

51,765 words

# AFFIRM YOURSELF

15 Principles to Retrain the Voice in Your Head

by Jerry Levin, Ph.D., L.M.T.

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ISBN:

# Dedication


This book is dedicated to:

- My family and friends, especially my wife Karen Kiemnec, for their love, patience, support and understanding while I spent hours and hours working on this book and while I spent weeks and weeks procrastinating and working to heal my fear of success and impostor syndrome.
- The personal development giants who helped me to find myself and my ultimate life mission. They started me on the path that led to this book. They include the transformational authors: Richard Bach, Louise Hay, Wayne Dyer, and many others.

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# Section I – THE CHALLENGE

Welcome to your new opportunity. Or maybe, you've seen this one before. Since you picked up this book and cracked it open, I assume that there are some circumstances in your life that you wish were different. To state it in the simplest terms, you either want more of something or less of something else. Maybe some of each. This is a journey you are beginning, and I hope you are as excited to get started as I am to guide you. But many of you are probably not excited to encounter these challenges ... again. Let's take a quick look at what lies ahead.

This book is divided into four sections. In this section, we will consider the nature of the challenge that we *all* face from time to time. And we'll begin to take action towards a solution.

In section II, we'll consider the background information that will help you understand why this challenge has been so persistent, how you can turn the challenge into its own solution, and the scientific evidence that supports this approach.

In section III, we will cover the 15 Principles assembled here to support you in writing your own personal affirmations to achieve what you want.

Finally, in section IV, we'll wrap this all up with some tips for how to apply this and how to deal with some common problems.

Well, I can't wait to get started! How about you? Let's go.

# Chapter 1 - The Voice in Your Head

What are you thinking right now?

What were you thinking before you started reading this?

Really. It's important. What were you thinking just before you thought about picking up this book? What have you been thinking about so far today? Stop reading for a moment and do your best to remember some of your most recent thoughts. I'll wait right here.

---

Dum, dum, dum, dum, dum, dum, dum

(*Jeopardy* theme song) ...

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Were those thoughts about something you would like to experience in your life on a regular basis? Were they joyful, loving, healing, self-empowering thoughts?

If you recently had some great news that resulted in a currently joyful mental atmosphere, I am happy for you. Do your best to keep it up. This book will help you do just that.

If you're like most of us, the answer is definitely NO! Those thoughts you were thinking were probably critical, judgmental thoughts. And yet we let ourselves think about those things - repeatedly day after day. We act as if we have no choice. Actually, we do. It is one of the few things that we have total control over, and no one else has any influence unless we give it to them. Yet, we act as if we have no control over our thoughts. How's that for a paradox?

Before we dig into the meat of this book I need to speak to certain types of readers.

### For the Open-Minded Reader

If you are excited to learn more about the power of affirmations and how to use them better, I promise you are in the right place. If you are willing to practice some unfamiliar skills, you can gain a powerful tool that will help you with any of your life's challenges. I'm right here with you every step of the way.

### For the "I Just Stumbled on to This and Don't Know What I Think About It" Reader

You have a book in your hands that will introduce you to a powerful tool (unbiased opinion) that you have probably been misusing because you didn't even realize you were using it. Once you understand what this tool is and how it can serve you when properly managed, you'll be able to overcome most of the challenges that you now experience.

### For the Skeptical Reader

If you're coming to this book with a healthy skepticism of anything really different, you should know that I consider skepticism to be a good quality. My first career was as a research scientist, and reasonable skepticism is essential for good science. There is a lot of misinformation and disinformation circulating today, especially on the internet. I actually encountered some of it myself, as you'll see a bit further in this book. In addition, an enlightened, converted skeptic can become a strong promoter of an idea they once doubted.

Before you give in to your skepticism and pass this book on to local Goodwill or library, I hope, for your own sake, that you will read the next few chapters about the proof that

affirmations work *and actually* give them a try. As you'll see, you have nothing to lose except some time. There must be something that drew you to this since you picked up this book. Are you hoping to find help for a problem? Have you tried several other strategies unsuccessfully? This just might be the one that does the trick for you. Don't give up on yourself before you dig a bit deeper by reading several chapters.

