

AFFIRMATIONS TO TEACH YOUR CHILDREN

By Alison Quackenbush

A young boy and girl are splashing in the ocean at sunset. The boy is on the left, shirtless, and the girl is on the right, wearing a yellow shirt. They are both raising their hands in the air, and a large splash of water is in the center between them. The background is a bright, golden sunset over the ocean.

WATCH THEM GROW IN
HAPPINESS, SELF-CONFIDENCE,
AND VIBRANT HEALTH

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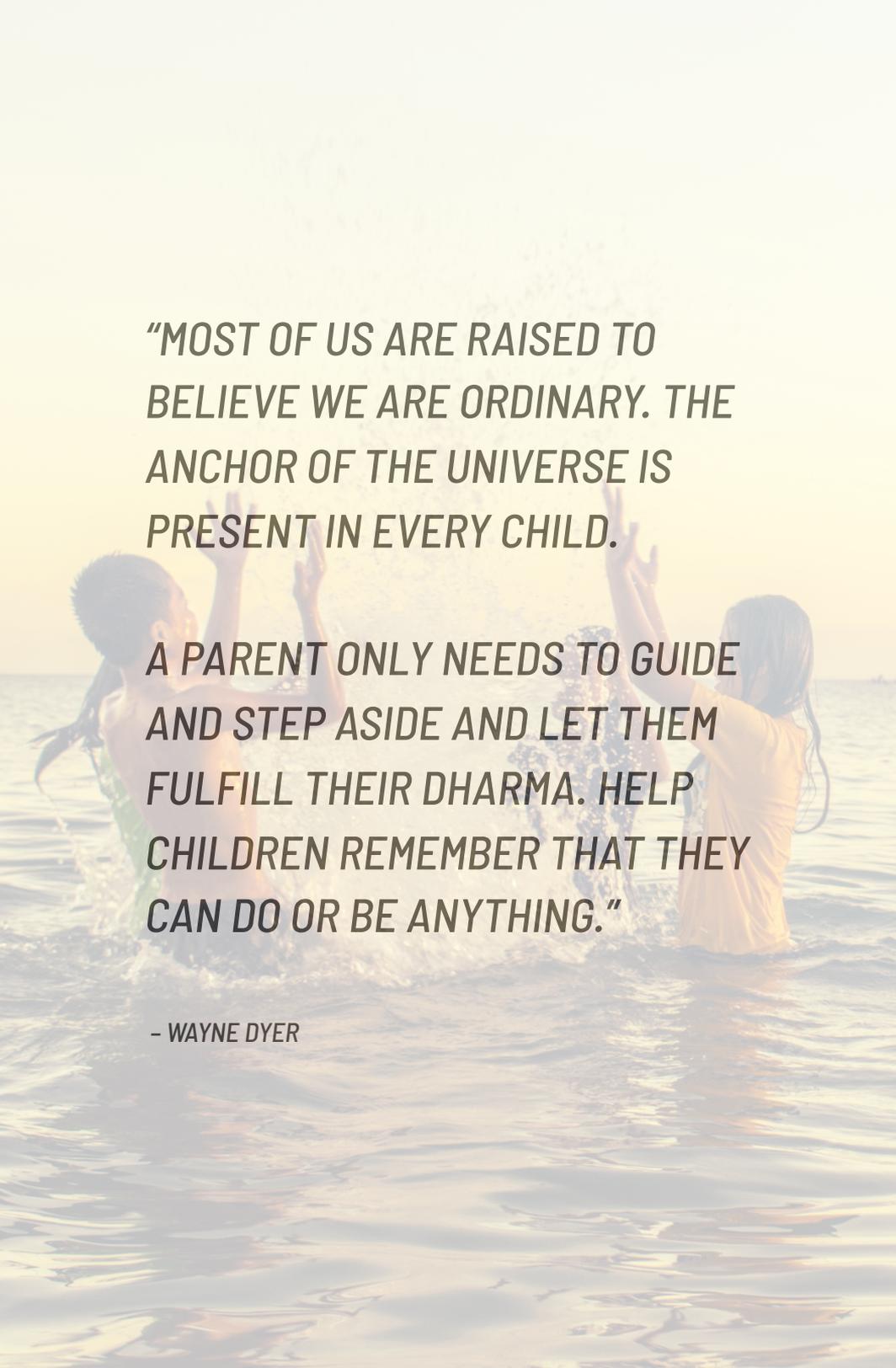
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A person and a child are playing in the ocean waves. The person is on the left, wearing a green swimsuit, and the child is on the right, wearing a yellow shirt. Both have their hands raised in the air, splashing water. The background is a bright, hazy sky over the ocean.

