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## AFFIRMATIONS

An affirmation is a short, powerful and positive statement that helps to develop a mindset that allows us to flourish and thrive.

Affirmations:

- Generally begin with “I am” (but don’t have to)
- Are stated in the present tense
- Use positive and empowering words
- Are brief – so that they are easily remembered
- Are repeated regularly
- Are directed towards yourself and your wellbeing

They transform us from a negative mindset to one that is more encouraging and supportive – silencing the inner critic and replacing it with your own personal cheerleader.

An everyday example of this transformation could be while performing a difficult task at work or practising a yoga posture that you find particularly challenging.

Instead of saying “I can’t do this” switch the mindset to something that frees you from this stuck energy and helps your growth such as, “I am learning”, “I am growing”, “I am accomplished” or “.....(insert your own wonderful words here)”.

The brain is remarkable in that it can adapt and change – a feature known as neuroplasticity. We have the ability to actually change our brain.

*“The importance of neuroplasticity can’t be overstated. It means that it is possible to change dysfunctional patterns of thinking and behaving and to develop new mindsets, new memories, new skills and new abilities”* Psychology Today

Dr Joe Dispenza explains the changes in our brain functioning in his book ‘You Are The Placebo’:

“Studies show that getting in touch with positive, expansive emotions like kindness and compassion... tends to release a different neuropeptide (called oxytocin) which naturally shuts off the receptors in the amygdala, the part of the brain that generates fear and anxiety. With fear out of the way, we can feel infinitely more trust, forgiveness and love....And as we embody this new state of being, our neurocircuitry opens the door to endless possibilities that we never could have even imagined before”.

By repetition of the affirmation, we allow the new state of being to filter through to our subconscious and into our physical make-up – changing the way our brains are wired. David Schechter MD describes this beautifully: *“Just as we do repetitive physical exercise to get stronger, affirmations can be thought of as exercise for our mind/brain”*.

### What do the Sutras say?

When bound by negative thoughts their opposite ones should be cultivated.  
This is pratipaksa bhavanam  
Yoga Sutra 2.33 (translation by Marshall Govindan)

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While this sutra refers primarily to the yamas and niyamas, I think it describes in a beautiful yet succinct way how we can release negative thoughts and invite the opposite thought or emotion to reside in their place. It suggests that we can grow in a different direction.

Reflecting on our study of the Sutras on Day 1, we explored how the true purpose of yoga is to still the fluctuations of the mind (the vrittis). The incorrect thoughts that we so often create about ourselves hold little or no basis in the truth. They are an unhelpful use of our imagination (vikalpa), resulting in a misconception (viparyaya). Instead, as we repeat our nurturing affirmation, we contain these negative and unhelpful thoughts and emotions and prevent them from spilling out of control.

### **Using your affirmation in relaxation**

Bring yourself into a comfortable resting position, using any props to support you.

Take time to allow the body to settle and to connect to the gentle flowing stream of your breath.

Imagine a wave of peace and gentleness sweeping through you.

As you take the slow mindful journey around the body, repeat your affirmation – gently dropping it into each place – sense it cascading into every cell:

Right foot  
Right lower leg  
Right knee  
Right upper leg  
Right hip  
Whole right leg  
Left foot  
Left lower leg  
Left knee  
Left upper leg  
Left hip  
Whole left leg  
Both legs  
Pelvis  
Belly  
Lower back  
Upper back  
Shoulder blades  
Chest  
Collar bones  
Right hand  
Right lower arm  
Right elbow  
Right upper arm  
Right shoulder  
Whole right arm  
Left hand  
Left lower arm

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Left elbow  
 Left upper arm  
 Left shoulder  
 Whole left arm  
 Both arms  
 Throat  
 Back of the neck  
 Back of the head  
 Crown  
 Scalp  
 Forehead  
 Eyebrows  
 Eyes  
 Temples  
 Ears  
 Cheeks  
 Nose  
 Mouth  
 Chin  
 Jaw  
 Whole of the head  
 Whole of the back of the body  
 Whole of the front of the body  
 Guide your awareness to your heart centre, and place your affirmation there  
 Repeat 3 times  
 Then send your affirmation to the whole body – infusing the whole body  
 Rest for as long as needed, and gently return to activity when you are ready.

Eventually you may be able to coordinate this with your breath:  
 Inhale: drop the affirmation into place  
 Exhale: allow its energy to infuse that place

(If this makes you feel uncomfortable or reaching for breath, let go of this and allow the breath to flow freely as you use your affirmation).

### **Affirmations - some ideas**

When creating your affirmation, choose a quality that you would like to embody. Here's some ideas. Choose one that resonates or better still create your own...

I am healing	I am free
I am loved	I am whole
I am enough	I am loving awareness
I am abundant	I thank you, I love you

Or you may prefer to use a single word:

Peace	Love
Courage	Gentle
Joy	Strong
Soften	Energise