

# **Iffirmations Workbook**

## **How to Use Iffirmations to Change Your Life (nope, that's not a typo)**

**Suzanne Manser, PhD**

## **Welcome to the wonderful world of affirmations!**

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The goal of this workbook is to introduce the concept of affirmations, get you familiar with them, help you create your own, and make a plan to use them on a regular basis so they actually make a difference in your life.

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# What's an Iffirmation?

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## The Long:

Iffirmations are one of my favorite mindset-management tools. They help us change how we see ourselves and our lives.

Changing how we see things – changing our mindset – is how we change our lives.

Changing our mindset allows us to let go of all the self-criticism we drown ourselves in and put that energy toward appreciating ourselves. It allows us to let go of focusing on what could go wrong and notice what could go right. It gets us to focus on the helpful stuff instead of the stuff that drags us down.

Affirmations are a well-known mindset-management tool. Affirmations are statements that we want our brains to believe. “I am good enough.” is an affirmation.

Many of us hear that affirmation and have an automatic “Yeah, right.” reaction. Our mind’s immediate response is to reject it because it sounds so implausible. This is in part because it’s a statement. Statements give our mind no wiggle room – we are either good enough or we’re not. Since we’ve spent years believing that we’re not good enough, our mind automatically selects that option and rejects the alternative.

This is where iffirmations come in. **Iffirmations are “What if” questions.**

Their question format is their superpower; it allows them to slide in through a side door. Because iffirmations aren’t statements, they’re not telling our mind to believe something improbable. They are simply inviting curiosity. They are merely wondering if there is a possibility that this could be true. This makes our minds much more receptive to them.

**Try it.** Ask yourself, “What if it’s possible that I am good enough?”

Instead of automatically rejecting this affirmation, we find ourselves imagining the possibility that we are good enough. And now, because we're focusing on this topic, our brains are creating more neuronal connections around it. The brain changes based on what we focus on - this is neuroplasticity. The more you ponder the idea of being good enough, the more space your brain devotes to this topic. This means you are more likely to keep thinking about this topic.

The whole point is to keep considering the idea that we're good enough, to open the door to changing our minds about this. Putting it in the form of an affirmation helps us get there more easily.

**What if you really did believe that you are good enough, right now, as you are, without having to be better in some way? How would your feelings about yourself change? How would your approach to your life change?**

Iffirmations are opportunities to change our lives. This workbook will help you figure out how to take those opportunities.

### **The Short:**

- Iffirmations are “What if” questions that help us change how we see ourselves and our world.
- Our mind tends to automatically reject statements that sound improbable. If the statement is transformed into a “What if” question, our mind is more willing to consider it.
- “I am good enough.” becomes “What if it's possible that I am good enough?”
- Because of neuroplasticity, the more we consider something, the more space our brain devotes to that topic, which makes us keep focusing on it.
- Iffirmations help us change our mindset, which will have reverberating effects through our life.

# Examples of Affirmations

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Affirmations can be used in any life area and are a useful tool to use with kids (who, like our minds, are generally resistant to being told what to do!).

## For General Well-Being

What if I could loosen my expectations of how life “should” be?

What if it’s possible that life is not supposed to be smooth and easy all the time?

What if I could focus more on what I want and less on what is getting in the way?

What if I focus on what feels meaningful and what lights me up?

What if it’s possible to find the time to take care of myself in meaningful ways?

## For Self-Acceptance

What if I am worthy, right now, of everything I want in life?

What if I am not inferior to anyone?

What if it’s possible to accept my “imperfections” and mistakes as a regular part of being human?

What if believing that I’m not enough doesn’t have to mean anything? What if it’s just a story I tell myself?

What if my inner critic is supposed to make me feel bad, not tell me the truth about myself?

### **For Perfectionism**

What if it's possible that I am fully acceptable as I am, without being perfect in any way?

What if there is no "right" way to be?

What if it's possible that having it all together doesn't have to be a goal?

What if my attempts at doing everything perfectly is a waste of time?

What if being perfect doesn't protect me from emotional pain like I think it will?

### **For Anxiety**

What if my anxious thoughts are not accurate?

What if I don't have to listen to my anxious thoughts?

What if it's possible that nothing catastrophic happens?

What if things go well?

What if I could do what feels meaningful even though I also feel anxious?