"MOST OF US ARE RAISED TO BELIEVE WE ARE ORDINARY. THE ANCHOR OF THE UNIVERSE IS PRESENT IN EVERY CHILD.

A PARENT ONLY NEEDS TO GUIDE AND STEP ASIDE AND LET THEM FULFILL THEIR DHARMA. HELP CHILDREN REMEMBER THAT THEY CAN DO OR BE ANYTHING."

- WAYNE DYER

INTRODUCTION

The idea of affirmations isn't new. Most of us have at least a vague idea of what affirmations are and how they are supposed to work.

Even so, many of us don't believe that affirmations are worth the time. You might think, "How can repeating something to myself that I know isn't true make a difference?"

You're not alone.

However, several studies have shown that affirmations can be powerful tools if utilized correctly and consistently.

Affirmations can be an especially effective tool for children. There are several reasons for this we'll discuss later. Affirmations are also free and require little time or expertise. If your child could use a boost in the areas of self-esteem, confidence, happiness, and

developing healthy habits, affirmations can be one option to make those changes.

You might even learn a thing or two to apply to your own life.

WHAT ARE AFFIRMATIONS?

An affirmation can be defined as, “A positive, confident, and forceful statement of fact or belief.” **Affirmations are statements of what we would like to be or experience.** An affirmation is a sentence, in the present tense, that serves to positively influence the conscious and subconscious mind.

Affirmations can help us to achieve goals or can be goals in themselves. Becoming more confident can be a goal in itself. Or confidence can be acquired to accomplish other things.

Affirmations have the following characteristics:

1. **Present tense.** Affirmations are statements that address the present. The word “will” puts off the action or idea to the future and keeps it there.

Affirmations stated in the past are also ineffective.

- Effective: I am growing happier each day.
- Ineffective: I will be a happy person.
- Ineffective: I was the best baseball player in the league.

2. **Positive.** Negatives are confusing to the subconscious. The most common culprits are the words: no, not, don't. State what you want, and not what you don't want.

- Effective: I am a happy person.
- Ineffective: I am not a sad person.

3. **Simple.** A simple sentence is enough.

- Effective: I love myself.
- Ineffective: I love myself because I am a good person, I love animals, I eat all of my

vegetables, and I floss regularly.

4. **They lack the words “want” or “need.”** An affirmation that states, “I want a million dollars,” will only serve to ensure that you continue wanting a million dollars, which means that you won’t ever have it.
 - Do you want to want something? Do you want to need something? Of course not, so avoid using these words.
5. **Personal.** The best affirmations are inspiring to the person using them. There are many ways to say similar things. Ensure that the affirmation you choose for your child is the best affirmation for them.
6. **Believable.** This is where many people go wrong with affirmations. Affirmations like, “I am the richest person in the world,” is too much and too absolute. An affirmation like, “I am

growing wealthier each day,” is believable.

- If you don't believe the affirmation is possible, it won't work. Test this with your child when creating affirmations.

It's very easy to write an affirmation that instinctively feels good but won't work.

Ensure that any affirmation you use meets the requirements above. A strong, effectively-worded affirmation is an important step in using affirmations to help your child.

What Can Affirmations Do?

Affirmations can be an effective tool to accomplish several things:

- They can motivate us.
- They keep us focused on the positive things.

- They can get our subconscious on board with our conscious goals.
- They influence our thoughts and beliefs. This leads to changes in behavior.
- They enhance our mood.

“CHILDREN ARE NOT CASUAL GUESTS IN OUR HOME. THEY HAVE BEEN LOANED TO US TEMPORARILY FOR THE PURPOSE OF LOVING THEM AND INSTILLING A FOUNDATION OF VALUES ON WHICH THEIR FUTURE LIVES WILL BE BUILT.”

