

# AffOrmatIons

## Can adding a question mark improve our odds?



By Eve Menezes Cunningham

**W**hen I first heard about affirmations, I liked the idea but the reality, for me, was always challenging. It tapped into my then default self-loathing and feelings of never being good enough. The gap between the words I was parroting and how I *felt* about making them a reality was too gaping. I wasn't at all surprised to come across a study about how, in some cases, affirmations can actually lower self-esteem.

Over the (many) years, I've had more success with affirmations and I know many people who hit the ground running with them and this piece isn't to detract from how helpful they can be. Still, if you're looking for something a bit different, I hope you'll enjoy playing with affOrmatIons.

Denise Duffield-Thomas introduced me to the concept in her delightful book, *Lucky bitch*. She'd come across *The little book of affirmations* by Noah St John and it had shifted things in her life.

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For example, if I were to say to myself, 'I have an amazing life and home in wondrous Westport' I'd want to stamp my feet and cry at my sale falling through and not yet having found a new buyer. I want to be living on the Wild Atlantic Way NOW.

However, reframing it as an affirmation – 'Why did I create this



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amazing life and home in wondrous Westport?' – makes me *smile* as I type the words. It engages that resourcefulness and creativity. It helps me to think about my well-formed outcome and sensory acuity and to be flexible enough to adapt my approach where possible. Beyond that, it reconnects me with that sense of purpose.

'An affirmation takes tried-and-tested affirmations and changes the focus to utilise our insatiable appetite to answer questions to answer deeper ones,' says Laura Payne-Stanley, an international mindset and success coach behind hundreds of entrepreneurs.

Laura has been using 'curiosity-based questions' with clients for more than five years and now uses affirmations.

She remembers working with 'an established entrepreneur with multiple businesses who was struggling with issues around self-worth. The client had become disassociated from her own value, seeing what she *did* as valuable and not who she *was*. When tasked with a simple affirmation around "Why is she awesome?!", after five days not only did she report an increase in sales, but also an impact on her life. She was showing up in the playground being her true flamboyant self and not changing due to parent playground pressure.'

Laura recommends 'giving specific guidance around the changes associated with moving to a causal-based framework as they take control of their lives' when clients are working with affirmations between sessions. 'As your client continues to grow, improve and evolve, it is critically important that the affirmations follow the same path. Affirmations need to be targeted towards the goals that



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you seek. Observation has shown that clients when not working with a coaching professional will linger with an affirmation rather than progressing to the next level.'

'Unlike affirmations which work with an *I am*, affirmations follow a questioning line that makes it easier for people to believe,' adds Janet Mohapi-Banks, a transformational life coach for entrepreneurs. 'I have been working with affirmations for years and years and affirmations for about 18 months.'

'When saying an *I am* statement, sometimes people have difficulty in truly believing that they are strong, or that they are lovable. Without that belief, it is far harder for the neural pathways to be overwritten or redirected to form an empowering belief. By using affirmations instead, it opens the door to the possibility which allows the brain to more readily accept this new programming.'

'The one I use most regularly with my clients and with myself is "What would it take?" "What would it take for me to feel strong?" "What would it take for me to feel worthy?"'

'The results that my clients have had with them have been incredible. When you use affirmations, you remove the resistance to accepting the possibility that you are what you wish to become. My clients have therefore found it far

easier and quicker to accept these truths about themselves. One client reported that their confidence level went from a 2/10 to an 8/10 in a matter of weeks.'

'The biggest challenge that people face using affirmations is that, like affirmations, the key to succeeding with them is repetition. The damaging belief got into our subconscious through repetition so the only way to remove it is also through repetition. If you stop consciously making the effort to repeat your affirmations, you will find that your old thought patterns will sink back in. However, once you have kept this empowering thought pattern alive for around a month, it is then more likely to stick for good.'

'An excellent way to ensure that you keep up the repetition of your affirmations is to set an alarm on your phone to go off every hour so you can repeat your affirmation five or ten times to create the reality you wish to see. By consciously creating every thought we think, we create a new truth about ourselves and the possibilities of everything we can be, do or have become a reality.'

'Affirmations are powerful questions which change your thought patterns from negative to positive', adds Ruth Kudzi, a business and mindset coach. 'They use "why" questions to challenge beliefs that you hold about yourself.'



### Want to play with some potentially life-changing questions yourself?

These are a few suggestions. As always, feel free to tweak the words so they resonate with you:

- 1 Instead of affirming 'I am lovable' (cue potential sinking feeling about feeling unlovable), how does it feel to ask yourself, 'Why am I so lovable?'
- 2 Instead of 'My finances are improving' (cue potential sinking feeling about your overdraft), how does it feel to ask yourself, 'Why did I transform my financial situation?'
- 3 Instead of 'I enjoy amazing health' (cue potential sinking feeling about the test results you're dreading from the hospital), how does it feel to ask yourself, 'Why did I transform my health and wellbeing?'



'I have been working with them for around two years. Personally, the best results have been around my relationship with money. For clients, they have been able to change negative beliefs in a much more effective way than using affirmations.'

'Some people find the self-challenge a challenge in itself and it is dependent on someone being consistent with their practice to get results. Help clients to use them consistently by looking at specific times of the day when they can practise and keeping a journal of what is and isn't working.'

'Affirmations work because they help play into our cynical nature. They are like that child's voice saying "Why?"' ●