



# New Affirmation Ideas

a newsletter for people who care about self-esteem

Volume 14, Number 1 - Issue 76 - Jan-Feb, 1994

Dear Readers,

First, about the **WE** issues. You readers, except for new subscribers, noticed that in 1993 you received three instead of six issues. Most of you received what I termed my "litany of overwhelm" in which I listed the demanding health problems my family and I were experiencing. I am happy to report that we are all well or improved and that my memory and energy losses are partially recovered. Several readers have advised me to extend your subscriptions rather than try to play catch up, and that seems reasonable to me, particularly since my energy is still not up to par and writing takes much longer than usual. So let it be. Your subscription is extended.

Next, about the **previous issue** on Kaye Centers' research and the Education Affirmation Scale. Several of you have indicated that you will be using the scale in your winter classes and in other settings. **Please, don't let your research go to waste!** However you use it, please send your results immediately to Kaye at 257 East Front Street, Buchanan, MI 49107. Thank you! We can all benefit from having this data.

Due to a miscommunication, the order blank for the wonderful new affirmation stickers was omitted from the last issue. Please accept it at this time.

Now, about **this issue**. As we begin a new year, I hope you enjoy Lynn Donahue Proegler's thoughts on the **Doldrums**.

During the doldrums that Lynn describes, Carole Gesme and I are planning an expanded and updated edition of *Affirmation Ovals, 139 Ways to Give & Get Affirmations*. You are invited to share your ways of using affirmations with others in the Ovals book. It is a "Let's not reinvent the wheel!" "Let's use each other's ideas!!" book. It is also a stimulus for new ideas. Often, when I am preparing a workshop, or choosing an opening exercise, or thinking of how to use the affirmations in an informal situation, I glance through the book and get an "idea pop." Sometimes I use the exercise exactly as offered. More often, what I read triggers me to think of the "just right" way to use affirmations in the situation for which I am preparing.

We will also add a new section called "Stories." Please tell us affirmation stories that you want us to share with other people. And  **jot down those nifty ways you use affirmations**. Send them to us before October. We will edit them and send you the copy for your approval before your ideas go into the book. Be sure to tell us exactly how you want us to spell your name. Please let us know what you want expanded or added to the book. We want this book to be usable for you!


Some of the **affirmation theory and activities** to be added to the Ovals book are offered in this issue so you can start using them right now.

Thanks and thanks,

*Jean Hilsley Clarke*

**Affirmation Ovals**  
139 Ways To Give and Get Affirmations  
by Jean Hilsley Clarke and Carole Gesme

- 6-12 yrs: I love you even when we differ; I love growing with you.
- 12th-4 mos: I'm glad you are alive.
- 12th-4 mos: I love you and I care for you unconditionally.
- 6-18 mos: I love you when you are active and when you are quiet.
- 18 mos-3 yrs: You can become separate from me and I will continue to love you.
- Adult: You are lovable at every age.
- Adult: Your love nurtures and expands.
- 2-4 yrs: I love who you are.
- 18 mos-3 yrs: Thinking: You can become separate from me and I will continue to love you.
- 6-12 yrs: I love you even when we differ; I love growing with you.
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# IN THE DOLDRUMS

by Lynn Donahue Proegler  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

The Holidays are over. The New Year is here. I have often heard people refer to this time of year as the "doldrums." They mean it's a depressing time, often associated with "mid-winter blues" or "cabin fever." The dictionary defines doldrums as, *a part of the ocean near the equator abounding in calms*. Actually, I wouldn't mind being a little nearer the equator right about now, and what in the world is wrong with *abounding in calm*? I can understand that it might be devastating to a sailor trying to get his ship to port, but for me, calm is most welcome. I don't feel a post holiday letdown. Instead, I feel a letup of demands and obligations.

I LOVE this time of year! For the first time in months I don't have to worry about shopping for back to school things or Christmas gifts or decorations. I don't have to make any costumes, turkey stuffing, or Christmas cookies. I'm not helping out with any kind of pageant, bazaar or festival. It's too cold out to worry about planting, weeding, or cutting the grass. I'm FREE!!