- JAMES DOBSON

How Do Affirmations Work?

Most of our beliefs were developed without a lot of thought behind them. We were told

certain things. We heard certain things. And then beliefs were formed. **Many of our beliefs would be quite different if we had taken the time to really assess the situation.** Unfortunately, this process can proceed automatically without our conscious involvement.

This might be great for survival purposes, but it does little for our happiness and overall satisfaction with life.

One theory about why affirmations work is based on the idea of cognitive dissonance. Our brain likes it when our behavior and circumstances match our thoughts and beliefs. **This is why change can be so challenging.** When we attempt to change our behavior, our brain creates discomfort. When our lives change, we experience similar discomfort.

Affirmations create change on the inside.

Our brains are then motivated to make our actions and circumstances match our

thoughts and beliefs. Our brains gain relief this way. By changing your thoughts and beliefs through the use of affirmations, your brain will change your behavior to match.

"IT'S WHEN CHILDREN ARE 15, 16 OR 17 THAT THEY DECIDE WHETHER THEY WANT TO BE A DOCTOR, AN ENGINEER, A POLITICIAN OR GO TO THE MARS OR MOON. THAT IS THE TIME THEY START HAVING A DREAM, AND THAT'S THE TIME YOU CAN WORK ON THEM. YOU CAN HELP THEM SHAPE THEIR DREAMS."

- A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM

WHY AFFIRMATIONS ARE A GREAT TOOL FOR CHILDREN

Affirmations are a powerful tool for children to learn how to create confidence, happiness, and self-esteem within themselves.

Children often rely on parents for these positive emotions and concepts. At some point, we all must take responsibility for these things ourselves. **When we can create our own positive emotions, it's much easier to make wise decisions and stay out of trouble.**

Affirmations are especially good for children. Their brains are developing at a rapid rate, and their thought patterns are much easier to amend now rather than in adulthood. Effective mental habits and thought patterns developed now can set the stage for a pleasant and successful adulthood.

Taking control of one's belief systems is easier for a 10-year old than a 50-year old. Consistently reaffirming positive beliefs at a young age can be enough to create and maintain those beliefs for a lifetime.

Negative beliefs become more challenging to alter as one ages. The old saying, “You can't teach an old dog new tricks” has some merit.

An affirmation allows a child to affirm their worth. When positive thoughts and word patterns are repeatedly presented to a young mind, belief systems that support those ideas are created. This is powerful, because it can be used to combat negative thoughts or negative comments from others.

For example, if a child thinks, “I'm ugly” or hears, “You're ugly” from another child, an affirmation can come to the rescue. “I'm actually not ugly. I'm a beautiful person, inside and out.”

A child's thoughts about themselves impact how they grow and develop emotionally.

A child that believes he's stupid, acts as if he's stupid. A child that believes she's worthless will exhibit behavior to reinforce that fact. By the same token, a child that believes they are loved and valuable will behave accordingly.

Affirmations create a foundation for a child's belief about himself. **This foundation can be changed without too much effort in a young child.** It gets progressively more challenging as we age. It's not hard to find a child that struggled but became a successful adult.

It's much more challenging to find a person that struggled until age 50 and then turned it all around! How many people do you know like this?

Affirmations help to teach a child self-kindness. Most adults are quite hard on themselves. We criticize ourselves aloud and in our heads. The effect is a loss of self-

confidence and self-esteem. We doubt ourselves and make ourselves less effective.

Children can avoid this trap by learning how to maintain positive thoughts and self-talk.

Self-criticism is less likely when you routinely think highly of yourself.

“CHILDREN ARE NOT ONLY INNOCENT AND CURIOUS BUT ALSO OPTIMISTIC AND JOYFUL AND ESSENTIALLY HAPPY. THEY ARE, IN SHORT, EVERYTHING ADULTS WISH THEY COULD BE.”

- CAROLYN HAYWOOD

HOW TO CHOOSE AFFIRMATIONS FOR YOUR CHILD

This is an important topic. Affirmations require time and repetition to have a significant impact. **It's neither feasible, nor effective, to throw every affirmation you can think of at your child.** There's not enough time in the day, and your child will quickly sour on the whole idea.