## A Roadmap for Your Journey

This chapter introduces you to affirmations as a tool for transformation and healing. It'll provide you with a framework for how they can be used alone and in conjunction with other life-enhancing tools.

You'll be writing your own affirmations very soon. But there's some introductory information we need to cover first:

- the scientific proof of the power of your thoughts,
- how you have been misusing this power so far,
- how the solution to this challenge is contained within the challenge itself, as is often the case, and
- the important process of picking your initial project.

This is followed by the first in a series of chapters on the 15 Principles for writing powerful affirmations. Four of these principles are commonly known and are even listed in the Wikipedia definition: "..., it needs to be present tense, positive, personal and specific."

I've added 11 more Principles to aid you (and me) in formulating the best affirmations. To my knowledge, these additional qualities of effective affirmations have not been described elsewhere. I have taken some poetic liberty with naming these attributes of affirmations as the 15 P's. Maybe we should call them The Principles of aPhirmations to help us remember the 15 P's. (As you'll see, I love alliterations.)

But you do not need all 15 Principles to get started. You will begin to write your own affirmations as you learn about the first three Principles in Chapter 8. If you can't wait to get started, you can jump ahead to page XXX now and go for it. But do come back here soon and

finish this introductory material. It will give you a context and a solid foundation for your continuing work.

## The Journey Begins

Think about one or two goals that you have now. What is ‘missing’ from your life? What do you want more (or less) of right now? Do these goals have anything to do with why you are reading this book? I hope so.

Now go back to those thoughts you’ve been thinking, your stream of consciousness that just keeps flowing, seemingly on its own. Are *those* thoughts leading you toward your goals or away from them?

Most likely, that stream of consciousness is toxic, polluted. It is leading you *away* from your dreams, your heart’s desire. It is *suppressing* the full expression of the very best you that you can be.

That stream of consciousness has been poisoned by a polluter upstream (more about the polluter soon), and it is critical, judgmental, fearful, maybe even mean and nasty.

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If anyone else talked to you the way that Voice in Your Head does, you would *banish* them from your life forever. And rightly so. You would never allow them in your presence again. You would certainly stop listening to them. You wouldn’t pay attention to anything they said. You wouldn’t allow them to advise you about how to proceed (or not) with anything.

And yet we all do that most of the time.

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We listen to that crap day in and day out. There's a survival value, an evolutionary reason, for that, which I'll get to it in a bit. But first, let's get crystal clear that **the Voice in Your Head is *not* your friend. And, *this is very important*, that Voice is **NOT YOU!****

In fact, it might be helpful for you to get a bit angry with that diatribe going on in your head. That is the last thing that you should ever be listening to. It is mostly a great big pile of **LIES** (and that's the *niciest* thing I can say about it).

This book is about affirmations, positive statements you repeat to yourself to empower yourself. But before we dive into affirmations, we must become aware of what is currently being broadcast on the radio station you are tuned into in your head. I call that crap awful-mations because it is the direct opposite, the antithesis, of affirmations.

**Momentary Sidetrack:** If you are thinking, "What Voice? I don't hear any Voice in my head". That's it! That's the Voice I am talking about. Listen carefully to what it is saying to you and about you. ***Don't believe it but*** do listen. Notice that it is speaking to you in a way to confuse you into thinking that it is your voice, that it is you speaking. It is NOT!

Normally I don't like harboring negative emotions like anger, but when someone or something is hurting me, criticizing me, or putting me down over and over, a bit of anger is biologically appropriate. When they are holding me back, causing me to doubt myself constantly, and interfering with my progress toward goals that are important to me and valuable to my family, friends, and maybe the whole world, anger is an appropriate reaction. Not allowing



yourself to feel this anger would amount to stuffing what is biologically appropriate and that is definitely unhealthy.

The Voice in my Head is regularly telling me to do things that are physically harmful or to not do healthy, productive things. It wants me to eat unhealthy foods and skip exercising, for example. In this way, it is literally killing me, shortening my life, depriving me of my God-given right to vibrant health, comfort in my body, and a full measure of years of life well lived in joy and accomplishment. It encourages me to sort through my email instead of working on this book. This has delayed and inhibited my work on this project which is so meaningful to my heart and soul and which, I believe, will be very meaningful to you.. Anger is an appropriate response to that. Anger can be motivating. When I get angry, I have the energy and drive to make changes that are necessary and appropriate for the situation. This is self-preservation, self-appreciation, and self-empowerment.

