

The Student Success Curriculum

Topic 3: Positive Affirmations

The things students say and think to themselves form some of the most powerful influences on their school experience, career, relationships, success, and happiness. Negative thoughts and internal dialogue feed doubts and fears. Persistent negative thinking makes it difficult for students to achieve success and reach the goals they strive for. A positive affirmation is a healing, uplifting phrase that provides a tool for countering negative self-talk. Positive affirmations remind a person to remain vigilant about his or her own thinking process, regularly visualize goals, and to grow and change in a meaningful way. This topic discusses the roots of negativity and explains different types of positive affirmations. The goal is to empower students to manage their own thought processes, to develop a shared class language for discussing negativity, and to improve student resilience, persistence, and self-confidence.

Teaching Strategies:

Lecture

Affirmation Writing

Small Group Discussion

Large Group Discussion

Self-Evaluation

Time Frames

The implementation time for this material is approximately ninety minutes. The material can be modified to a shorter time frame, provided the affirmation writing activity in Worksheet 3-1 is given as homework. The material taught in Topic 3: Positive Affirmations pairs nicely with the material taught in Topic 2: Goal Setting. It works well to teach these two topics in the same session.

Instructor Preparation

- ✓ Read Topic 3: Positive Affirmations in the *Student Success Guide*.
- ✓ Review the PowerPoint slides side-by-side with the lecture outline for topic three.
- ✓ Complete Worksheet 3-1 by writing your own affirmations.
- ✓ Prepare “encourage mints” by finding quotes, typing them onto labels, and affixing them to mints.

Resources

Locate and read any of the following resources to support an understanding of the topic.

- ✓ *Building Positive Student Self-Concept* by Kathleen Cotton. A report on findings of a study conducted at Stevenson-Carson School District in Stevenson, Washington, available at <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/7/snap25.html>.
- ✓ *Create Your Own Affirmations: A Creative Visualization Kit* by Shakti Gawain, New World Library.

- ✓ *Everyday Positive Thinking* by Louise Hay, Hay House.
- ✓ *Using Your Brain—For A Change: Neuro-Linguistic Programming* by Richard Bandler, Real People Press.
- ✓ Resources for quotes for the encourage mint activity
 - www.bartleby.com
 - <http://creativequotations.com>
 - www.quotationreference.com
 - www.quotationspage.com

Supplies & Equipment

- ✓ *Student Success Guides* (one per student)
- ✓ *Massage Year Planner* (one per student)
- ✓ Encourage mints
- ✓ LCD/DLP projector, laptop, and PowerPoint presentation, or printed overheads and an overhead projector.
- ✓ Voices handout

Learning Objectives

After reading Topic 3 and completing the worksheets associated with this topic, each student will be able to:

- ✓ Understand the basic nature of negative thought.
- ✓ List two reasons why it's helpful to label thoughts as "just thinking."
- ✓ Describe three questions to ask about your thoughts when exploring the source of negative thinking.
- ✓ Explain the four main types of affirmations and provide a written example of each type.

- ✓ Use positive affirmations to support goal setting and attainment.
- ✓ List two different ways to utilize positive affirmations and bring affirmations into daily life.
- ✓ Explain the benefits of the thanking mode exercise and describe when the exercise might be used.

Opening Activity—Encourage Mints

Tip!

Encourage mints can be distributed at open house events, orientation, in the front lobby, or even on the desks of faculty and staff. They promote a positive, supportive, upbeat campus environment.

Preparation: Log on to the websites listed in the resources section above and identify quotations that are appropriate for your class or use the quotations listed here (many of which appear in the *Massage Year Planner*). Type and print these quotes or other encouraging words on colored labels and affix them to the back of a mint candy. Place enough of the encourage mints into a bowl so that each student in class gets one.

Activity: Pass the bowl of mints around the classroom and have each student take out a mint. Have them read the quote to the class and then they can eat the mint or save it for later. When each student has read their encourage mint, discuss the power of positive words. Ask students which quotes really moved them and why. After the general discussion, begin the lecture.