Use these strategies to choose the best affirmations for your child:

1. **Where does your child need the most help?** You should know your child quite well by now. Where do they struggle? What are their self-imposed limitations? What are their limiting beliefs?
2. **Ask your child to list their negative qualities, flaws, or shortcomings.** You

might think your child is perfect, but your child doesn't believe that. The accuracy of your child's opinion of himself isn't the issue. The issue is "what is the belief?"

- Turn your child's negative thoughts and beliefs into an affirmation of the opposite thought.
- "No one likes me," can become, "I make friends quickly and easily."

3. **How confident is your child?**

Confidence counts for a lot regardless of age.

- Confident children have less anxiety. Anxious children are unhappy and struggle to make friends.
- Confident children are more willing to experiment with new

things, like sports, learning an instrument, and trying new activities.

- Confident children have an easier time socially. We're all drawn to confident people.

4. **How happy is your child?** We all want our children to be happy. If your child isn't as happy as they should be, ask yourself why. What thoughts and beliefs would allow them to feel more happiness?

- What affirmations would be helpful in this area for your child?

5. **Does your child have healthy habits?** Eating, sleeping, and exercise habits are important at any age. While children do not need structured exercise, they certainly do need physical activity to be healthy.

- Does your child spend a lot of time being sedentary? The internet, cell phones, iPads, TV, and video games can all be addictive, as well as promote a lack of physical activity.
- Could some affirmations regarding health be beneficial to your child?

6. **If your child is older, they can probably choose their own affirmations.** There are endless lists of affirmations online and in books. Your teenager has a pretty good idea of their weak points.

Take some time and determine 25 affirmations that would most benefit your child. Put them in order from most important to least. This may change over time but give yourself a good starting point.

Now that you have a few affirmations in mind, it's time to approach your child with the idea.

***“PARENTS ARE THE ULTIMATE ROLE
MODELS FOR CHILDREN. EVERY WORD,
MOVEMENT AND ACTION HAS AN EFFECT.
NO OTHER PERSON OR OUTSIDE FORCE
HAS A GREATER INFLUENCE ON A CHILD
THAN THE PARENT.”***

- BOB KEESHAN

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT AFFIRMATIONS

How you approach your child will vary with the age of your child. The right approach for a 7-year old might fall flat with a 17-year old.

The keys are to:

- Keep it simple.
- Explain the benefits.
- Treat it like an experiment.

You might say to your young child:

“Affirmations are a special way of speaking and thinking to yourself. They can make you feel better when you’re sad or afraid. They can make you happier and make you feel more powerful. Why don’t we try them out and see what happens! It should be really cool.”

Teenagers are so unique that you'll want to consider the best approach for your child. Give it some thought and plan your approach.

***"THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT
PARENTS CAN TEACH THEIR CHILDREN IS
HOW TO GET ALONG WITHOUT THEM."***

- FRANK A. CLARK

HOW TO USE AFFIRMATIONS WITH YOUR CHILD

Remember that the keys to affirmations are repetition and time. Repeating an affirmation 1,000 times in a single day would be impressive, but a less industrious pace over a longer period of time would be more effective.

It's important to repeat an affirmation several times each day and then stack as many days in a row as possible. Eventually, affirmations can be repeated less frequently, and additional affirmations can be added.

Fortunately, they can accumulate a lot of repetitions without doing a lot of work each day.

Younger Children (Less than 13)

Younger children can be easier to approach with new ideas. Many teenagers are rebellious by nature. A young child is ready to give something new a try. **They are less cynical and more open to new ideas.** If your child is young, rejoice! It might be more work on your part to work with a younger child, but the road will be smoother.

Affirmation cards can be an effective way for a child to use affirmations. Consider these ideas:

1. **Start with just one index card.** Or you can create cards with your child. A portable size is helpful. Your child might like to make a poster or two along with a card.
2. **Give your child the option to decorate the card.** They can color it, glue on photos, apply stickers, or use their

creativity in any way they see fit. Once they are satisfied, you can even have the card laminated if you want to be fancy. It will also increase the durability of the card.