I invite you to notice what you are feeling as you listen to your Inner Voice. But do not let yourself get stuck in any negative emotions, like anger, frustration, depression, or the like. Feel them if they come up, and then let them go and move on.

Now, I want to assure you that this is not an angry book. We are not going to wallow in pages of bitching about the Voice in Our Heads. I have an excellent solution for you. This book is about the solution. But first, it is *critical to get really clear* about the problem. We need the kind of clarity that leads to determination to do something different. You're going to need that determination.

We need to learn to think differently about ourselves, our abilities, relationships, health, etc. And that's what this book is about. You have been thinking the way you are thinking for a long, long time, so it is a deeply entrenched habit. But know this: habits *can* be changed.

You have probably assumed that that Voice in Your Head is you. Most people do. I did for decades. I was literally shocked when I started to realize that The Voice was not me. This is the quote that started my thinking about that (I wish I could remember who to attribute to):

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“If you think the voice in your head is you speaking, who is it that is listening?”

~ Unknown source

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And now here I am telling you that you shouldn't listen to that voice, the one that you assume is you speaking. So, this is no small feat we are undertaking, you and me. Let's be honest. It's substantial. And I am here with you every step of the way. I promise.

If you are still puzzling about “who is listening,” I'll tell you. *YOU* are the listener. You are the being that other cultures refer to as “the Witness.” That diatribe in your head is not you speaking. You are the listener. And, most unfortunately, you have been believing and accepting what the Voice is telling you, as I did for a very long time. And what it is telling you is almost entirely a pack of lies.

If this book is about anything, it's about helping you learn to stop listening to that Voice and substitute your own personal Truth. It is very hard to get the Voice to shut up, but you can stop listening to it. You can stop engaging with it. You can change the inner dialogue that you consciously repeat to reflect the truth about yourself.

I've been walking this path for years, nay, decades. I have gotten lost on most of the twists and turns. I know where there are traps and pits in the path. I am here to guide you and to help you up when you fall, which you will. But if you are persistent, *you will succeed!*

Ready? Let's get started.

## Quality vs. Quantity

We have a huge number of thoughts every day. If you do a Google search for “number of thoughts per day,” you will find estimates ranging from 6,000 to 70,000 per day. When I first saw these figures, they were so huge that I didn’t believe it was possible. If I imagined that it might be true, I was exhausted by the thought of all that thinking.

Most of these internet articles state that over 90% of these thoughts are repetitive, they recur day after day, and that about 70% of our thoughts are NEGATIVE.

I could not find any documented research supporting these numbers. But the implications are ominous, even if they are grossly overstated.

We have a great number of thoughts every day, and most of them are negative. The number of thoughts I have each day is not important to me, but the quality of those thoughts is *very* important.

The point is that we have a lot of negative thoughts every day. I believe that my affirmation practice has allowed me to decrease that. But, more importantly, affirmations have enabled me to change the quality of those thoughts. It used to be mostly crap. And now it is much better.

This book is about changing the nature of the dialogue in your head. You have been practicing your current thought pattern for a very long time. It has become an ingrained, subconscious habit. It will not change by simply reading this book. This is a workbook, and you will have to do some mental/emotional work to practice new, more accurate, more supportive, and more joyful thought patterns.

Reading about this engages the Understanding part of your brain. Doing the exercises engages a totally different part of your brain, the Action part. The Understanding part provides clarity about why the doing is critical. Understanding opens the door to doing. But it is the doing

that provides the practice needed to learn a new skill and turn it into a habit. These exercises are the doing. So just do them!



### First Exercise

(The trophy emoji will be used to designate an exercise.)

Before you can change anything, you have to be clear about where you are starting from.

If you want to get to Chicago, you have to be clear exactly where you are now. The directions for how to get to Chicago are very different if you are starting in Baltimore or in San Francisco. Similarly, if you want to improve the quality of your life, you first need clarity about your current situation.

So, this first exercise is about getting a clear picture of the default conversation from the Voice in your head.

