

Lesson Name:

The Importance of Daily Affirmations

Student Objectives:

- Students will define daily affirmations.
- Students will investigate the importance of daily affirmations.
- Students will create a list of daily affirmations for themselves.

Educator Preparation:

- Familiarize yourself with the concept of daily affirmations and the important role they can play in positively changing the brain (see mini-lesson materials and resources).
- Create your own list of at least three negative daily thoughts and turn them into positive versions or affirmations; be prepared to speak to your thought process in choosing them and why they matter to you. This goes in the “Interaction” section of the lesson if you plan to teach it yourself instead of using Dr. Ennis’s video.
- Access the Google Doc and be sure you make a copy so it can be edited.

Introduction:

Hello! My name is Dr. Kristie Hofelich Ennis, and I am bringing you this Happiness Lab lesson from Louisville, KY. Today, I will share with you the concept of daily affirmations, engage you in thinking about their importance, and lead you through the creation of your own list of affirmations to positively change your thinking.

Instruction:

You may have heard of “the power of positive thinking” before, but sometimes that can seem very difficult to keep in mind, especially when the world seems so crazy. The National Science

Foundation tells us that in fact, of the up to 60,000 thoughts we have per day, 80 percent of those thoughts are actually negative. That may be overwhelming, but the good news is this is largely unconscious and a pattern that can be broken. That's right: humans can retrain their brains to be more positive, in a similar way that they can train animals to follow commands. Don't worry, I'm not suggesting you get a treat every time you have a positive thought or a punishment every time you have a negative one. Instead, I am suggesting that we use the Cognitive Behavioral Science we know works to help you live a more positive life.

If we are going to change a negative habit that doesn't serve us well, we must start with what we know about habits. According to Dr. BJ Fogg, Stanford University professor and author of *Tiny Habits*, new habits can be created with consistent repetition. Further, they can be sustained if we take small steps, attaching them to everyday things we already do and associate with positive or neutral feelings. For example, if a person wants to exercise more regularly, but they actually have a negative association with exercise and have a history of not sticking to any program, this person needs to change his approach or he is likely to be disappointed once again. Dr. Fogg suggests that to meet this goal of exercising more regularly, the person should choose something small to add into his regular routine that creates a new, tiny habit with positive results.

So, if you want to be more positive, to attract more good things to your life, you must start small and incorporate a daily "tiny habit" into your life that we will call affirmation. The word *affirmation* means the assertion or declaration that something exists or is true. Simply put, this means that if you tell yourself daily that something positive is true, it is more likely to be true. If you make these positive affirmations enough, they will become reality and a part of your everyday thought processes, pushing out some of that 80 percent negativity.

Interaction:

Let's look at a simple example. In preparation for this lab, I thought about two things: what positive affirmations I need to hear to kick out some negative thoughts, and how I could attach positive affirmations to something I already do every day. When I was in high school, a coach of mine used to make us repeat a positive mantra to start every, single class and it became so automatic, that there were no issues with behavior. We all started on a positive note together. I still remember that and I wanted to recreate it for my current life.

Without meaning to, I tend to think about how much I hate getting up in the morning, even when I don't have an alarm clock set. Every morning, I also brush my teeth, so I decided to attach this "tiny habit" of positive affirmation to this time of my day to begin the process of changing the way I start my day from instantly grumpy to more positive. What I came up with is this short list:

1. You have been given another day to use as you will.
2. Today is going to be a great day.
3. You are amazing and unique.
4. The world needs you today.
5. It is not your responsibility to make others happy.

Telling myself these things each day after I brush my teeth, out loud in the mirror, helps me set a positive tone and intention for the day. I've been trying it now for a few days and I have to say, it is becoming more automatic to feel like I can conquer the day, that I can *use* it to work for me instead of letting it run me.

Closure:

Now, it is your turn. Complete the following activity to determine what your negative thoughts are, how you can turn them into positive affirmations, and attach them to your daily routine to make them new, "tiny" habits that will begin retraining your brain in a good way. Let us know how it goes by snapping a photo of your list (if you're comfortable) and posting it to social media.

Activity:

Follow these steps to begin your own positive affirmations:

1. On a piece of paper or digital document, make two columns. [Here's a Google Doc](#) you can customize if you'd prefer. Just make a copy for yourself or download it.
2. In one column, write down all the negative thoughts you can think of that you tend to have.
3. Once you think you're finished, keep going by digging a bit deeper. Think of losses you've had, things that people do to make you angry or hurt, things that stress you out, your fears, and your insecurities.
4. In the other column, write one positive version of each negative thought. This could be something positive to learn from that negative thought or simply the opposite of it. Here are some examples:

- a. If you fear failure, write one instance when failure helped you to learn a lesson.
 - b. If you're [insecure about your skills](#), write how much you've improved since you started.
 - c. If you've lost a relationship in the past, write about the beautiful time you spent with each other.
 - d. If you stress about work, write how your work is serving other people.
 - e. If you don't like your friend's behavior, write about one positive thing about that person.
5. Narrow this list to five-ten thoughts that dominate your headspace everyday.
 6. Take those five-ten positive thoughts you created in the second column and cut them out, create a colorful image on a small poster, or make a digital creation that you can print.
 7. Choose one thing you do everyday that has a positive or neutral association, such as taking a shower, getting dressed, or brushing your teeth.
 8. Display your list/creation of positive thoughts in a prominent place where you perform this routine action and once you've completed it, read those affirmations out loud to yourself, every single time you do it.

This might feel silly or embarrassing at first and that's ok. Changing the brain can be frustrating or feel weird. Give it a change and you might just be surprised at how something so personal and simple can make a big difference!

Resources:

- [Tiny Habits by Dr. BJ Fogg](#)
- [Practical Hack](#) to Combat Negative Thoughts
- [Do You Have a Positive Attitude?](#) (Wonderopolis)
- For Adults: BJ Fogg [interview on ArmChair Experts podcast](#)