Right after Christmas I usually have a new supply of my favorite bath salts, powder and perfume. I can soak in the tub and relax and read in the evening, and then get out and put on my new slippers and robe. I can finally attack that pile of material I bought on sale and sew whatever I want, without a deadline! I can cook plain or fancy, or not at all, as the mood hits me, and not worry about it. I can concentrate on my job

without having heavy holiday obligations hanging over my head. And I can enjoy my children without having to get them ready for anything! I even have time to be alone with my family, luxury of luxuries!

If you find yourself becoming depressed at this post-holiday time of year, it may simply take a shift in perspective to snap you out of it. Look at it this way, for about two months, there are no outside demands being placed on you by the weather or the calendar. Look around your house at all the things you haven't had time to do. You're free to do those things now! You can redecorate or rearrange. You can spend time on your hobby. You can read all those magazines that have been piling up since October, whatever you want!

But you'd better take advantage of this time quickly. It won't last. Pretty soon spring will be here. You'll have to switch everyone's wardrobes again, shop for kids who have grown out of last year's clothes, and get ready for spring vacation or holidays. Then it will be time to clean up the yard and fertilize and plant. Then summer, with the kids at home, and mowing, and weeding, and taking everyone out to the beach or the pool or the park. It wears me out just to think about it!

Enjoy this time while it lasts. It will be over too soon, and then you'll have to wait another whole year for the blessed, welcome doldrums to come around again!

## THEORY:

# AFFIRMATIONS:

## Phoney or Real?

Rosemary Taylor  
Goodwood, South Australia

A few years ago, I started working with cancer patients, basing my work on the Simonton approach as outlined in their book, *Getting Well Again*. One of the important ingredients of Simonton's work is the use of visualization or imagery where the client is taught to visualize a positive outcome of the treatment and elimination of cancer cells in the body. It was in essence, the beginning of the repackaging of an older brand of pop-psychology, the power of positive thinking. In the last decade, there has been a massive influx in the market of Self-Healing, Self-Loving, Self-Affirming techniques, using creative visualization and positive affirmations.

From the beginning I had some discomfort with certain aspects of this overall approach. Partly it was due to the evangelical zeal with which this approach was being expounded, but also because many of my clients seemed to develop an almost obsessive need to look and sound positive, no matter what else they were feeling.

The philosophical assumption behind this goes something like this:

*We create our experiences by our thoughts and feelings. The thoughts we think and the words we speak create our experiences. We create our experience and our reality. So patients were asked to say things like, "I am healthy. I will have a long life."*

Even though they may have felt frightened, doubtful and unconvinced of their chances to increase their life-span, they thought that if they stayed positive enough, hard enough, long enough, their fears would be eliminated. What I saw happening, was a developing of a phoney attitude, a scared child masquerading as a internal positive parent with a strong belief - "I must be positive, or else."

My knowledge and understanding of Transactional Analysis gave me some understanding of the way ideas and beliefs about the self get incorporated and with this information I was not satisfied with the pop-psychology approach.

It was when I was attending an affirmation workshop with Jean Illsley Clarke that the process for the incorporation of positive beliefs or affirmations about self became clearer to me and in particular the role of the Nurturing Parent and the Free Child. As she began to speak about using affirmations I found

(continued on page 3)

myself inwardly groaning. I imagined the workshop participants adopting the phoney unconvinced child position that I had seen so often in my clients.

However as she read out the affirmations, I noticed a profound difference.

Instead of the person being asked to say "I can trust my inner wisdom" a partner was asked to tell the person, "You can trust your inner wisdom."

Instead of the individual saying "I love who I am," a partner was asked to say "I love who you are."

What a difference. I found myself sitting up and taking notice. The message and the process had excited my Free Child and it made sense to my Little Professor.

**Editor's Note**

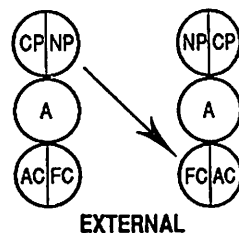
Transactional Analysis theory, created by Eric Berne, suggests that the way we talk to ourselves and others can be understood more clearly if we think of the personality as having three parts or Ego States: The Parent (P) is the part from which we nurture (NP), structure, criticize (CP), or marshall ourselves and others. The Adult (A) is the part from which we do here-and-now problem solving, taking the environment and ourselves into full account. The Child (C) is the part that responds freely or adaptively. The Free Child (FC) responds freely and authentically. The Adaptive Child (AC) responds over-compliantly or over-rebelliously or psyches things out like a Little Professor. Using this model, external and internal dialogues can be diagrammed. J.I.C.