- **Make a note of some of your thoughts for a few days.**

Not all of them, of course. Given the number of thoughts we have each day, if you wrote them all down, you would do nothing else, and you'd have a bad writer's cramp.

But do record enough of them that you can get a clear sense of where your consciousness is now. What is the Voice telling you day in and day out? A good goal would be 50-100 thoughts.

You can record them in a simple memo-type, spiral notebook, or by using the Notes app on your smartphone. With the digital version, you can probably dictate a short note about the thought.

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“Pay attention to what you pay attention to.”

~ Amy Krouse Rosenthal

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I just started to do this again with you. I created a new note in my iPhone Notes app and titled it My Thoughts and today's date. On the next line, I typed a "1." to start a list. Now, the app will sequentially number them. Then I type the first short thought: "I don't want to do this."

To make this list of thoughts really useful later, it would be great to add one or two words to each thought describing the feeling that accompanies that thought. The feeling associated with my first thought was "resistance." We could discuss whether that is a feeling or not, but I know what it means and how it feels. It is not an unusual feeling for me. It will help me understand my common thoughts when I go through the list later.

I also set a Reminder in my smartphone that will go off every day and repeat every couple hours starting at 9 a.m. That will help me remember to do this. If I miss a notification or two, no biggie. The goal is not to do this perfectly but to do it and capture 5-10 thoughts per day.

If you use the Reminder feature of your smartphone software, try to capture the thought you were thinking just before you noticed the Reminder. Once or twice, you can note the thought you had in reaction to noticing the Reminder. But mostly, you are looking for your default thoughts in response to your everyday life events.

One of the tricks I have used to make this easier for myself is to imagine that I am sitting in a booth at a diner, and the Voice that I hear is coming from someone in the booth behind me. This helps me listen without identifying with what is said. It also helps me recognize that the Voice in My Head is not me.

That's it, pretty simple and very little time commitment. After collecting 50-100 thoughts like this, I strongly recommend that you take 5-10 minutes to review your thoughts and the associated feelings. Save this list for later exercises. It will serve as personal reference material. If you feel it's necessary, you should be able to password-protect the Note on your phone.

### **Very Important Issue**

This book has a number of exercises, and you should give serious consideration to how you are going to respond to them. There are two options:

1. You can skim over reading these exercises and finish reading the book. I still get paid for your book purchase, but you will get relatively little value from your investment of time and money. You will get something, but nowhere near what is available for you.
2. You can take these exercises seriously, as if they might show you how to alter the course of your life in a good way.

I highly recommend you take the second approach. But then, I am definitely biased.

Taking these exercises seriously will look like whatever it has looked (and felt) like in your life in the past when you have practiced something new that had potential value for you.

When you were in school, did you take the required practice (homework) seriously? In some subjects? Did you play on any sports teams where you had a coach who told you to do some things that may have been uncomfortable? Have you ever hired a coach for golf, tennis, guitar, a foreign language, or a job skill you needed to acquire?

How was that for you? I imagine that sometimes you were enthusiastic about being told to practice, and other times you dragged your feet and made excuses. What made the difference?

I'll tell you what made the difference, your attitude, your assumptions about what the exercises could do for you, and what they would “cost” you in effort.

As with most things in your life, the choice is yours. Before you decide to take what looks like the easy path and just skim through this, realize that the first option above is easy right now, and that type of choice is what got you here ... to a place in your life that you are not entirely satisfied with.

There is a scene from one of my favorite movies, *The Matrix*, that is poignant at this juncture. If you remember, Neo (Keanu Reeves) has just been picked up by some of the good guys and is being taken to meet their leader, Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne). On the way, they insist that he submit to being searched for a bug planted in his body by the bad guys. When he resists, his contact with the good guys, Trinity (Carrie-Ann Moss), says: “Stop the car!” They do, and she throws open the back door next to Neo for him to get out. The camera follows his gaze down a dark, rainy, foreboding street in a warehouse district. As he starts to get out, Trinity touches his arm, points down the dark street, and says: “You know what’s down there Neo.”





She is referring to the aching sense he has had that something is wrong, something is off, something is missing in his life. The sense that his life doesn't have to be like it is. It could be much, much better. She is niggling at his feeling that there is a whole universe that he is missing, an amazing life experience that is waiting to be discovered.

