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Affirmations For A Positive Life



By **Regina V. Cates**

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One of the most important lessons I've learned is that our thoughts create our behavior, and our behavior creates our life experience. Therefore, to change ourselves for the better, we need to change our thinking for the better. One way we can do this is through affirmations.

In *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (Viking Press, 2007), Canadian psychiatrist Dr. Norman Doidge advises that we can indeed change our thinking to change our life. In fact, he says using affirmations can actually rewire our brain. Just imagine the positive life you can create when you focus on yourself, other people, and the challenges of life from a positive point of view.

Before we get to my list of affirmations that will help you change your present thinking, I invite you to return with me to the childhood story of *The Little Engine that Could*, written by Watty Piper and published in 1930. Still available on Amazon today, this enduring tale offers one of the most empowering affirmations I still live by: "I think I can."

The story goes like this:

There was a little train filled with good things for boys and girls, like stuffed animals, dolls, and picture books. The little train also carried good things to eat, such as oranges, apples, and bananas. He was taking all these good things to the other side of the mountain. But all at once the train came to a stop. He did not move at all.

"Oh, dear," said the little train. "What can be the matter?" He tried to start up again. He tried and tried. But his wheels just would not turn.

"We can help," said the toy animals. They tried to push the little train. But he did not move. "We can help, too," said the dolls. And they got out and tried to push. Still the little train did not move. The toys and dolls did not know what to do. Just then a Shiny New Engine came puffing down another track. "Maybe that engine can help us!" cried the clown.

The Shiny New Engine slowed down. "Please pull our train over the mountain. If you do not, the boys and girls will not have any toys or good food."

The Shiny New Engine was not friendly. "That is not what I do. I carry people." Off went the Shiny New Engine without another word. Then another engine came along. The Big Strong Engine came to a stop. "Please help us, Big Strong Engine. Our train is not working. But you can pull us over the mountain." "I do not pull toys," he said. "I pull cars full of heavy logs." Away puffed the Big Strong Engine without another word.

By this time the little train was not happy. But another engine was coming. A Little Blue Engine. A very little one. "Will you pull us over the mountain? Our engine is not working."

"Oh, my," said the Little Blue Engine. "I am not very big." But she pulled up close, took hold of the little train, and began to pull. She tugged and she pulled and said, "I think I can. I think I can."

Slowly, very slowly, the train started to move. Up, up, up. The little engine climbed and climbed. At last she reached the top of the mountain and she smiled. As she puffed back down the mountain, the Little Blue Engine seemed to say, "I thought I could, I thought I could, I thought I could, I thought I could, I thought I could."

Mom read the complete story to me of *The Little Engine that Could* when I was a young child. Somewhere deep inside my heart the story stuck with me, to be remembered later in life when I most needed to believe in myself.

I was about 42 when my life plan did a one-eighty. It hadn't occurred to me any great physical challenge might lie ahead. Why would it? I was a natural athlete, excelling at every sport I attempted. Working in the yard, moving heavy loads of soil, plants, and stone, was a challenging pleasure. Eventually, all the years of lifting too many heavy objects without supporting my lower back or asking for help caught up with me one day.

Unaware my back was unstable and teetering on the brink of disaster, I sneezed. That one sneeze resulted in a lower back disc herniation, and the pain went from uncomfortable to excruciating over the next few days. Fortunately, I worked for a neurosurgeon at the time, so I got a quick referral and was rushed into surgery.

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Two weeks after the surgery, I was able to walk around a short block in my neighborhood. It took four weeks for me to drive and six weeks to return to work. More than three years later, I finally woke up and accepted the truth: my body was never going to be the same.

The most substantial shock I received in life was looking in the mirror and not recognizing the person looking back. Two back-to-back surgeries on my spine left me with permanent nerve damage, muscle atrophy, and a limp. It became easy to ignore the inner, aware voice that told me to keep exercising, eat right, and stretch. Instead, I ate without awareness, sat around feeling sorry for myself, and waited for a miracle.

I gained more than 60 pounds in what seemed like the blink of an eye, but it was actually not overnight. As I became emotionally detached from responsibility for my body, time got lost within my unconscious excuses.

One day, I bravely faced my fear and honestly looked at myself in the mirror. With tears in my eyes, I managed to see past the overweight stranger and into my heart. No matter how I abused my body, the spark of life that made Regina was still alive.

