

Using Mindfulness to Create & Use Affirmations

Many of us engage in critical or negative thinking, which can result in persistent, uncomfortable emotions. Affirmations can help us reverse negative thought patterns. This worksheet will guide you through the process of using the **Human Systems Mindfulness Model** to create the most effective affirmations *for you* based on your emotions and needs.

Critical thought patterns are either self-condemning, such as “you always make mistakes” or “you are so stupid” or condemning towards others, such as “she always ignores me” or “he’s just so lazy”. *Negative thought patterns* tend towards predicting negative outcomes, such as “I will never get this done” or “if I don’t exercise, I will gain weight.” Critical and negative thinking result from deeply ingrained, often subconscious or unconscious beliefs.

Critical and negative thought patterns are different from critical thinking or sorting through possible outcomes. When critical and negative thinking turn into ingrained patterns that result in persistent uncomfortable emotions, these kinds of thinking are no longer a useful tool for effective decision-making based on reality, but instead have become like an old, irrelevant set of instructions that we continue to read even though they are not useful.

Certain emotions are associated with certain kinds of thought patterns. The table below lists each uncomfortable emotion category in the **HS Emotion Wheel for uncomfortable emotions** and the associated negative thought pattern.

Emotion Category	Negative Thought Pattern
Afraid	Predicting an unpleasant or dangerous future or outcome
Angry	Believing something is being withheld from you that is critical to your well-being or believing that somebody is purposefully hurting you or intends to hurt you
Embarrassed	Believing that you are less worthy than others
Alone	Believing that you are disconnected from others
Dislike	Believing that somebody or something will hurt you or is hurting you
Sad	Believing that you have lost something critical to your well-being

4. Consider each negative thought pattern in your answer to question 3. What was the *specific* thought you were having in reaction to your experience that reflected the thought pattern? For example, if you are angry, and you believe that something is being withheld from you that is critical to your well-being, perhaps you are thinking that “if she doesn’t give me the information I want, I will never be able to finish this project.”

Practice Acceptance

Now that you have a better understanding of the experience, your emotions, your negative or critical thinking patterns, and your specific thoughts, you can practice *acceptance* (step two in the [Human Systems Mindfulness Model](#)). When we have persistent uncomfortable emotions related to critical or negative thought patterns, we can be sure that those thought patterns developed for a good reason. *At some point in the past, those thought patterns were useful to us and we just kept applying them to various situations because we did not have the opportunity to learn and practice another way to think or be.*

We can create affirmations that reflect acceptance of our emotions and thinking patterns using the idea that there are good reasons for how we think and behave today. At first, you may feel some resistance to these affirmations, because they may seem counter-intuitive and wrong – that’s because when we have critical or negative thinking patterns, at the very core of those thinking patterns is a tendency to blame and shame ourselves. We can take responsibility for our thinking and actions without blaming and shaming.

Here are some ideas for acceptance-based affirmations:

- It makes sense that I am feeling and thinking this way.
- There are good reasons for my negative and critical thinking patterns.
- I accept that I sometimes engage in negative and critical thinking.
- It’s okay that I have negative and critical thought patterns from time to time.
- I am exactly where I’m supposed to be right now.
- Everything is exactly the way it’s supposed to be right now.

You can use the above affirmations, or you can create affirmations that apply specifically to your uncomfortable emotions and critical thinking patterns. *When you create specific affirmations, you are purposefully rewriting the old instructions to reflect your worth, as well as your needs and the truth of the current situation.* The more you practice creating specific affirmations, the more readily you will be able to create a new, more realistic, and more useful thoughts in response to situations that used to activate negative and critical thinking patterns.

5. For each of the critical or negative thought patterns you wrote down for question 4, write an affirmation that indicates complete acceptance of the pattern and the accompanying emotion from question 2. For example, if you feel angry and your negative thought is “if she doesn’t give me the information I want, I will never be able to finish this project,” your affirmation might be “it makes complete sense that I am angry about not getting the information I need. I am exactly where I am supposed to be.” Remember that the point of this exercise is not to reinforce our uncomfortable feelings to the point of righteous indignation or self-pity, but to avoid beating ourselves up for feeling uncomfortable and stuck.

Practice Compassion

When we practice *acceptance*, we clear away any resistance we might be experiencing and make room for *compassion* (step 3 from the [Human Systems Mindfulness Model](#)). We can create affirmations that reflect compassion and unconditional love for ourselves as well as other people in the situation. When we feel compassion for ourselves, we understand and accept our own suffering and give ourselves unconditional love. Once we feel compassion for ourselves, we can feel compassion for others, also known as empathy.

6. For each of the critical or negative thought patterns you write down for question 4, write an affirmation that indicates an understanding of your suffering and an expression of unconditional love for yourself. For example, if your negative thought is “if she doesn’t give me the information I want, I will never be able to finish this project,” perhaps your affirmation would be “I am an amazing human being, regardless of whether I finish this project or not.”

Create *Balance*

The fourth step in the **Human Systems Mindfulness Model** is the growth or change step, called *balance*. When we seek balance, we seek a happy medium that draws on the knowledge and resources we have today. Mindfulness practice enables us to continually be seeking our true happy medium, which can change day to day and moment to moment, depending on our state of being and the environment. A happy medium today could look very different than the one we find tomorrow, because our capacity changes and grows all the time, and our surroundings change all the time.

Once we become aware of our negative thought patterns, have accepted them, and are practicing compassion and unconditional love for ourselves, we will have illuminated more choices and created space to move along the path we choose.

7. For each of the negative thoughts you identified in question 5, write down an affirmation that reflects the truth of the situation. For example, if your negative thought was “if she doesn’t give me the information I want, I will never be able to finish this project,” then your affirmation might be “I can do a lot of this project without that particular piece of information. I can, and will, do the best with what I have and what I know, and that’s enough.”

Compare In

In 12-step recovery programs, there is a saying that the best way to assess ourselves and our progress is to “*compare in, not compare out*”. This means that we compare how we are in the moment to how we were in the past, and we never compare our insides to other people’s outsides. Comparing ourselves to others to determine how well we are doing is like comparing the taste of two oranges by eating one and looking at the other.

10. Now that you have created some affirmations to counteract your uncomfortable emotions and negative thought patterns, it’s a good idea to reassess your emotions. How do you feel now compared to the emotions you chose for question 4? You can use the [HS Virtual Emotion Wheel](#) or the [HS Emotion Wheels](#).