Imagine that Trinity is sitting there with you now. She touches your arm and says to you:

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“You know what lies ahead if you continue on this same path you’ve been on. You have more than enough history with the results of the way you have been living to know that if you keep going that way, nothing will improve, and none of your dreams and goals will be realized. And some of your concerns and complaints will just get worse. If you keep going the way that you are, you will wind up where you are headed. It’s that simple.”

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Are you OK with that? No? Then, you *have* to change the path you are headed down. That’s all there is to it. Some of you will. Hallelujah! Some of you won’t. I am sorry to admit that, but it is true. And I promise to be here if and when you change your mind in the future. It is always totally up to you.

I truly wish it were different and that I could just say: “I want to change this about myself,” and it would be done that easily. We will talk soon about why this can be so hard. But for now you will have to act on faith like Neo did in *The Matrix*. (If you haven’t seen the movie, he submits to their request, meets Morpheus, and his life changes **dramatically** so that he becomes the savior of humanity.)

Understand this clearly: nothing that I have said or will say in this book is about making you wrong or pointing out your ‘defects’ in any way because you are *not* wrong or defective in any way. You are simply uninformed, and reading this book *and* doing these exercises can help change that.

If I haven’t convinced you to **do** these exercises yet, will some groveling work? Please, please, please. I *am* begging you. Do this. Not for me, for you. It will be challenging, but you have succeeded in so many challenges already. If not for yourself, if not for me, ask yourself, “Who else in your life is counting on you?” Do it for them.



**If You Think You’d Prefer a Book of 1000 Done-For-You Affirmations, Read This:**

(The 🌟 emoji will be used to draw your attention to an important point.)

I may have some experience on how to write affirmations, but the world’s best expert on writing affirmations for you is YOU! You know what feels good or bad to you; no one else does or can. You know what sounds natural rather than artificial. And as you work through the process of writing your own affirmations you will become more consciously aware of these preferences and be able to easily write your own affirmations way better than any so-called expert because you are *the* expert on YOU!

Yes, it may be quicker and easier to pick a relevant affirmation from a categorized list of 1000. But if it doesn’t work, then it’s not easier. It’s a total waste of time and discourages you from working with affirmations, one of the most powerful tools for healing and personal development. That is a significant loss which may also cause you to doubt the validity of many other resources. Worse yet, it may heap more fuel on the smoldering fire of self-criticism.

The truth is that anything really worth achieving will probably require some work and effort from you. There are so many sayings that validate this, like:

- “You get what you pay for,” whether you pay in coin or time or the discomfort of changing or all three.
- "Nothing in life is worthwhile unless it's kind of hard to get there." ~ Carli Lloyd
- “If you want the rainbow, you gotta put up with the rain.” ~ Dolly Parton
- “Many people delay taking action because they hope to avoid suffering. They keep searching for a path that won’t involve tradeoffs. But some form of suffering is always inevitable. The process of taking action is the process of choosing your pain.”  
~ James Clear

Yes, it is a challenge to learn how to do this. And the truth is that no one else can really do it for you. Sorry. I can point the way and advise you and support you, but I can’t do it for you, nor can anyone else.

The biggest reason is that words have baggage. I use the phrase ‘charged words’ to refer to words that have an emotional charge for us. The emotions could be positive and uplifting or negative and contracting. The charge on these words comes from one of two sources:

- Externally charged words are words that have a similar charge for nearly everyone or for a group of people that is important to you. Words like love, peace, murder, starvation, and vomit are externally charged words that affect most of us similarly. Racial slurs and denigrating words like fat affect those they are applied to (and some caring bystanders).

- Internally charged words are words that have an emotional charge for an individual because of an experience they had probably during childhood. I had a friend who had a strong, angry reaction to the word ‘fool’ because his father verbally abused him by repeatedly calling him a fool. It affected him for his whole life, and he carried it like a load of bricks.

Usually, I know about the externally charged words that might adversely affect others. But I *can't* know about your internally charged words unless you are aware of them yourself and tell me about them. It took years of getting to know the friend I just mentioned before he told me about the abuse his father heaped on him.