It was not possible to change the past or undo what neglect and feelings of unworthiness had done to my body. The only option was to accept that the rest of my life lay before me. Then and there, I decided to love myself by taking my body back for good.

Over the next two years I lost the 60 pounds. I went to the gym, retrained myself to eat healthfully, got plenty of rest, stopped drinking sodas, and cut out as much sugar, fast food, and processed food as possible. Every day I'd get up focused on the goal. Every day I had to tell myself, I think I can, I think I can, I think I can. And every day that I accomplished the goal of eating right, exercising, and getting enough sleep, I told myself, I thought you could, I thought you could, I thought you could.

While it may seem too easy and simplistic, thinking of the childhood story *The Little Engine that Could* somehow motivated me to get busy and do what needed to be done. Believing "yes I can" is exactly what motivated me to take back my life.

When stumbling blocks came up, and they will for all of us, I refused to take "no" for an answer. I relied on me to support myself in taking the necessary actions over and over until the new, positive lifestyle was securely in place.

Yes, it took time. Yes, it took determination to change my life. But having reached this side, I can assure you with complete confidence you are absolutely capable of making the personal changes you want to make once you stop "trying" and instead do, do, do.

Yes You Can! There is no hill you cannot climb, no challenge you cannot overcome, no negative habit you cannot change when you see yourself as the Little Blue Engine that believes, I THINK I CAN, I THINK I CAN, I THINK I CAN!

In addition to "I think I can," the following affirmations can also help support you in supporting yourself:

I am worthy of having the best life.

I am strong enough on my own to create my best life.

Whatever happened in the past is in the past.

Today I am focused on being my very best.

Tomorrow I will strive to be even better than I was today.

I accept that confidence comes from within.

I choose to be confident and optimistic.

I forgive myself not by trying to forget what I did, but to learn from it so I don't do the same negative behavior again.

I have the power to change my thoughts by being aware of what I am thinking and the motivation behind my thoughts.

I look at challenges as opportunities to learn and grow.

I love and care for my body as home to my soul.

I realize all healthy relationships have healthy boundaries.

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I am comfortable setting healthy boundaries with people in my life.

I have the power to break negative habits.

I live according to my values.

I embrace the reality of how people and situations are, rather than how I wish they could be.

I accept there are reasons for whatever I am going through.

I know what is most important for me in life.

I accept that every experience in life has lead me to this moment.

I am working to live a balanced life.

I am grateful for all the good I have in life.

I believe in my ability to succeed.

I define success for myself, not what I am told it should be.

I am worthy of being loved.

I am focused on results.

I don't allow myself to be mistreated.

I realize trying is not the same as doing.

I will not let fear stop me.

I understand experience is the way to know.

I say exactly what I intend to say.

I understand the thing I want to run from is the thing I need to turn and face.

I realize blaming others is giving away my power to change.

I am okay criticizing my performance with the goal of doing better.

I am responsible for my thoughts, words, and actions.

I understand the biggest risk in life is not taking risks.

I don't make excuses. I have faith in my power.

I want things, but what I need is more important.

I am honest with myself and others.

I am devoted to being my natural self.

I am the greatest teacher I will ever have.

I am devoted to living aligned with my values.

I am my own best friend.

I embrace my emotions and acknowledge what I feel.

I embrace change.

I am the kind of partner I want to attract.

I build myself up by lifting others.

I am present with myself and those who are in my presence.

I walk away from any situation that does not support me in creating my best life.

I am gentle with myself because it is one of the strongest things I can do.

I am not responsible for anyone else's behavior. Only for my responses to their behavior.

I am giving the best of myself to life.

I was born to stand in my individual magnificence.

I don't depend on other people's opinions to determine my value.

I protect my heart not by keeping it closed, but by knowing which people I allow to get close.

I take good care of myself.

I am healing the holes in my heart to become whole.

I make hard decisions to help me create an easier life.

I listen to people to understand them. I don't just respond.

I love and respect myself.

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I understand that being alone and feeling lonely are two different things.

I accept asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

I am curious.

I celebrate my wins and learn from my losses.

I choose kindness even when it is hard to do.

I apologize because it is the right and brave thing to do.

I don't gossip about others, or myself.

I am powerful, beautiful, brilliant, and brave.

I create a healthy family, work, and me-time balance.

I find joy in the ordinary.

I am the energy I want to attract.

I take good care of myself because there will never be another me.

I am a reason people believe in the goodness of others

I invite you to create your own affirmations below.

Regina