So what is the difference and why is the difference so important?

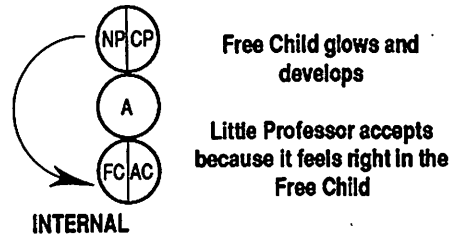
If you now take note of how the message is worded, you will notice that the message is being sent from one person to another or from one part of a person to another part of that person's self.

I identified the following steps in that process:

1. Message is sent from the Nurturing Parent of one person to the Free Child of the other person. "I love who you are."
2. Message is received by the Free Child who feels good.
3. The Little Professor intuitively knows that the message makes sense and accepts it.
4. The message from the Nurturing Parent is thus received by the Free Child who can incorporate it into the whole self. I diagrammed it thus:



5. Having accepted the message from the Child and having integrated it, the person can now nurture self with the same message. "I love who you are."



This process made a lot of sense to me and highlighted the importance of the Nurturing Parent in the process. Instead of a person attempting to convince themselves from their own Child, they were being taken care of by someone else's and their own Nurturing Parent.

Jean then went on to show us different ways to use the messages and you will notice again the use of the Parent in these techniques.

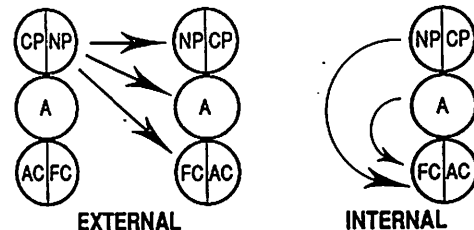
1. Participants find a partner. A selects messages she wants to hear. B conveys the message to A. e.g. I like the way you initiate things.
2. Participants in groups of threes. A selects messages she wants to hear. B and C convey the messages to her indirectly by saying it to each other about her. e.g. I like the way she initiates things.
3. Participants in groups of ten. Five people form inner circle seated. Five participants form outer circle standing behind them. Inner circle participants select message they want to hear. The message is conveyed by each person in the outer circle in turn, so that the message is received from five different Nurturing Parents. Change places and repeat the exercise.

Thanks to Jean Illsley Clarke's different approach to the use of affirmations, I can now work with them comfortably, satisfied from all my ego states that the process makes sense to me.

Rosemary Taylor is a therapist in Goodwood, South Australia

**Editor's Note**

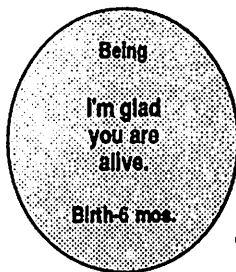
People experience affirmations in their own ways. For me the process is as follows: I check my values about the external message in my Parent (NP), evaluate it in my Adult (A), and let my Child (C) listen in. If I choose it as a fitting message for myself, I say it to myself. After I come to believe it in all three Ego States, I find that I spontaneously change the message from "I love who you are," to "I love who I am!" J.I.C.



# DEVELOPMENTAL AFFIRMATIONS

## From HELP! for Parents

From the books *HELP! for Parents of Children Birth to Five* and *HELP! for Parents of School-Age Children and Teenagers*, HarperCollins, 1993 by Jean Illsley Clarke, et. al.



### Being, Stage I, 0 to 6 months

- I'm glad you are alive.
- You belong here.
- What you need is important to me.
- I'm glad you are you.
- You can grow at your own pace.
- You can feel all of your feelings.
- ♥ I love you and I care for you willingly.

### Doing, Stage II, 6 to 18 months

- You can explore and experiment and I will support and protect you.
- You can use all of your senses when you explore.
- You can do things as many times as you need to.
- You can know what you know.
- You can be interested in everything.
- I like to watch you initiate and grow and learn.
- ♥ I love you when you are active and when you are quiet.

