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## Designing Personal Growth

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.

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.

### 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.

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