What if I could look for the interesting bits in life instead of focusing on the potential problem areas?

### **For Depression**

What if my depressive thoughts are not accurate?

What if I can do a small thing today and recognize that as helpful?

What if I can do meaningful things even though it doesn't feel good or meaningful right now?

What if it's possible that I am not the burden I think I am?

What if I deserve compassion for feeling this way?

### **For Body Image**

What if my weight is not a problem to be fixed?

What if it's possible that my weight doesn't reflect my worth or anything important about me?

What if I didn't have to love how my body looks? What if I could respect my body without loving how it looks?

What if I knew that bodies are supposed to be diverse in size?

What if weight and health are not as related as I have been led to believe?

### **For Kids (and adults!)**

What if it's possible that school goes well today?

What if I can focus on the good stuff today, even if it's small?

What if I find a chance to be brave today?

What if I am loveable, acceptable, and worthy, without having to change anything?

What if what I think of me really does matter more than what anyone else thinks?

For more examples, see my article:  
"46 Affirmations to Change Your Life (nope, that's not a typo)."

## How to Use Affirmations

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Affirmations will change your life if you let them, but it does require some effort. First, you've got to identify the affirmations that will be helpful for you. You may have found some in the lists on the previous pages, and you may want to create some that fit you more precisely.

Once you know your affirmations, you have to make a plan to actually follow through with using them. And then you've got to do it. We can't ask ourselves a helpful "What if" question once and expect it to have a lasting impact. Even though our minds are more open to the question format of affirmations, they are not a once-and-done type of tool.

Changing our mind takes **repetition** and **intention**.

By repeating the affirmation, we are signaling to our brain that this is important, and we want more brain space devoted to it. The more brain space it gets, the more likely we are to keep thinking about it. Point being, repetition matters.

So does your intent. If you quickly repeat the affirmation 10 times in a row, you are not giving your brain adequate time to consider the question. The intent is to invite your mind to genuinely ponder the question throughout the day. It may happen a few times; it may happen 15 times. And then keep doing that throughout the week, and the month. The more intentional you are, the more likely you are to follow through.

## 5 steps to using affirmations to change your mind and your life:

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1. Identify the mindset shifts you want to make. What are your current beliefs that need to be changed?
2. Transform these problematic beliefs into affirmations.
3. Make a list of the affirmations you want to use.
4. Make a plan for bringing these affirmations to mind throughout the day.
5. Follow through.

# Step 1. Identify the mindset shifts you want to make

## What are the views or beliefs you hold that are problematic for you?

These views are keeping you stuck in some way, keeping you feeling bad about yourself or some aspect of your life. We all have views or beliefs that are unhelpful and cause problems. “I’m not good enough” is a great example.

To help you identify your problematic views, identify the problematic life areas:

Self-acceptance	Perfectionism	Anxiety	Depression
Body Image	Relationships	Love	Career
Money	Spirituality	The Future	Life In General
_____	_____	_____	_____ (fill in your own)

## Now fill in the blanks:

I see (life area) as: \_\_\_\_\_

This belief about (life area) is keeping me stuck: \_\_\_\_\_

For example:

I see myself as: \_\_\_\_\_

This belief about myself is keeping me stuck: \_\_\_\_\_



## Step 2. Transform these problematic beliefs into affirmations

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This generally involves starting with “What if” and ending with a flip of the problematic belief. You can also expand them and play with them.

**Here are some examples:**

“No one could find me attractive.”

**BECOMES**

“What if it’s possible that there are people who would be attracted to me?”

**OR**

“What if it’s worth finding out?”

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“I’m not good enough for this job.”

**BECOMES**

“What if I can totally do this job?”

**OR**

“What if I enjoy this job?”

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“People are going to laugh at me if I try this.”

**BECOMES**

“What if people don’t laugh at me?”

**OR**

“What if doing this thing is more important than whether people laugh at me while I’m doing it?”

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“I have to hide all of my imperfections to be accepted.”

**BECOMES**

“What if I don’t need to be perfect to be acceptable?”

**OR**

“What if my imperfections make me likeable and relatable?”

**OR**

“What if being my full self is the key to a fulfilling life?”

**Your turn!** Take the list of problematic beliefs and views from the list on page 9 and transform them into affirmations.