### Thinking, Stage III, 18 months to 3 years

- I'm glad you are starting to think for yourself.
- It's OK for you to be angry and I won't let you hurt yourself or others.
- You can say no and push and test limits as much as you need to.
- You can learn to think for yourself and I will think for myself.
- You can think and feel at the same time.
- You can know what you need and ask for help.
- ♥ I love you when you become separate from me and I will continue to love you.

### Identity and Power, Stage IV, 3 to 6 years

- You can explore who you are and find out who other people are.
- You can be powerful and ask for help at the same time.
- You can try out different roles and ways of being powerful.
- You can find out the results of your behavior.
- All of your feelings are OK with me.
- You can learn what is pretend and what is real.
- ♥ I love who you are.

### Structure, Stage V, 6 to 12 years

- You can think before you say yes or no and learn from your mistakes.
- You can trust your intuition to help you decide what to do.
- You can find a way of doing things that works for you.
- You can learn the rules that help you live with others.
- You can learn when and how to disagree.
- You can think for yourself and get help instead of staying in distress.
- ♥ I love you even when we differ; I love growing with you.

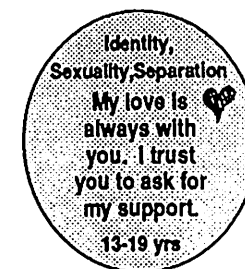
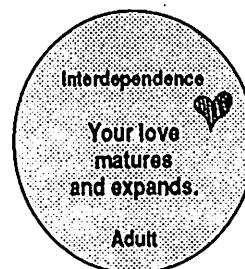
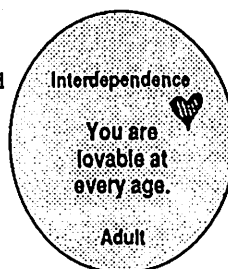
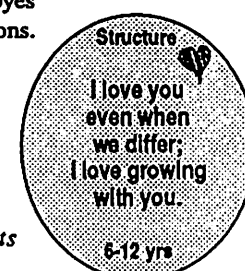
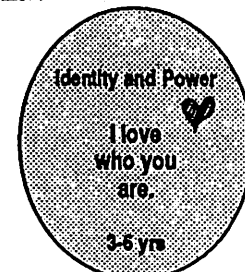
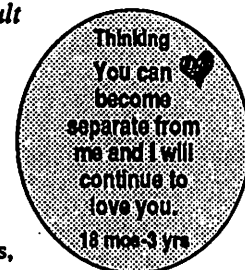
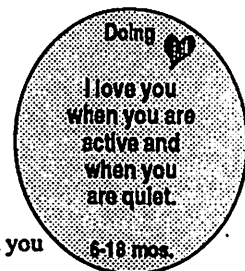
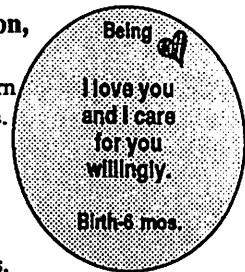
### Identity, Sexuality and Separation, Stage VI, Adolescence

- You can know who you are and learn and practice skills for independence.
- You can learn the difference between sex and nurturing and be responsible for your needs and behavior.
- You can develop your own interests, relationships and causes.
- You can learn to use old skills in new ways.
- You can grow in your maleness or femaleness and still be dependent at times.
- I look forward to knowing you as an adult.
- ♥ My love is always with you. I trust you to ask for my support.

### Interdependence, Stage VII, Adult

- Your needs are important.
- You can be uniquely yourself and honor the uniqueness of others.
- You can be independent and interdependent.
- Through the years, you can expand your commitments to your own growth, to your family, your friends, your community, and to all humankind.
- You can build and examine your commitments to your values and causes, your roles and your tasks.
- You can be responsible for your contributions to each of your commitments.
- You can be creative, competent, productive, and joyful.
- You can trust your inner wisdom.
- You can say your hellos and goodbyes to people, roles, dreams and decisions.
- You can finish each part of your journey and look forward to the next.
- ♥ Your love matures and expands.
- ♥ You are lovable at every age.