3. **Encourage the child to read the card several times each day.** It's important to repeat affirmations several times each day. It's easier to develop habits around things your child already does each day. A child could develop the habit of repeating affirmations at the following times:
 - First thing in the morning
 - All meals
 - Before leaving for school
 - Arriving home from school
 - All visits to the restroom
 - Bedtime

4. **Post copies of the card around the house.** Make several cards for each affirmation. This can make it easier for your child to remember to read his

affirmation. A few ideas include:

- Bathroom mirror
- Bedroom door
- Refrigerator
- Near the TV
- Any place your child spends time regularly

5. **Have the child read the affirmation and visualize.** Encourage your child to read the affirmation five times on each occasion and then visualize accordingly. For example, if your child's affirmation was, "I love to try new things," he could imagine himself trying something that scares him and having a great experience.
6. **After two weeks, put the card on the child's nightstand and create a new card.** It's time to begin using a second affirmation. The first affirmation is still used, but only in the morning and evening.

7. **Continue this process.** In roughly a year, your child should be through the list of 25 affirmations. Of course, you are free to alter that list in any way you see fit along the way.

8. **Create a new list.** Ideally, this process will continue for the rest of your child's life. The format might change, but we could all be using affirmations to increase the quality of our lives.

Younger children are easier to direct and mold. They are also likely to see results sooner.

Be consistent and persistent. Your child can benefit greatly from the regular use of affirmations.

These ideas are suggestions. Your child and lifestyle might require a different approach. Be flexible with the details but stick to the principles.

*"TO ME THERE IS NO PICTURE SO
BEAUTIFUL AS SMILING, BRIGHT-EYED,
HAPPY CHILDREN; NO MUSIC SO SWEET
AS THEIR CLEAR AND RINGING
LAUGHTER."*

- P. T. BARNUM

Older Children

Teenagers are in a challenging situation. So much of their self-esteem relies on their social lives, which are challenging to control. Other teenagers are more than willing to speak their judgmental opinions aloud. It makes for a harrowing experience.

Imagine basing your happiness almost entirely on the opinions of others that care little for your happiness.

Older children won't respond as quickly to affirmations, but they still respond extremely well. The ideas of repetition and consistency still apply.

Your high school student probably isn't interested in making index cards and putting Scooby Doo stickers on them. But the same general idea is effective.

Older children can use affirmations effectively, too:

1. **Consider the use of electronic devices.** If your child has a smartphone, it's a safe bet they have a death-grip on it 24/7. It would be easy to create a list of affirmations and store them in the phone. **The list would always be available and would provide more discretion than index cards.**
2. **Consider the use of subliminal software.** There is free software available that will flash messages on

your computer screen. Anytime your teenager is using the computer, the software could be activated. It runs in the background and will work regardless of the task being performed.

- The timing of the affirmation can be manipulated. The message can be flashed so quickly that it can't be consciously seen. It can also be set to last for a few seconds.
- Messages can be flashed every second, every few minutes, or anywhere in between.
- A long list of affirmations can be entered into the software and used.

3. It's still important to create a routine.

Teenagers procrastinate as well as adults, if not even better in many cases. It's important to be diligent in

reminding them to use their affirmations. You'll get what you tolerate.

4. **It's imperative to convince your teen that affirmations are a good idea.** If you can get them to see the value in practicing daily, they'll be motivated internally. If the only motivation they have is Mom nagging them, failure is all but certain.
5. **Remind them that daily repetition over many days is crucial.** It's the only way affirmations work.

Convincing many teenagers to try something new can be difficult. **You might have to resort to your parenting bag of tricks to make progress.**

Do your best. Remind yourself that this will benefit your child for a lifetime.

***“THERE CAN BE NO KEENER REVELATION
OF A SOCIETY'S SOUL THAN THE WAY IN
WHICH IT TREATS ITS CHILDREN.”***

- NELSON MANDELA

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Few new things are accomplished without challenges along the way. **Those experienced in the use of affirmations have found several tips and strategies that increase the odds of success.** You'll undoubtedly discover a few of your own tricks for making this process work and increasing the motivation of your child.

Try these techniques to give your child the best chance to be successful with affirmations:

1. **Consider making a list of affirmations for yourself.** Make your own affirmation cards and join in the fun. Your child and you will benefit in several ways:
 - Your child will enjoy doing this process with you.
 - Your child will believe it's important if you're doing it, too.