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Starter Quotes

- Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail. ~Harold R. McAlindon
- The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy. ~Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Anyone can hold the helm when the sea is calm. ~Publius Syrus
- We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit. ~Aristotle
- The best way out is always through. ~Robert Frost
- Fortune favors the brave. ~Publius Terence
- Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. ~Albert Einstein.
- Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do. ~Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
- Try not to become a man of success but a man of value. ~Albert Einstein
- Nothing is predestined: The obstacles of your past can become the gateways that lead to new beginnings. ~Ralph Blum
- If you would create something, you must be something. ~Goethe
- Along with success comes a reputation for wisdom. ~Euripides
- They can because they think they can. ~Virgil
- Nothing can stop the man with the right mental attitude from achieving his goal; nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong mental attitude. ~Tomas Jefferson

- Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out. ~Robert Collier
- The thing always happens that you really believe in; and the belief in a thing makes it happen. ~Frank Lloyd Wright
- A failure is a man who has blundered, but is not able to cash in on the experience. ~Elbert Hubbard.
- We make our fortunes, and we call them fate. ~Earl of Beaconsfield
- The best way to prepare for life is to begin to live. ~Elbert Hubbard
- Solitude is as needful to the imagination as society is wholesome for the character. ~James Russel Lowell.
- Believe that you have it, and you have it. ~Latin Proverb
- Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined. ~Henry David Thoreau.
- You cannot dream yourself into a character: you must hammer and forge yourself into one.
~Henry David Thoreau.
- No man was ever wise by chance. ~Seneca
- Happiness is not achieved by the conscious pursuit of happiness; it is generally the by-product of other activities. ~Aldous Huxley
- Happiness depends more on the inward disposition of mind than on outward circumstances. ~Benjamin Franklin
- There is only one way to happiness, and that is to cease worrying things, which are beyond the power of our will.
~Epictetus
- To be happy, we must not be too concerned with others.
~Albert Camus

Tip!

Encourage mints can be used anytime the class dynamic gets low and students start to demonstrate signs of increased stress. It's a great way to calm students before a big exam or important practical test. The mints can also be renamed "accomplish mints" and contain a message of congratulations or simply the words "Well Done!" These mints are given out when a student demonstrates great professionalism or goes above and beyond in some way.

Students can even give each other encourage mints or accomplish mints. This is a nice way to promote positive energy in the classroom. Students can give the mints privately or they can give them publicly at the beginning of the class.

- The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear. ~Socrates.
- If we all did the things we are capable of, we would astound ourselves. ~Thomas Edison
- We are far more liable to catch the vices than the virtues of our associates. ~Denis Diderot
- Arguing with a fool proves there are two. ~Doris M. Smith
- Let us believe neither half the good people tell us of ourselves, nor half of the evil they say of others. ~J Petit Senn.
- A good world is an easy obligation; but not to speak ill requires only our silence; which costs us nothing. ~John Tillotson
- It requires less character to discover the faults of others than it does to tolerate them. ~J. Petit Senn
- Our doubts are traitors, and make us lose the good we oft might win, by fearing to attempt. ~William Shakespeare.
- There is no impossibility to him who stands prepared to conquer every hazard. The fearful are the failing. ~Sarah J. Hale
- Little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortunes; but great minds rise above them. ~Washington Irving
- Our greatest glory consists not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall. ~Oliver Goldsmith
- It is the want of diligence, rather than the want of means, that causes most failures. ~Alfred Mercier.
- When the best things are not possible, the best may be made of those that are. ~Richard Hooker.

Lecture Outline

This lecture outline is meant to be used in combination with the *Student Success Guide*, *Massage Year Planner*, and the PowerPoint slides included with this teaching kit. The information in this lecture/activity follows the information presented in the *Student Success Guide* with page numbers of the associated materials provided to the right of the heading in parentheses. Instructors are encouraged to add or delete slides and information as they deem appropriate to meet the particular needs of their student groups. The PowerPoint slides can be shown with an LCD projector or printed onto transparencies for overheads.