If I suggest an affirmation to you unaware of your list of internally charged words, I may suggest some that won't work for you. If you are fully aware, consciously, of the effect of the offensive word on you, you can avoid those affirmations or change that word. But the majority of us are oblivious to many of these effects. Even a subtle, negatively charged word in an affirmation can cause an unconscious refusal to accept it, making it ineffective or, worse, counterproductive.

And then you might doubt yourself, thinking that “you are doing it wrong” or that “these things never work for you.” More negative crap loaded on your pile when all along it is the affirmation that is at fault.

By contrast, if you were to write the affirmation yourself with some guidance, support, and examples, you can learn to pay attention to how it feels to you when you repeat it. You will learn that if it doesn't feel right, look for the bothersome word or phrase and change it as often as necessary until you have a good fit. You will know that you have a good fit by how it feels when

you repeat the affirmation to yourself over a period of several days. When the affirmation makes you smile, feel safe and warm, excited, and powerful, it is a good affirmation for you.

Much more on this later, but for now, just know that the quick and easy path is often the less effective path. While the most effective path sometimes appears to be the harder, more painful, and less desirable path.

### **Don't Wait As Long As I Did**

I was afraid of how writing these books would change my life. I was afraid that I wouldn't be able to do a decent job of it. I was enjoying my retirement and the easy, relaxed lifestyle it offered. If/When these books are successful and help a lot of people improve the quality of their lives, it will dramatically change my life. This scared me. I was afraid of recreating myself *again*. Maybe I would succeed. Maybe I would fail. I'm not sure which one scared me more, but I think it was success.

With failure, I would 'waste' a lot of time and effort, and my life situation would basically remain the same. No one would criticize me because we all have heard myriad stories about unsuccessful, struggling authors. In truth, I would be critical of myself because I know this is something I can do if I just put in enough time and effort.

On the other hand, with success, my life might be turned upside down. New situations, people, responsibilities, possibilities, opportunities. Familiar things and people and circumstances I might have to give up. Without trying to sound over-melodramatic, it feels like I might be in for a life transplant.

I am also afraid of outliving and 'beating' my father, whom I loved and whose approval I craved. I was afraid of being so involved with the author thing that I'd ignore my family and other important areas of my life - and maybe I already was.

I let all these fears sidetrack and delay me for years. All because of the Voice In My Head.

I recommend you don't do the same. Instead, I urge you to grab the opportunity that is offered here and run with it. But clearly, that, too, is entirely up to you.

If any of those fears, or others, are holding you back. You can use affirmations to change that for yourself. That's what I finally am doing.

If you haven't started working on the first exercise, ask yourself why.

Ok, enough. Either you're convinced or not. Moving on.

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# Chapter 2 - What Is That Voice?

Simple answer: It is not you. It is not your voice; it is the voice of the past.

Should you pay attention to it? *Yes.*

Should you do what it is telling you? *Maybe, maybe not.*

You must decide in the moment whether that advice is good for you. Will it advance your goals at this time or distract you? Is it healthy for you or not?

You might decide that the advice *will* support your goals, and then you may find out later that you were wrong. If you discover that the advice may be leading you away from your goals, don't beat yourself up. Learn and change what you are doing.

Remember that this Voice of Fear is operating from a base of internalized rules about what is good and what is bad. Some of these rules are prehistoric, like “watch out for saber-toothed tigers.” Some of them are old, like “Do your chores before you go out and play.” And some of them are current, like “Today I have to work on that report.” All of them need to be evaluated in the moment. They may need to be changed according to your current needs and circumstances.

The mistake isn't in listening to all the comments and cautions of your inner voice. The mistake is automatically assuming them to be the best advice or assuming that it is you speaking to yourself.

The purpose of this voice is singular: *to keep you safe*. That's a good thing. But if it is trying to keep you safe by creating a fear of getting out of bed, you may need to think about that and maybe challenge it.

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If you have a substantial goal, the Voice probably has a substantial objection.