- It will enhance your life.
 - It can be a bonding experience with your child.
 - You'll stay better engaged with your child's daily affirmation practice if you're also doing it.
2. **Be consistent.** The burden is on you to ensure that your child is using their affirmations each day. A lack of attention on your part is a guarantee of failure. In time, it will become as habitual for your child brushing their teeth. It becomes easy to do, but just as easy not to do. It will always require a tiny bit of willpower.
3. **Make a big deal over any positive results.** After a few weeks, ask your child about their area of challenge. If you see any indication of progress, ensure your child knows that it's a big deal. Often, we make progress and fail to even notice. **Results are motivating, so call attention to them.**

4. **Use a mirror.** At least once each day, have your child recite the affirmation while looking at themselves in the mirror. It's easy to be self-critical while looking in the mirror. Making positive statements while looking in the mirror can be especially helpful.

5. **Consider the use of bribes, rewards, or anything else you think will be helpful.** A coloring book, choosing a restaurant for dinner, or other enticement might help.

*"LIVE SO THAT WHEN YOUR CHILDREN
THINK OF FAIRNESS, CARING, AND
INTEGRITY, THEY THINK OF YOU."*

- H. JACKSON BROWN, JR.

SUGGESTED AFFIRMATIONS

It's best to choose affirmations that will help your child the most. **Affirmations that help one child might not be the optimal choice for another.** There are many sources of affirmations available online. Do some research and think about the needs of your child.

Here are a few suggestions to stimulate your thought process.

Self-Confidence and Self-Esteem

Confidence and self-esteem are critical areas for the emotional health and wellbeing of every person. Life is difficult and miserable without the belief that you can handle life and without liking yourself. Everything in life is built upon these two qualities.

Here are a few self-confidence and self-esteem affirmations to inspire you:

- I have the courage I need to be myself.
- I have the power to make my dreams come true.
- I am allowed to make mistakes.
- The most important people in my life love me.
- I love to face and solve challenges.
- My mistakes teach me important lessons.
- I enjoy learning new things.
- I make friends easily.
- People like me just the way I am.

"THE GREATEST SIGN OF SUCCESS FOR A TEACHER... IS TO BE ABLE TO SAY, 'THE CHILDREN ARE NOW WORKING AS IF I DID NOT EXIST.'"

- MARIA MONTESSORI

Health

Ask any person with very poor health if they'd rather be wealthy or healthy. Life is more difficult to enjoy without good health. While some health issues are beyond our control, health is usually the result of your habits.

See if you can create a few of your own healthy affirmations for your child, such as:

- I get at least “x” hours of sleep each night.
- I like to eat healthy food.
- I only eat if I am hungry.
- I like to drink water.
- I make smart choices that support my health.
- I brush and floss my teeth twice each day.
- I love my body and value my health.

Happiness

It has been said that the only true motivation of humans is to be happy, but we just go about it in different ways. It's safe to say that happiness is a primary objective of all emotionally healthy people.

Which affirmations would be most likely to help your child to be happier?

- I choose to be happy and I deserve to be happy.
- I am positive that everything is going to be okay.
- I can ask for help whenever I need it.
- I am protected.
- I think happy thoughts.
- I am naturally a happy person.
- My future is bright and happy.

*"GIVE ME FOUR YEARS TO TEACH THE
CHILDREN AND THE SEED I HAVE SOWN
WILL NEVER BE UPROOTED."*

- VLADIMIR LENIN

FINAL TIPS FOR MAXIMUM EFFECTIVENESS

There is much you can do to increase the effectiveness of your child's affirmations. However, understand that the more you pile on your child, the more likely they are to fight you. Make a habit of using the basic steps before adding to your child's load.

Use these tips to supercharge your results:

- 1. Use a variety of techniques other than just reading.**
 - You can record and listen to the affirmations.
 - Write the affirmations.
 - Read them aloud and silently.
 - Use the affirmations in the place they are most needed. This might entail going to the school playground on the

weekends, for example.