Slide 1: Title Slide

Introduce the topic (Positive Affirmations) and direct students to page 32 in their *Student Success Guide*. Students will also need to have their *Massage Year Planner* close at hand.

Slide 2: Goals of this Lecture (p. 32–39)

The goal of this lecture is to help students understand where negativity comes from and some of the unproductive ways it surfaces in an educational environment. It also aims to teach students how to use positive affirmations to achieve their goals and how to question negative thought.

Slide 3: What is Negative Thinking? (p. 32)

Define negative thinking and list some of the behaviors that are a sign of pervasive negative thinking.

Slide 4: Where Does Negativity Come From? (p.32)

Discuss the common roots of negative thinking and then break students into groups of three. Ask the break out groups to list some of the common negative thoughts they have on a regular basis (e.g., “I’m not smart enough,” “I don’t like my body,” etc.) and explore where these thoughts came from, their root, and the source. For example, it’s not uncommon for young women to feel overweight in our society because of the ultra thin look of models and actors. Bring students back into the main group and ask each group to list one common negative thought. List all the thoughts that come up on the white board.

Tip!

Regularly remind students to check their thinking and determine its source. This can be done before an exam (“Take a quick look at your thoughts before you begin this exam. Are your thoughts conducive to your success on the exam?”), or at any time the instructor senses that students are not questioning their attitudes about a project or topic.

Slide 5: Just Thinking!

The first step to overcoming negative self-talk is vigilance. It requires practice to watch your own thinking and become curious about it. It’s interesting to introduce students to the idea that a *thought* is just a *thought*. A thought has no power until we give it power. So why do some thoughts dissolve us into tears while others bounce off without doing any damage? It’s the degree to which we attach to the thought and buy in to the thought. In one example of this, a counselor told one of the people in a discussion group, “Sarah, you’re purple.” Sarah looked at the counselor with a quizzical expression and said, “What are you talking about? I’m not purple!” The counselor acknowledged that Sarah was not purple and then went on to talk about something else. About ten minutes later the counselor turned to Sarah and said, “Sarah, you’re fat.” Sarah’s eyes became watery and her face turned red. She said, “Why would you say that to me in front of everyone?” The fact was that Sarah was not fat and the counselor didn’t think she was fat, but the thought “I’m fat” had so much power in Sarah’s mind that she was instantly weakened by the words. The counselor went on to explain that the words *fat* and *purple* are just words, they are just thoughts. They don’t have power until we give them power. The way to keep thoughts in perspective is to label thoughts as “just thinking.” As the thought comes up, “I’m too dumb to pass this test,” the thought is labeled “just thinking” and the mind replaces the negative thought with a positive thought: “I’m smart.”

Slide 6: Be Curious About Thoughts (p. 32)

The first step to replacing negative thinking with positive thinking is vigilance. This means that you watch your own thinking and are curious about it. The questions on the slide give examples of ways to explore thoughts. It is also interesting to ask students to close their eyes and to contemplate what thoughts come up when asked the question, “When you try to rest in the peace and serenity of your own spirit what gets in the way?”

Slide 7: Internal Voices (See activity)

Explain the internal voices activity and ask students to fill out the worksheet (included in the Internal Voices activity section following this lecture outline). Process the activity with students.

Slide 8: Positive Affirmations (p. 33)

Define the term *positive affirmation* and discuss the findings of the Stanford University study.

Slide 9: Types of Affirmations (p. 33–35)

Use this slide to preview different types of affirmations.

Slide 10: *I am* Statements (p. 33)

Discuss *I am* affirmations and give some examples of this type of affirmation.

Slide 11: *I can* Statements (p. 34)

Discuss *I can* affirmations and give some examples of this type of affirmation. Discuss the limitations of *I can* statements. Some people feel that *I can* statements lack determination because a choice is implied; “I can control my anger (if I feel like it at the moment).”

