks or roles you identify may be your Ordinary Superpowers. Or they simply may be deeper clues or good indicators as to what your true Ordinary Superpowers are.

Your Ordinary Superpowers may be the task itself, but it could just be related to the task. For instance, if people always ask you to help them fix their computer, one of your Ordinary Superpowers might be *fixing computers*. There's just something about computers that you understand, and you have a real knack for rooting out the cause of the breakdown and fixing it. Done. End of story.

However, your Ordinary Superpowers could simply be showcasing themselves through certain tasks or activities. Using the same example from above: If you're great at fixing computers, it could be because your real superpower is *solving process-oriented problems*, or *recognizing patterns*. It could even be that you love *diving into a problem that most people shy away from*, even if you don't have any idea how to fix it (but somehow you always figure it out).

As you identify the tasks and roles you naturally perform (or feel compelled to perform), ask yourself which talents or skills you exercise when you perform those activities. Then, think about where else you use those talents or skills. *Do you use your problem-solving skill only when you fix computers, or do you frequently use it in other tasks or activities as well, such as rearranging the office for better efficiency or mediating arguments between family members?*

APPLY THE TEST TO BE SURE

As you identify skills, tasks, and roles from this thinking, you will undoubtedly have a decent-sized list in your head or even on paper (if you're taking notes). You may be thinking that there's no way everything on that list can be a superpower, and you're right. Whether the talents on your list are a God-given strength or a skill you've developed through experience, to identify which ones

are Ordinary Superpowers, you will need to apply the Ordinary Superpower test to each item on your list:

1. It comes naturally to me.
2. Most people DON'T have this power.
3. It helps people.
4. I enjoy using it.

If it doesn't pass all four parts of the test, it's not one of your Ordinary Superpowers.

If you discover several items on your list pass the test, take your evaluation to another level. If you had to pick just three of the items, *which three pass the test with the most flying colors?* Which three MOST meet the criteria? Look at your list as objectively as you can. There may be items that you wish were your strongest Ordinary Superpowers, but they don't necessarily pass all four parts of the test as powerfully as some of the other items do.

If you're struggling, use the test again, but use each part of the test as a tie-breaker by rephrasing the test a little on parts 1, 3, and 4:

1. Which one(s) come MOST naturally to me?
2. Most people don't have this power.
3. Which one(s) help people the MOST?
4. Which one(s) do I enjoy using the MOST?

If you still struggle with narrowing down your list, share your list with someone who knows you well and who will be honest and straightforward with you. Don't be surprised if they point out your top three right away. Your strongest Ordinary Superpowers have a way of being obvious to the people around you, even if they're not so obvious to you.

LEVERAGE THE POWER OF FOCUS

Why is it so important to narrow down to your top three Ordinary Superpowers? Because the more focused you are, the more powerful you are (think laser beam vs. floodlight). That doesn't mean you can't exercise the other abilities on your big list, but you will always contribute the most and get the most fulfillment by focusing on your true top superpowers.

Need proof? Look at the top performers in any industry. Top scientists are typically not also world-class violin players. Elite athletes are rarely also Oscar-winning actors. CEOs are not typically also master chefs. These people usually contribute at such high levels not because they have a broad range of Ordinary Superpowers, but because they have a small, focused set of Ordinary Superpowers that they have learned how to maximize for incredible results.

As soon as you discover your Ordinary Superpowers, you'll be able to do that, too.

PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION

Got your Ordinary Superpowers all nailed down? It's okay if you don't. Honest. If you've never thought about this stuff before, it can take some time to perform the necessary self-reflection to feel confident enough to say, *"Yes, absolutely! These are my Ordinary Superpowers!"*

Even during my retreats where we spend an entire morning on this step, some people nail their powers right away, while others have to live with the material for a bit longer before clarity sinks in. Both approaches work just fine.

There is no such thing as self-development perfection. In fact, that would be an oxymoron, wouldn't it? What we're after here is progress, not perfection. As fun as it might be to whip through this book so you can leave an amazingly positive review of it on Amazon, take your time with this, even if that means you need to pause for a day or two to think about what you're experiencing and learning through this journey.

When you feel like you have a bit of a grip on what your Ordinary Superpowers are, turn the page, and we'll take those babies out for a spin.

READY TO DISCOVER?

Purchase the full book today & receive a free companion workbook.
<http://bit.ly/ordinary-superpowers>