The affirmations marked with hearts are called "Love Affirmations."



Permission to copy, Jean Illsley Clarke.

# ACTIVITIES:

## Affirmations Telephone

Created by Pamela Searles, Certified Facilitator, Minnetonka, Minnesota

### Structure, Stage V

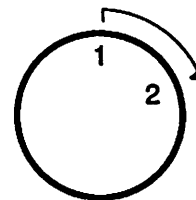
- You can think before you say yes or no and learn from your mistakes.
- You can trust your intuition to help you decide what to do.
- You can find a way of doing things that works for you.
- You can learn the rules that help you live with others.
- You can learn when and how to disagree.
- You can think for yourself and get help instead of staying in distress.
- I love you even when we differ; I love growing with you.

Group members stand in a circle with affirmation posters placed where they can be seen and read. We use affirmations for Stage V.

The leader stands in the middle of the circle and says:

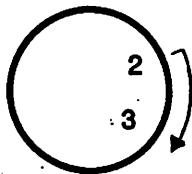
- Children play a game called Telephone. They whisper a message around the circle and by the time it gets to the end, it's all messed up and silly. We are each going to pass a telephone message but today we will keep the messages the same and not change them.

- Choose the affirmation you want to pass.
- When I give the signal to the person starting, person

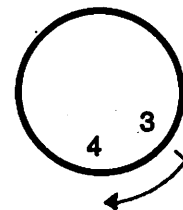


No. 1, he will whisper his affirmation to the person next to him, No. 2.

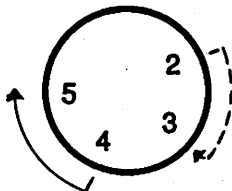
- No. 2 whispers the affirmation to person No. 3:



- No. 3 whispers the affirmation to person No. 4.

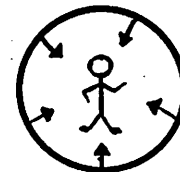


• While No. 4 is whispering to No. 5, person No. 2 will whisper her chosen affirmation to No. 3 who will then pass it on.



- Continue until everyone's affirmation has come full circle and returned to its sender.

- When all the affirmations have gone around the circle the leader asks the group members to say an affirmation of the leader's choice to him/her in unison.



## Ground Rules Affirmation Exercise

### POSTER

#### Ground Rules

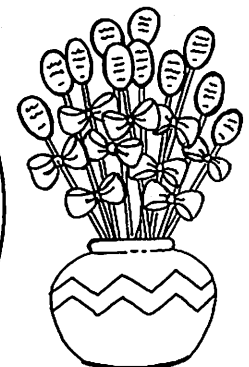
1. Everyone participates
2. Right to pass
3. All beliefs honored
4. Mutual respect
5. Confidentiality

- Explain the ground rules.
- Throw affirmation ovals on the floor or table. Have people pick an affirmation they feel helps honor one of the ground rules for them.
- Have people place the affirmations (stickers or masking tape on back) on the poster under the ground rule they picked.
- Ask people to share with the group why they picked the specific affirmation for a specific ground rule.

Created by Nancy Barnes as suggested by Mary Gale, Calgary, Alberta

## Wands Whenever

Pam McElmeel puts affirmation stickers on the end of a kabob stick, ties a ribbon on it to make a wand, puts a bouquet of the wands in a pot, and invites children, baby-sitters and guests to feel free to take a wand whenever.



Created by Pam McElmeel, Seattle, Washington

# Using Affirmations With Parents Of Children With Disabilities

by Marilyn S. Neel

I was introduced to the developmental affirmations (page 4) a few years ago... at first, I was a little skeptical but soon learned and realized their power. Now I not only use them frequently in all areas of my life but also have adapted ones especially for parents of children with disabilities.

All of the developmental affirmations may be used, but I have found that parents of special needs children also have special issues they deal with that may need extra affirming. Special needs parents are not only recycling early stages of their own development, but also are dealing with and adapting to the demands of having a special needs child. Parents react differently at different times and benefit from a variety of messages that affirm them and offer them power, protection and permission about the situations and issues that they face in their unique and ongoing situation.