Slide 12: *I will* Statements (p. 34)

Discuss *I will* affirmations and give some examples of this type of affirmation. *I will* affirmations are considered stronger than *I can* affirmations because no choice is implied; “I will control my anger (and I have no choice about it).”

Slide 13: Process Affirmations (p. 34–35)

Discuss the benefits of using process affirmations and give some examples of this type of affirmation.

Slide 14: Objections to Affirmations (p. 34-35)

Sometimes the conscious mind objects to an affirmation as impossible. In this case the affirmation must be written to overcome the objection. On page 35, for example, the student writes, “I want to be free of credit card debt” and the conscious mind objects, “You don’t make enough money to get rid of your credit card debt.” Write the affirmation to overcome the objection. For example, the student might

write “Moment by moment, day by day, in every hour and every way, I find new ways to earn the money I need to pay off my credit card debt”.

Slide 15: Ways to Utilize Affirmations (p. 35)

This slide gives some examples of ways that people can use affirmations and bring them into their daily life. Remind students to write new affirmations regularly to keep them fresh and meaningful.

**Slide 16: Affirmations and Goal Setting
(*Massage Year Planner*)**

Ask students to turn to their monthly goals that they wrote in the *Massage Year Planner* during the last session. Ask students to write an affirmation for each of their monthly goals. When students have completed this exercise, have them share one goal and its affirmation with the class.

Slide 17: Break

Send students on a break so that they are refreshed before beginning the next exercise.

Slide 18: Worksheet 3-1 (p. 36)

Ask students to turn to Worksheet 3-1 on page 36. Give students thirty minutes to complete the worksheet. Have students break into groups of three and share two important affirmations with their classmates. Bring the groups back together for the thanking mode exercise.

Slide 19: Thanking Mode (p. 39)

Explain the practice of thanking mode to students and describe how it is used. The exercise on the right side of p. 39 is best used for students who have been in school for a while. If the students are still new to massage school it works best to have them make a list of general things they are thankful for. Go around the class and ask students to share one thing they are thankful for with their classmates.

Slide 20: Process Positive Affirmations

To conclude the lecture, ask students to describe how they feel about using positive affirmations.

Activity: Internal Voices

Introduction: Everyone has internal voices that whisper negative messages when stress, a threat, or a new situation seem challenging. Labeling internal voices and becoming aware of their repetitive messages helps us to put aside fears and doubts and strive for our goals. The purpose of this activity is to help students identify repetitive thought patterns and their internal voices. It also helps students get to know, and understand each other better. If the class is a large one, it works best to break students into groups of three or four, otherwise this activity can take up a good deal of class time.

Directions:

1. Describe the concept of internal voices and give some examples of your internal voices to set the stage for the activity. Explain how internal voices can start to influence thinking patterns and behavior.
2. Pass out and review the voices handout. Give examples of each type of voice. It works well if the instructor can do a character voice for each of the internal voices.
3. Ask students to identify the three or four voices that are most prevalent in their thinking. Share the most prevalent voice with the group.
4. Ask students to identify how these voices might interfere with their success in school or in a professional massage practice. Share these thoughts with the group.
5. If the students are in smaller groups, bring them back together and ask these questions:
 - a. How easy was it for you to recognize some of your voices?
 - b. Was anyone surprised by the voices selected by their classmates?
 - c. How can being aware of these voices and thought patterns be useful to you?
 - d. What can you do to overcome these voices and change your thinking patterns?
 - e. As a class of students, why is it useful to identify your own and the internal voices of your classmates?
 - f. How can classmates support each other to overcome their voices?

Internal Voices Handout

NV = Negative Voice

PV = Positive Voice

The Victim Voice (NV): Nothing is my fault. People are always doing mean or unfair things to me. When something goes wrong it's not my responsibility; it's someone else's fault.

What Can I Learn Voice (PV): this is hard right now, but I will get through this and it has taught me an important lesson.

The Failure Voice (NV): I'm bad at everything I try. I lack natural ability and it is unlikely I will ever be good at anything.