~ Jerry Levin

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How can I know that? Simple, if the voice didn't have such an objection, you would almost certainly have accomplished that goal already or be making real and significant progress towards it daily and weekly. For example:

- if your goal is to take on a big work project, the Voice may be telling you that you aren't smart enough or don't have enough time, or
- if you want to have a loving, intimate relationship, the Voice may remind you of all the times in the past when you 'failed' and how much it hurt, or
- if your desire is for financial independence, the Voice may be telling you that "you have to have money to make money," or "rich people are all mean and selfish and won't be able to get into Heaven," or "you don't know how to be responsible with money."

You weren't born with this Voice in your head. No one is. You were born with the ability to remember information, especially information repeated with strong emotions, and repeat it back to yourself. You, and almost all infants, were born with *this* ability. That is your hardware, to use a familiar computer analogy.

Your parents were the first and most important 'programmers' of this 'hardware.' They provided the 'software,' the emotionally laced messages that your mind committed to memory and then repeated back to you at appropriate moments. Some of the most powerful messages they gave you were not verbal but behavioral. Their actions spoke louder than their words.



All the authority figures in your life have provided these messages: relatives, teachers, religious leaders, media, influential friends, etc. Many of these messages, maybe most of them, were presented by people who believed them to be true and told them to you to help you, to teach you what they already ‘knew.’ We can assume that all of them were well-meaning in what they told you. According to the analogy I used in the first few pages, these authority figures are the unwitting polluters of your stream of consciousness.

When we think something might be true, our mind starts to look for evidence to support it. Then, when we find some experience that fits with what we were told, we believe that message even more and look more intensely for even more support.

We are all born with this mechanism for learning lessons that will keep us safe. And we have no shortage of authority figures who want to support our well-being by providing us with lessons they have learned. This process gets reinforced throughout your life until now, here you are facing a “monster” that you helped create, which is keeping you from achieving your heart’s desires.

Sounds hopeless and disheartening. But, there is hope within that very same scenario.

You are a creative, conscious being with numerous skills, lots of creativity, and support. This mechanism is just that, a mechanism.



And you can learn to use it rather than be used by it.

With affirmations, you can re-train this mechanism to work for you just as you supported its original training that is now working against you in some ways. By becoming your own authority figure, the person who knows what you want and what you need to do to get it, you can tell yourself over and over truthful, accurate statements about yourself, your abilities, and your goals.

By reprogramming your mind this way, you are installing a new and improved update to your operating system. This will reset your habitual thoughts by imprinting new ones that support, encourage, and lead you to your goals rather than discouraging and disempowering you with doubts and fears.

You have this powerful mechanism within you that was trained to doubt and criticize you, making it harder to achieve the goals that you now desire. Through the exercises in this book, you will learn to use affirmations to retrain that same Voice to support and empower you, turning that inner critic into an inner coach and collaborator. Now, how does that sound?

Be clear: This Voice that is currently working against you is clever, sneaky, and unconcerned about the truth. It has developed over eons of time to keep you safe. It has many tricks up its sleeve to deceive you in an attempt to keep you safe from yourself. You will learn to recognize these tricks over time and develop strategies to work around them and change them. But first, you must be on the lookout for them. And that will be part of every exercise you do here.

Think about this: the reason you are stuck where you are in your life is that this Voice has cleverly resisted every significant change you have wanted to make in your life. Every time you wanted to improve your health, your love life, your career, or anything else, it resisted you, often successfully. That is why you still want these things despite many valiant efforts. Whenever you attempted to change your relationship status (start or end one), it dug in its heels. Think about taking on a project of any kind, and it will come up with lots of reasons why it is a *very* bad idea. Here's why:

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That Voice doesn't like change. And there's an **evolutionary** reason for that.

~ Jerry Levin

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Change creates uncertainty and opens the door to possible unforeseen dangers. That Voice has just been trying to keep you safe. It has been a benefit to the human species to have a mechanism like this that resists change.

Think about it this way: Imagine for a moment that you are a prehistoric cave dweller.



Imagine that you are going out to get some food or water. You have a path that you have followed safely day after day. The fact that this path has been safe is very important. This world you live in is a dangerous place, and safety is more valuable than food or water. You can do without food or water for a day or two, but if you take an unsafe path, you may not live to tell about it. So, you will continue to follow this safe path until you have a *very* good reason not to, like a huge tree fell across your path. When you take a different path, you must be extra cautious because you don't know where danger might lie in wait.

