

EXERCISE: POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS

This use of positive affirmations is based on the ideas that we are affected emotionally but our thoughts and that we can actualize what we think about. An affirmation is a positive self-statement that can improve mood and, some believe, increase the probability of having positive experiences and outcomes. Affirmations seem to be most effective as complete sentences containing the following four components:

1. Present tense
2. Action verb
3. Self reference (“I”)
4. Realistically positive

Begin by identifying a key word that represents an important personal goal, such as being more “relaxed,” “flexible,” “trusting,” “serene,” “confident,” etc. It may help to use a key word that represents the opposite of the problem thought or belief. For example, “trust” and “optimism” are opposites to “worry.” Then, build an affirmation around the key positive word. For example, the word “trust” could be the core for the following affirmation: *“I trust deeply that everything will be OK.”*

An affirmation creates an internal tension between what is presently untrue and what could be true. The natural tendency is to resolve such tension, with two possible outcomes: we stop saying the affirmation (we give up because it is not yet true) or through consistent repetition we create a new truth.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SLEEP

DISCLAIMER: This list of suggestions is for your interest only and is not intended to be prescriptive for individuals. Information is compiled from a variety of sources. Discuss all treatments with your personal health care professional.

- Relaxing ambiance at nighttime (e.g. dim lighting)
- Establish a consistent sleep cycle 7 days a week
- Make sleep a priority and avoid temptation to stay up late
- No television within one hour of sleep (too stimulating)
- Warm bath (or foot bath): 92-97 degrees F (see also aromatherapy below)
- Avoid daytime naps if difficulty falling asleep at night
- Use bed only for sleep
- Quality sleep requires a good mattress that provides comfort and support
- Regular exercise aids sleep (but not within two hours of bedtime)
- Relaxing activity (reading, gentle music, breathing exercise) before bedtime
- If wake up and can't resume sleep, get up and do something (go to bathroom, drink water or herb tea, read) until fatigue induces sleep
- Food considerations: avoid over-eating and stimulants (chocolate, sodas, black tea, coffee ice cream or chemical additives that increase heart rate) before bed. "Good foods" for sleep include tea with chamomile (e.g. "Sleepytime Tea") and "Horlick's Hot Malted Milk" (verified by research)
- Herbs for sleep: valerian root (tincture—one dropper in water, capsule, or tea—one teaspoon in water steeped for 10 minutes), hops (tea with or without valerian), ladieslipper (tea, mood elevator, induces sleep), other tea combinations (chamomile, passion flower, catnip, skullcap, lime flower, cowslip flower), herbs with relaxant properties (anise, balm, cayenne pepper, dill, heather, marjoram, poppyseed, lemon, verbena, California poppy, rosemary, peppermint, gotu kola)
- Aromatherapy: chamomile (6 drops) or lavender oil (6 drops) or blossom (5 drops) added to warm bath. Steep a combination of valerian root, lime blossom, and chamomile in boiling water for 10 minutes and add to warm bath.
- Massage: gentle stroking and kneading of body or just feet, massage oil with lavender and chamomile