\_\_\_\_\_ becomes

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_ becomes

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_ becomes

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_ becomes

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

\_\_\_\_\_ becomes

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

### Step 3. Make a list of the affirmations you want to use

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This one's easy: take the affirmations you made on the previous page and put them all in one place.

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

What if \_\_\_\_\_?

## Step 4. Make a plan for bringing these affirmations to mind throughout the day

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The planning steps are crucial. You have to remember to connect with your affirmations throughout the day or they're not going to be effective. In an ideal world, when the problematic belief comes up, you would automatically notice it and automatically remember to use your affirmation right then.

In the real world, you will need to manually remind yourself to use your affirmations. This is the part that requires ongoing effort and sustained focus. The aim is to remind yourself of your affirmations throughout the day. The more often you intentionally connect with your affirmations, the more likely you will remember to use them when the problematic belief comes up.

### Make a plan to connect with your affirmations throughout the day:

**1. Choose 2 affirmations each day to focus on.**

Trying to keep all of them in mind will make it less likely that you'll devote adequate time to any one of them.

**2. Decide when you will remind yourself of your affirmations throughout the day:**

You've got at least two good options here:

- a) Set your phone alarm to go off several times a day (if possible, when you know you won't be engaged with someone else). When the alarm goes off, pause what you're doing and ask an affirmation. Take a moment to ponder it. This can take literally 30 seconds. Don't mistake its brevity for unimportance.
- b) Connect your affirmations to activities you do each day. For example, you could ask your affirmations in the morning while brushing your teeth, in the afternoon while eating lunch, and at night while brushing your teeth.

### 3. Decide how you will remind yourself of your affirmations throughout the day:

There are probably endless options. Here are a few to consider:

- a) Set multiple daily alarms on your phone.
- b) I'm also a big fan of sticky notes. Put them on your computer, on your bathroom mirror, on your car dashboard – wherever you will see them. Change them up when you stop paying attention to them; try new places for the sticky notes and different affirmations.
- c) Write down your two daily affirmations each morning. Writing them down helps us remember them.
- d) Get in the habit of reminding yourself of your daily affirmations as you have your first sip of coffee, walk into work, turn on your computer, or whatever you do to start your work day. Use it as an extra opportunity to feel good.
- e) Keep an affirmations journal. Each evening, record the affirmations you focused on that day and a few words about how it impacted your experience of the day. It could even be a smiley face, neutral face, or sad face.

## Step 5. Follow Through

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This is the hardest step, requiring the most effort. It's hard to follow through with something that requires effort, especially once you've been doing it for a while and it's no longer shiny and new.

**Here are a few tips:**

### **a) Have a plan**

Without a plan, you are not likely to remember to use your affirmations often enough over a long enough period of time for them to be effective.

You created a plan in the last step, so you're good here.

### **b) Identify your motivations**

Ask yourself: What makes it worth doing this hard thing? What do I hope to gain or change, and why is that meaningful? What value does this have for me?

Dig deep on this one, don't skimp out and write a surface-level answer. That won't sustain you.

Write your motivation(s) down:

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You'll need to remind yourself about your motivation at some point. Consider including it on the sticky notes or returning to what you've written here.

### **c) Pay attention to whether it makes a difference**

We have a tendency to just do the thing and not notice what impact it has on our lives. This deprives us of a great source of motivation. If we see that it is improving our lives, it feels rewarding. We will be more motivated to continue doing the effortful thing.

Keep a running record of how helpful the affirmations are when you use them. Notice how that moment or that day felt once you connected with the affirmation. Consider the affirmation journal idea I suggested in the previous step.

**Please note:** This is not an opportunity to be hard on yourself if you forget or don't follow through. That's never helpful. Self-compassion and self-understanding are useful here.

# Daily Affirmations

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

How am I going to remember to use them? What's my plan?

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

How am I going to remember to use them? What's my plan?

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

How am I going to remember to use them? What's my plan?

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

How am I going to remember to use them? What's my plan?

\_\_\_\_\_

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

How am I going to remember to use them? What's my plan?

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

How am I going to remember to use them? What's my plan?

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

How am I going to remember to use them? What's my plan?

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

Affirmation: What if \_\_\_\_\_ ?

How am I going to remember to use them? What's my plan?

\_\_\_\_\_