


Section: Self-efficacy

Activity 3	Writing affirmations: the director's cut  40 minutes: 30 for personal reflection, 10 for discussion about the process.
Description:	<p>The activity is about making affirmations and visualisations to increase self-efficacy. This is a key tool for increasing self-efficacy and needs to become a regular habit. It is adapted and re-sculpted from the work of Albert Bandura, Steven Covey, Martin Seligman and the interpretation of their work by the Pacific Institute (see further reading section). Much of this work is itself built upon exercises by the psychiatrist and cognitive therapist Albert Ellis who founded the Institute for Rational–Emotive Therapy in 1955. This activity is in two parts.</p>
Use(s):	<p>To change habits and increase self-efficacy through altering our conscious, and cognitive, forethought.</p> <p>To develop self-understanding in order to provide better models for others so that they may also increase their self-belief.</p> <p>To provide a replicable tool that should become an ongoing habit for all learners in order to encourage positive learning dispositions.</p>
Preparation:	<p>A state of relaxation and readiness that should have been achieved by following the sequence of the previous activities. Fellows need a personal and private log in which to record their affirmations. Guide Fellows through the sequence below step by step.</p>

Instructions for Fellows:

- You are going to practice making affirmations and running your own film - sequence in your head. Imagine, to start with, that you are doing or learning something with which you have had great success in the past. You run a scene in which you strongly visualise yourself with this success. You are picturing and talking about this scene as if it were happening in the present tense. This could be imagined as though you were watching a film, or if you prefer, a script or novel in which you have written then read the scene aloud to yourself. Include strong emotional reactions and create a very strong forceful feeling for the scene based upon the reactions you recall from the original experience.
- Now imagine something that you would like to achieve, or an area of your life that is perhaps difficult or adverse. Jot it down somewhere private for yourself. Think of a 'vision' in which you have achieved your goal or one where the difficulty would no longer exist. Note down that vision somewhere private.
- Now think of goals that would help you achieve that vision. These goals won't be pure fantasy and entirely outside the realm of the possible **but** remember you can start to depress the vision by being 'too' realistic, too down to earth, too demeaning of yourself. What is it you really want and what small steps can you see yourself taking to achieve this vision? Will these small steps ease you out of your comfort zones? Go too far too quickly and you may discourage yourself. Write these down in your private notebook. A common example is the loss of fitness: "I used to be really fit when I was younger and felt really healthy. Now I don't get time but I would like to keep fit; I need to make time for it. I need to find a way of getting fit that is low cost and I can easily do."



- You are now going to make two or three affirmations that are based on these steps. An affirmation is a short statement that is written in the present tense, starts with I and is attached to an emotion. An example would be: “I enjoy running to keep fit and I feel really energised and pleased with myself.”
- Now you have to make a regular habit of writing or saying this affirmation many times a day and engage in the behaviour you envisage. However, you then need to start being more specific with the criteria you use. For example, it would be ‘unrealistic’ to run a marathon straight away but there is no reason why a plan should not build your fitness to the required level if you really want to.
- You need to keep the habit going. In the example of running to get fit, what happens to you when the weather is wet and cold? You will need to work on your motivation by affirming what is possible for you, so the affirmation may include a statement about how many times a week you run or how far in one go.
- Now you have to make a regular habit of scripting and running a ‘film’ about change. In this script run all the possible difficulties that you may have to overcome. BUT you are the director. The final scene is yours and yours to control. Link this to the fishbone exercise by picturing activity generated by having optimistic explanations of events rather than passive dejected ones. The final picture or sentence is one where you are acting out your affirmation as though it is in the here and now.

Learning to be drawn from this activity

- Our self-talk is critical to forming habits. Good learning habits can be cultivated by attending to our self-talk. We need to become students of our own minds.
- Things that happen to us have many causes but sometimes our self-talk is directed to bring out only one belief about what went wrong. We need to ‘dispute’ this version.
- Working on our habits requires strong visualisation, a disputation and an emotional feeling. The film metaphor is one means of creating a framework in which to do this. For those who find visual imagery harder than verbal imagery, write a script or novel in which you are a reader saying the words.
- Bring the future into the present. Saying ‘I will’ or ‘I should’, or ‘I could’ gives your unconscious permission to put off change. Say “I am...”
- This process works when it becomes a regular habit, constantly practised until it becomes automatic. Get into the habit of writing film scripts until the framework plays inside your head.
- This tool can be a highly effective model for the learners you work with: make time to practise daily.
- If people find it hard to connect to this process, ask them to think about their journey or map reflectively, so that they can see where they have passive or helpless patterns of behaving. Most people do have or have had some of these patterns and rehearsing past sequences of events often uncovers them! If they cannot see a purpose for themselves in these tools, what about those that they work with? Can they benefit from greater self-efficacy? If so how would you support them to develop these habits?