2. **Listen to the affirmations while falling asleep.** Most children have an electronic device or a stereo. Record the affirmations and allow your child to listen to them while falling asleep. You might try using the child's voice to record the affirmations.
 - Resist the urge to have the affirmations playing all night. Research has shown that this isn't effective and may disturb the child's sleep. **Twenty minutes or so is enough.**
 - Have your child listen again first thing in the morning while still in bed.
3. **Increase the frequency.** The more, the better. This can happen by increasing the number of repetitions at each session or by increasing the number of

sessions per week.

4. **Spend more time on visualization.**

Seeing really is believing. Rather than just hearing or reading the affirmations, have your child visualize them extensively. This requires practice, but your child might enjoy using this technique.

There are ways to supercharge the results you and your child gain from repeating affirmations daily. **However, it is wise to establish a solid routine and set of habits in this area before adding more work.** It can quickly become too much effort to sustain. Long and steady wins this race.

*"IT IS EASIER TO BUILD
STRONG CHILDREN THAN TO
REPAIR BROKEN MEN."*

- FREDERICK DOUGLASS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

How long does it take for affirmations to begin working?

There's no concrete rule for how long it will take to see results. It might be just a few days or a few months. As a general rule, the younger the child, the less time it will take. Remember that we're all different.

What type of results can I expect?

The changes are most often subtle at first and grow over time. It may be necessary to create stronger affirmations after several months as your child's beliefs in himself and his capabilities grow.

Affirmations aren't working for me. What can I do?

There can be several reasons why affirmations aren't working for you or your child yet:

1. **It's too soon.** Patience and persistence should be the mantra of everyone that uses affirmations. It's possible for young children to see results very quickly, but some take longer than others. Plan on needing at least a few months and be happy if results happen faster.
2. **You're not fully engaged.** It's not enough to go through the motions like a robot. It's important to be focused and emotionally involved during the process.
3. **You're resistant to the affirmation.** Suppose someone had an affirmation to become wealthy, but they held a lot of negative beliefs around wealth, such as "Wealthy people are selfish." An affirmation such as, "My wealth is

growing each day,” is unlikely to work.

- **Modify the affirmation.** In fact, you might change the affirmation to address your sticking point. “Wealth provides me with the ability to help others.”

4. **Ensure your affirmations are within the realm of belief.** Going from being the least popular kid in school to the most popular is difficult to believe. It would be like the average adult repeating an affirmation that he was a billionaire. It’s reaching too far. An affirmation should be believable on some level.
5. **There is too much negative self-talk.** Repeating an affirmation 25 times each day is no match for 16 hours of negative thinking and self-talk. It’s one step forward and three steps back.

6. **You're all talk.** It would be nice if affirmations created miraculous changes without any stress or work involved, but it's not quite that easy. Affirmations serve to make changes easier.

- Affirming that you're the perfect body weight won't melt off the pounds, but it will make it *easier* to eat in a healthy manner and to get to the gym. Easier means easier. It doesn't mean automatic and effortless.
- Some affirmations will only take the edge off the challenge. There is still effort required to make the change.

Affirmations are a simple idea and not terribly difficult to implement, but that doesn't mean they're guaranteed to be without challenges. **Like any other new process, you just need to get started and then you can adjust as you go.**

A little troubleshooting is par for the course.
The most important thing is to get started,
be consistent, and be patient.

*"THE GOLDEN RULE OF PARENTING IS; DO
UNTO YOUR CHILDREN AS YOU WISH
YOUR PARENTS HAD DONE UNTO YOU!"*

- LOUISE HART

CONCLUSION

Affirmations can be a powerful tool to help you change your child's view of the world and themselves. **We all want our lives to be different in some way, and this is true for children, too.** None of us have perfect levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, and happiness 100% of the time. We could all strengthen our habits around our health, too.

Whether your child is lacking confidence, is afraid of failure, or can't seem to stop eating junk food, affirmations can be the tool that makes a positive difference. Like anything else, affirmations won't work unless your child puts in the work. The work is easy, but not very exciting.

Using affirmations is a bit like starting a journey to lose 50 pounds. The results come, but it takes a while to notice a significant difference. Ensure your child is consistent in his use of affirmations, and the results will happen.

The principles work, but it's the responsibility of you and your child to ensure that you're working the principles. Soon, you'll be enjoying the results!