There are other cavemen whose biology is a little different, and they don't pay as much attention to habitual behavior. They go off a different way each time to get their water because they like interesting, new sights. They will not find water in all directions, and they may stumble across something like the den of a dangerous animal. This will result in the gene pool being restricted to the humans who repeatedly take the safer path.

That's an idea of the evolutionary power of your conformity-craving, change-resisting habit mechanism. It is partly responsible for humans being the dominant species on Earth. It has developed over eons. This makes it a formidable power. When it has been programmed to work against you, you will have a hard time accomplishing your goals. When you understand why this is so, you can work around it to reprogram it to work for you rather than against you. And that's what the book you are reading is all about. Make sense?

If it sounds like I'm telling you that this Voice is really your BFF, I'm not. While it may occasionally warn you of a genuine threat, you should not automatically follow its every alarm. Likewise, don't throw the baby out with the bathwater and automatically ignore everything it ever says from here on.

I tell you all this not to convince you to avoid making any changes but to advise you on what will challenge you. And to assure you that if you slip up, forget to do something, or get side-tracked, it is not a sign of failure on your part. It is a sign that the Voice is working and doing its job faithfully and diligently. Just remember that it is a program that can be changed.

This was a great revelation for me personally and a significant step in my becoming more self-aware and responsive to Spirit. At one point in my developing these ideas, I realized that I was looking to this "Voice" for the solution to a problem in my life, and I simultaneously realized that this problem occurred because I had acted on the advice of this "Voice" regarding

this matter for some time now. So here I was, turning to the source of a problem for the solution to that very same problem. How silly is that? I actually burst out laughing when I realized that, and it still amuses me to this day.

This reminds me of a great quote from one of my favorite spiritual people, Albert Einstein.

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“No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.”

~ Albert Einstein

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## The Various Incarnations of the Voice(s) in My Head

I have gone through several stages in learning to deal with the Voice(s) in my head. Initially, I noticed that there seemed to be two voices that I learned to differentiate based on the emotional content of the voices. One Voice was always loud, fearful, firm, and insistent, like it was trying to prove something. I felt like that was the voice of my ego. The other Voice was soft-spoken and certain, unafraid of the outcome, like it knew the ending of the story already. This Voice felt like the Voice of my Higher Self. As I worked with this understanding, I tried more and more to pay attention to the Voice of Spirit, as I came to call it. This strategy served me well for some time.

Have you noticed anything like that with the Voice in your head? For me, it didn't stop there.

When I read Steven Pressfield's *The War of Art* it unfolded more. He writes about the battle that all creatives experience with a tendency to avoid their creative work. He personifies this

tendency as Resistance and spends a lot of time describing the nature of Resistance and some strategies to deal with it.

I really identified a lot with what he said and started referring to my Resistance as Rusty (Remember, I like alliterations). This was also helpful for me. It helped me to realize more clearly that this voice was not *my* voice and not something that I necessarily had to follow.

More recently, I noticed that there seemed to be a group of Voices, and each one seemed to have a unique topic that it chattered about. There was one Voice that frequently advised me of terrible things that were going to happen to me. I named him Gremlin. Another Voice liked to complain about other people and situations. That's Grinch. Then there was Gobbler, who was always advising me about the delicious, fattening things that I should eat. (You are noticing the alliteration that is creeping in here also, aren't you?)

Once I started this, the "Gast of Garacters" kept growing. There was Grovel, who would regularly point out unimportant things that I "should" be doing to avoid doing things that were important to my goals. He is a good friend of Rusty or may actually be Rusty in a different costume. Growler is Grovel's sidekick, and his job is to complain about me and everything I do or don't do. He may be my least favorite of these Guys.

Continuing on, let me introduce you to Ghoul. His job is to catalog all my previous fears and screwups. He will throw them at me to remind me of what I don't want to do again.

I have a full and complete description of all of these Guys, along with 'photos' of each of them in a pair of blog posts at my website. You can find the first one here: [bit.ly/49M0MHJ](http://bit.ly/49M0MHJ)

I hope this helps you gain a better understanding of the Voice in your head. Now let's look at some of the evidence of its power.

