

Affirmations

It is what a man thinks of himself that really determines his fate.

~Henry David Thoreau

Affirmations are encouraging and inspiring statements that assist us in personal transformation. They shine the light of awareness onto our thought patterns and so enable us to change the way we relate to our thoughts. Affirmations are neither magical nor mystical, but work in alignment with the laws that govern our minds.

There are two main ways in which affirmations help us re-orient our thoughts. First, affirmations provide subtle access to the thought patterns that conflict with our intentions. If we are affirming “peace is in me,” and we find ourselves regularly annoyed over small things, this affirmation can serve as a reminder of what we uphold as important, and help us to modify our attitude accordingly. Affirmations used this way can and will prevent us from acting unskillfully. They nourish our forthright resolve and assist us in maintaining that resolve even when outer circumstances become difficult.

Second, the right affirmation can be used to confront our inner belief systems head-on. Affirmations can be used to challenge point blank our false concepts of incompleteness. For instance, an affirmation for change might be, “I am wonderful as I am.” This affirmation will directly confront any views you hold that you are not wonderful as you are. What comes up is grist for the mill. Affirmations like these will directly challenge the false fabrications you may routinely entertain.

It cannot be emphasized enough that right understanding is to go hand-in-hand with affirmations. Affirmations are not silver bullets to assuage all our problems. Affirmations alone will not bring about lasting change: we need to *work* with them. They

remind us of what we know to be of true, and make room in the mind for the deeper work of awakening from our delusional nightmares. Affirmations provide a safe container for our everyday thoughts so we can become more aware of and directly challenge our unskillful mental habits. They can nurture our growth in a manner that is unique and amenable to our way of being.

Remember, too, that you can't change anyone else. You can't affirm that "someone" should change their ways. The only change you can make is in yourself, and how you may respond to another's behavior. So, when with difficult people, learn to rest in your integrity, your love, and don't worry about trying to explain yourself. The other may never understand, so don't waste your energy. Renew yourself.

The obvious question that must be addressed here is, if we are not our thoughts, why bother with affirmations? The answer is simple, yet not simple. Our true nature is naturally radiant and pure. This is true for thee as well as for me. Nothing, not even skillful or unskillful thoughts, can alter this truth. However, our thoughts are clues as to where we are stuck; signposts that point to where our work lies. Our thoughts are reflections of our desires, aversions, and ignorant tendencies. As such we can focus our intentions on concise thoughts—affirmations—and use these to pry open our consciousness, notice the minute particulars, and set our intentions right. We can rewire the circuitry and actually become happier beings in the process. Affirmations can help us tremendously with the meaningful process of self-transformation, which then facilitates the process of self-transcendence. No, our thoughts are not to be taken as I, me, or mine. They are not who we really are. However, it is to our benefit and not to our loss to watch our thoughts and tend to their ways with care.