The special needs affirmations have so far been adapted for the developmental tasks of being, doing, thinking, power & identity, and structure. In my thirteen years of work with these parents in a developmental treatment center, I have watched parents weave in and out of these stages depending on where they are in recycling, adapting to their child's disability and also where their child is developing, keeping in mind that these children are delayed in physical and/or mental development.

I have adapted the developmental affirmations to address issues that these parents deal with over and over again.

Space does not permit me to write all of the affirmations in this article. Here are some of the highlights of each stage.

**1. Being...** I will not rush you to accept your child's disability or talk about it when you are not ready. You can adjust to your child's limitations at your own pace.

**2. Doing...** Regardless of the progress your child makes, you are still a loving and lovable parent. You can experiment and explore how and when to do the therapy exercises at home with your child.

## DOING

Regardless of the progress your child makes, you are still a loving and lovable parent.

## THINKING

You can feel and think about your needs as a person and as a parent of a special child.

**3. Thinking...** You can feel and think about your needs as a person and as a parent of a special child. You are capable of thinking of different resources including schools, agencies or people to consult about your and your child's needs.

**4. Power & Identity...** You can learn the difference between what you would like your child to do and be and what he/she is capable of doing and being. You can experience and feel a wide variety of feelings as a parent of a child with special needs and you will continue to have our support.

**5. Structure...** You may be told a lot of different information by many people. You may disagree with them. You can decide how you feel about the information and what to do about it. It's okay to disagree. You can work toward an agreeable solution for everyone.

## STRUCTURE

You can decide how you feel about the information and what to do about it. It's okay to disagree.

How do I use the affirmations? I use them in a variety of ways depending on the situation. Here are some suggestions.

1. I initially affirm the parents when I first meet them by giving them lots of Being messages.
2. I use affirmations frequently in my initial interviews and introduction to the center.
3. When talking or in therapy with a parent I use affirmations appropriate to the issues being discussed.
4. I give parents copies of the affirmations so they can read them over and over again.
5. I use them in our monthly newsletter. I have found the affirmations to be quite powerful. I invite you to use them and watch their power.

Marilyn S. Neel, ACSW is a Certified Facilitator in Louisville, Kentucky

References: Levin, Pam. *Becoming the Way We Are: A Transactional Guide to Personal Development*, 1974.

Clarke, Jean Illsley & Dawson, Connie. *Growing Up Again*, 1989.  
Badry, Dorothy, et. al. *Letters to Our Children*, 1993.

## BOOK REVIEW:

### *Positive Self-Talk For Children, Teaching Self-Esteem Through Affirmations: A Guide for Parents, Teachers, and Counselors*

by Douglas Bloch with Jon Merritt

Bantam Books, New York, 1993

Reviewed by Jean Illsley Clarke

If you don't understand or believe the potential of using affirmations, this book is for you. In Part 1, *The Power of the Spoken Word*, the authors explain how and why "Sticks and Stones Will Break My Bones, But Words Will Wound Me Forever."

Also, this book is for you if you want a map for helping children or adults develop their own affirmations. In Chapter 3, *Introducing Positive Self-Talk to Children*, Bloch and Merritt describe, with many examples, how to help children create and use affirmations. Their process includes:

1. *Pick an area of your life that you wish to work on.*
2. *Decide what you want to occur in that area of life.*
3. *Formulate a concise statement that expresses the desired outcome. (This is the affirmation.)*
4. *Experience how the affirmation feels.*
5. *Repeat the affirmations.*
6. *Be consistent.*

This is very exciting! After the plethora of affirmation books and tapes that *prescribe* "I am..." statements, here is a much needed model for helping children get what *they* need, not what someone else thinks they need.

For example, Carol is guided to rewrite her negative self-talk about grades from:

There must be something wrong with me.  
I'm not as smart as my friends.  
I'll never do as well as my friends.  
I'm a failure.

to her own self-esteem affirmations:

I measure my progress by my own  
internal standards.  
I compete with myself.  
Success is doing better than I did last time.  
I'm glad when my friends and I meet  
our personal goals.

I let go of the desire to compare myself to them.

