



KARYN SHANKS MD

Heart, Hope, Healing

Why Affirmations Don't Work

BY KARYN SHANKS MD | DECEMBER 27, 2018



You know what I'm talking about here, right?

Those words and sentences so carefully crafted. Precious containers for our deepest yearnings. Our hopes, dreams, and desires. Crafted and spoken (or written) with prayerful, reverent, earnest intention and energy.

So why don't they work?

I've worked with affirmations and prayers my entire life. Organically, fueled by necessity and anguish at first. Later a craft, inspired by great teachers—Louise Hay, Wayne Dyer, and many others.

But I sabotaged them.

I created space for these precious containers for my hopes, then spent the rest of the day allowing streams of unfettered fears, worries, and ruminations about old, worn out, disempowering stories run amuck through my mind.

You see, everything we think or speak is an affirmation. Powerful stories about our reality that shape us at the deepest level.

I had rivaling affirmations competing for space in my mind.

Five minutes of the most positive, heart-felt affirmations don't stand a chance against an entire day of angst.

But the mature mind does something else.

The mature mind creates space for the compassionate witness, the observer who's always present, always watching, always gently guiding herself back to where she wants to be.

The mature mind knows that every thought, story, and spoken word affirms a reality. Creating space for itself. Carving out deep grooves within the mind. Brain pathways that become the tenacious backdrop for understanding our lives, orchestrating all of what's possible.

Once again we meet our story of hope. How hope leads to something beautiful within the mature mind.

But it takes work. It takes guts. It takes consistently. It takes showing up, going slow, and paying close attention.

That is the only way affirmations work.

Start here:

Create a clear, positive, present tense affirmation for your desires. Supercharge it with gratitude or a declaration of personal choice:

Thank you for Divine guidance and protection.

Thank you for my strength and courage in the face of all life's challenges.

Thank you for... (you fill in the blank).

I choose hope.

I choose strength and courage in the face of all life's challenges.

I choose... (you fill in the blank).

Write it, speak it, say it. *Feel* it with all of your heart.

Then:

Show up. Notice *all* of your thoughts, *all* of what you say, *all* of what you ruminate about. Throughout the day.

Go slow. Kind of have to, huh? Take your time as the compassionate witness to yourself.

Pay attention. Notice it all. Especially when you're fearful, worried, or feeling challenged. Especially then.

Take control of your stories (=hope). Honor them all and how they helped save you at one time, how they represent your humanness. Then, be brave to choose the better stories, the ones that will unlock the possibilities of your life.

Be patient. Gradually, with grace, and through your efforts, your mind will change. Your brain will reconstitute itself around your new mind. Your new mind will beget your strengthened brain. Your life will blow open with all the possibilities and potential you unleash by removing the obstacles to your greatest aspirations.

The paradox? They *do* work. Your affirmations work. Every last one...

Have a Beautiful day with your Beautiful new mind.

Karyn

p.s. The stories we tell can be tenacious roadblocks to the healing we seek. Join me on a journey of story mining by downloading my free e-book, [Big Energy: How We Bravely Reclaim Our Health, Our Potential, Our Lives—It's All In Our Stories.](#)

p.p.s. From my Archives:

[Get Your Mind Out of the Way of Your Healing.](#) 2018.

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Karyn Shanks, MD, is a physician who lives and practices in Iowa City. Her work is inspired by the science of Functional Medicine, body-mind principles, and wisdom gleaned from the transformational journeys of thousands of clients over her twenty-five-year career. Her work honors each individual and the power of their stories, their inner wisdom, and innate healing potential. She believes that the bones of healing are in what we do for ourselves. She is the author of *Liftoff*, a manual of energy recovery and healing through essential self-care practices.

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