The Voice of Abundance (PV): There will always be enough of what really matters. I will have enough money, I will have enough love, I will have enough time.

The Grudge Holder Voice (NV): You think you have the upper hand but you just wait. I'm watching for an opportunity to get you and get you good. You made me feel bad and you will pay for it.

The Voice of Hope (PV): Life is good. I like life and I know that new opportunities and exciting adventures are waiting for me up ahead.

The Voice of Doubt (NV): I don't think that's a good idea. What if things go badly? What if people stop liking me? What if something bad happens? This is too risky!

The Voice of Humor (PV): Oh dear, I didn't make a very good choice there but it's kind of funny how it all turned out. I can laugh at myself and not take myself too seriously.

The People are Out to Get Me Voice (NV): She's talking about me behind my back. I know it! I didn't get on the sports massage team because the teacher doesn't like me. It's so unfair, how come she always gets the good grades?

The Gratitude Voice (PV): I'm happy to be alive and I'm happy to have my loved ones around me. I feel lucky to be able to pursue the goals I am interested in achieving.

There's Not Enough (NV): I will never make enough money to have what I want. All the good clients are already getting massage from other therapists. There are too many massage therapists and too many people who want what I want. There's not enough for me.

The Creative Voice (PV): I have a great idea and I can't wait to share it. I want to start a new project this week and it will be beautiful when I'm finished. I am full of imagination and innovation and I am always finding new ways to express myself.

Oh the Trauma Voice (NV): Oh, this is awful! This is the worst thing that's ever happened to me. Nothing good will ever come out of this. This is so bad I'm going to break down and throw a fit right here in front of everyone.

The Voice of Forgiveness (PV): I feel angry with that but I've shared my feelings and now it's okay. I'm going to move on and just accept that people are not perfect but that they can change and grow.

Wait—Don't Act Voice (NV): If I lay low and don't say anything the situation will pass and I won't have to tell someone how I really feel. I don't want any messy emotion so I will just wait it out.

What Was My Role? Voice (PV): That didn't turn out the way I wanted it to. What did I do to end up here? How did I act? How did I fail to communicate? What could I do better next time?

Please Love Me Voice (NV): I will do whatever you want if only you will like me and want me for your friend. Please love me! I will bend over backward to be lovable. No one could ever dislike me if I try really hard to be likable.

The Optimist Voice (PV): I know I will be okay. I trust that my life is on the right path and I know that I can learn and grow, no matter life's challenges.

The Comparison Voice (NV): He has such a cool car. It's so much better than my car. Her house is so nice; why can't I get a house like that? I wish I had her legs because mine are so short. If only I was confident like he is, but I'm always nervous and shy.

The Voice of Reason (PV): There are facts and there is speculation. I'm going to look at the facts and take emotion out of the picture for a minute.

The Solution Voice (NV): I know it's your problem but I will step in and give you a suggestion, even if you don't want my solution.

The Voice of Honor (PV): I honor you for who you are and what you have accomplished. I feel strong and confident and so I can recognize your accomplishments without feeling threatened.

The Perfectionist Voice (NV): I did a good job on that project but the color scheme and type font could have been better. I can't make a mistake because then I wouldn't be perfect and people would see my weaknesses.

Other—Negative or Positive Voices not Mentioned Above:

Positive Affirmations Milestones Checklist

Name: _____

Date: _____

0 = The student does not have this skill.

1 = The student sometimes demonstrates this skill.

2 = The student almost always demonstrates this skill.

0	1	2	
			Evaluates thoughts and seeks to understand the source of negative thoughts.
			Verbalizes thought evaluation techniques during processing of other material and information.
			Enjoys writing and using positive affirmations.
			Uses positive affirmations as part of goal setting on a regular basis.
			Demonstrates a positive, upbeat attitude toward school and life activities.
			Overcomes obstacles to achieve goals.
			Connects positive outcomes to positive thinking.
			Demonstrates empathy with fellow classmates and is a source of encouragement to others.