There are many wise words in this book that we can all take to heart:

*As you affirm your child on a regular basis, he will automatically internalize the words you say and affirm himself. The underlying word behind every affirmation is YES! and the underlying emotion is love...*

*In working with children who have been traumatized, it is not appropriate to use affirmations early on to minimize the trauma or to cut off the child's feelings. Children need to fully feel their pain before they are ready to release it.*

*In addition, affirmations are not a "quick fix." Changing thinking patterns takes a long time, even with excellent therapeutic support. Nonetheless, affirmations are a tool that can promote attitudinal healing, especially when they are used with other forms of support.*

The authors also offer a wide variety of affirmations for specific situations. These include positive self-talk for children with special needs and affirmations for a variety of adult situations.

As usual, readers need to use common sense. Surely we set a child up for magical thinking if we *impose* upon him the affirmation, "I am the right weight for my age," if he isn't. It is better to help him develop his own affirmation in his own words. Or, we may set a child up to feel confused if we say to a child who has a badly burned face, "You are pretty." Better to say, "You are beautiful to me," or to target one feature that is attractive.

I wish the authors had consistently written to adults with the same respectful approach that they describe for children - that of building one's own special affirmations. Although affirmations are powerful, they are not magic. Prescribing the affirmation "I am comfortable with the full array of my own and Billy's feelings," for Billy's father, a man who sees feelings as a sign of weakness, may be counter productive unless the dad deals with his underlying belief about weakness. Consider offering, "You can learn the value of your own feelings and help Billy learn to accept his feelings and to express them appropriately."

The reader can, however, use prescriptions by constantly keeping in mind, "These are the affirmations someone developed. In my situation, are these the ones I need?"

### **California Earthquake News!!!**

Carole Gesme, author of *Help for Kids About Moving* and *Help for Kids About War*, has been requested to design materials to help children deal with their stress following the 6.6 level quake in California on January 17, 1994.

If you would like her 30 page packet consisting of master copies to be duplicated and collated as a booklet or used as handouts, send \$5.00 to Carole Gesme

4036 Kerry Court

Minnetonka, MN 55345

612-938-9163 612-935-2038 (fax)

## Opening Activity

### Using Affirmations.

Hand out name tags.

Ask people to:

- Choose a partner. Make a name tag for her and ask her to tell you about one affirmation that she wishes she believed more deeply.
- Introduce your partner and tell her affirmation to the group if she is willing for you to share that information.

BELIEVING  
AFFIRMATIONS

## Closing Activity

To help people learn how to accept and believe in affirmations.

At the end of the meeting, briefly review the activities of the meeting.

- Ask several people to share what they need to do to accept an affirmation that they want to believe.
- Ask for Resentments. Listen to resentments, do not defend or explain.
- Ask for Appreciations.

Edited by Jean Illsley Clarke  
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## TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

### Facilitator Training

A week-long workshop for people who want to learn and practice group facilitation skills.

June 20 - 24, 1994, Minneapolis, MN

August 8 - 12, 1994, Seattle, WA

Reminder: Facilitators who have taken the workshop anywhere may repeat it in Minneapolis for half price.

### Transactional Analysis 101

A Friday evening and all day Saturday overview of TA theory and practice.

June 17, 18, 1994, Minneapolis, MN

### Transactional Analysis Training

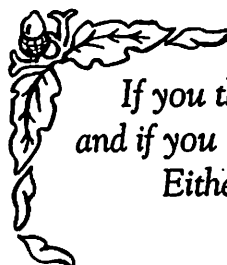
Ask about a series of workshops on the psychological system of Transactional Analysis for beginners, for professionals, and for those who want to become certified Transactional Analysts.

March 11 - 13, 1994, Minneapolis, MN

April 22 - 24, 1994, Minneapolis, MN

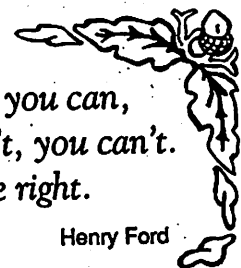
May 13 - 15, 1994, Minneapolis, MN

Write to WE for details on the workshops.



*If you think you can, you can,  
and if you think you can't, you can't.  
Either way you are right.*

Henry Ford



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