

# Give yourself the gift of self-affirmation

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● Reminding yourself of your inherent values promotes mental, emotional, and spiritual alignment.

**WE'VE ALL HAD DAYS** that push us toward the edge. The chaos likely starts around mid-shift and may go something like this: Radiology calls for bed 3, bed 6 is late for discharge, the emergency department is waiting to send two new admits, and Mr. Gilbert's wife is signaling for you again down the hallway. Your lunch break is sidetracked by a miscommunication with your colleague, and to top it all off, you just realized you're not off this weekend after all.

Now you're pacing in the supply closet, unable to find bulb syringes. From what feels like the depths of your soul comes the rant: "I hate this place! I'm over it! I'm just one person. I can't do it all on my own. I'm worn out and can't wait to go home!"

Oh, the power of the mind to send your day on a downward spiral! Repetitive thoughts of desperation and negativity affect your entire being, even at the cellular level. For example, have you noticed that the more you say, "I'm tired," the heavier your body becomes? That the passion with which you say, "I'm over it!" somehow makes you angrier and more frustrated? It's because the words we use are the most powerful predictors of our reality—and you've placed conviction and intention behind your angry words.

Your words inform your experience. So stop the neg-

ative self-talk. Instead, breathe and redirect. Say to yourself: *The words I speak are empowering and comforting.*

## Using affirmations to create new belief structures

How can we prevent patterns like this from overtaking our consciousness? How can we recalibrate them to restore at least a modicum of balance? Self-affirmations have been used to bring healing energy to those experiencing stressors ranging from traumatic experiences to everyday financial worries to chronic disease management. They can help us reconnect with our patience, sense of calm, and personal dignity during times of stress and discomfort. When practiced consistently over time, self-affirmations can help us release outdated ha-

bitual thoughts that no longer serve us, counter self-defeating silent assumptions, enhance our self-esteem, and reduce stress.

Understand that every time you express yourself in words, you help create your reality, as you know and experience it. Author Gale LeGassick suggests the words you use shape the world around you and you'll seek evidence

in everything you do to confirm what you say is true. This notion suggests we need to think before we speak and pause before we think, for our thoughts will become the words we speak, and the words we speak will become the world we know. In that pause, we have the choice to create a new reality and a new belief structure for the moment. So breathe and believe: *I create a new possibility for my life with the language I choose to express it with.*

## Self-affirmation theory

Self-affirmation theory was first discussed in social psy-



## Self-affirmations you can use

Amid the hustle and bustle of clinical practice, you can use the affirmations shown here as you wash your hands.

### Handwashing step

### Accompanying affirmation

Turn on faucet and wet hands. I clear my mind of all worry and upset.

Apply soap and scrub hands. I am powerful in my own wisdom.

Rinse hands. I release that which no longer serves.

Turn off faucet and dry hands. I show myself love and care.

Pause. I am safe in the world.

Or you can choose from the suggested affirmations below:

- I am worthy of love and belonging.
- I allow people to be as they are.
- I attract abundance, wealth, and success.
- I am financially secure and resourceful.
- I am guided, protected, and supported.
- I am kind to myself and comfortable in my skin.
- I eat foods that nourish my body and spirit.
- I find it easy to make the time to exercise.
- I am experiencing peace right now.
- I love and honor myself.

chologist Claude Steele's seminal 1998 work, "The Psychology of Self-Affirmation: Maintaining the Integrity of the Self." Steele asserted that human beings possess a fundamental motivation to maintain "global self-integrity, a general perception of their goodness, virtue, and efficacy." Basically, people experience well-being and a sense of mental, emotional, and spiritual alignment when they remind themselves of their inherent value. So breathe and remember: *I am a good person. I am whole and complete within myself.*

### Creating your own self-affirmations

Simply repeating words you don't believe or that conflict with external circumstances won't improve the way you feel. You must put conviction behind those words, along with the intention to mature into a more peaceful relationship with who you are. Make your affirmations short and to the point, and include words that move and inspire you. Carry the spirit of your intention to heal the situation: *All is well. I am healthy and strong.*

Making time to write and speak (and if you're an auditory learner, listening to your own voice speaking prerecorded affirmations) in a safe, relaxing setting can have positive neural effects on your brain chemistry. It can reduce the fight-or-flight response of the sympathetic nervous system and promote positive behavior change: *I invite waves of meaningful growth.*

Creating your own affirmations can be an exciting

process of self-discovery. Consider an area of your life that arouses feelings of worry, concern, or anxiety. Is it family? Friends? Work? Health? Release the need to judge yourself, and instead reflect on your thoughts and opinions about this source of "dis-ease." Now think about how you want things to be. How would you like to feel? Write down a first-person statement that is emboldening and encourages the feelings you've identified; for example, "I am cared for and cared about," "People are attracted to me," or "It's easy for me to relax and be flexible at work." Repeat this affirmation several times throughout the day, particularly on awakening and before falling asleep. This helps you establish a new pattern: *I'm open to new ways of being.*

If you decide to use affirmations you've heard or read about rather than creating your own, be sure to

modify them to make them your own. (See *Self-affirmations you can use*.) Remember—you need to practice self-affirmations over and over for weeks, even months, to create new beliefs and release deep-rooted limiting ones.

Free yourself as you create your own affirmations: *I embrace all that makes me unique.* ★

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### Selected references

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