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Browse > [Home](#) / [Small Business Resources](#) / [Business Articles](#) / [Motivation](#) / [Direct Your Leadership with Affirmation](#)  
By Paul J. Meyer

## Direct Your Leadership with Affirmation By Paul J. Meyer

Philosophers, poets, and other writers from many centuries in the past have left us a rich legacy of literature that demonstrates one of the most vital tools of personal leadership development. This technique is the firing pin for rapid-fire change, the scope for the rifle of self-direction. This marvelous tool is affirmation. The dictionary calls affirmation "the act of asserting or affirming as true a positive assertion." Affirmation is a positive declaration that describes what you want to be, what you want to have, or how you choose to live your life.

There is nothing particularly startling or new in using affirmation as a method of personal growth. It has been done for thousands of years. More than a hundred years ago, the French doctor Émile Coué began telling his patients they would feel happier and better if they adopted one simple idea: all they had to do was say over and over "Every day in every way I'm getting better and better." Many people laughed at Dr. Coué. His method was so simple that they doubted its validity. He was teaching his patients nothing new. It was just another way of describing the power of affirmation used with spaced repetition to affect attitudes.

The repetition of a positive thought over and over, day after day, affects your subconscious mind – the creative power within you. Quotations, proverbs, sayings, and axioms are all affirmations. For example:

- A penny saved is a penny earned.
- A fool and his money are soon parted.
- To have a friend, you must be a friend.
- A stitch in time saves nine.

These are all borrowed affirmations – ideas appropriated from someone else to support the value system we hold. Borrowed affirmations are the most commonly used but are effective only when genuinely internalized. Borrowed affirmations are not the only familiar type. How many times have you said something like this: "I said to myself, 'I can do better than that,'" or "I told myself to remember where I was putting that book." Talking to yourself may be conscious and directed, or it may be subconscious and reflexive; but you do engage in self-talk, and that, in essence, constitutes affirmation.

When you see in the world what you believe to be there and affirm it through self-talk, you psychologically reinforce your opinions and ideas. "But," you may say, "this does not alter reality. The fact that I believe or disbelieve doesn't change anything." Objectively, an affirmation may not change anything, but subjectively, it certainly does. You tend to live up to what is expected of you, to your reputation – good or bad. The real importance of this truth in the area of personal leadership is that you tend not only to live up to what others expect of you, you also live up to what you expect of yourself. This is why the use of affirmation is such a dynamic tool for personal leadership development.

When you consciously practice the use of affirmation, the law of reinforcement begins to work for you. First you begin to look for those strengths and changes that you have affirmed. Because you expect to see such changes, you also begin to act like the person you have decided to become. You literally change because you act according to the expectations you have set for yourself. Your affirmation becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

There is nothing mysterious about the power of affirmation. Although at first you may find it difficult to make conscious use of affirmations, the reinforcement principle actually is simple and relatively easy to apply. Your confidence in the value of affirmation increases gradually as you take each progressive step and learn from your experience that it is worthwhile.

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## Types of Affirmations

You have the choice of several kinds of affirmations:

1. A numerical affirmation makes use of some number that has a special meaning for you. It may represent money, a date, or a number of activities. For example, a salesperson might use an affirmation such as 10-6-3-50. This would be a reminder that 10 telephone calls every day will result in six appointments for sales presentations, lead to three sales, and produce an income of \$50,000 per year. Repeating this affirmation makes it easy to make calls because the salesperson knows the benefit.
2. Pictorial affirmations intensify and build desire in your subconscious mind. Looking often at a picture that represents your goal stimulates your imagination and helps you create ways of transforming it into reality.
3. Verbal affirmations are condensed statements of a desired result or an attitude you wish to possess. For example: "My annual income is \$50,000."
4. Actions serve as affirmations. Repetition of a new tennis stroke in practice is an affirmation. Repetition puts the law of displacement to work for you.

## Resolve to Success

Develop an unshakable determination to follow-through on your plans for success regardless of circumstances, criticism, or what other people say, think, or do. This is often the breaking point for good intentions. Many people live their lives in the shadow of public opinion, drifting with the tide of criticism, and wind up wallowing in the backwash of mediocrity. Set a realistic standard for yourself. No one else can determine your desires, needs, or wants because no one else knows your priority of values or understands your potential. Once you know yourself and set your goals accordingly, determination is natural because you know that you are right and you know why you are right. You have information no critic can ever have, and armed with this inside information, you are impervious to unjustified assaults. Determination is neither stubborn defiance nor unreasonable inflexibility. It is, rather, firm resolve, quiet confidence, and unshakable persistence.

LMI JOURNAL, VOLUME VI, NUMBER 1

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(Edit)

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