

# Self-Affirmation to Reduce Self-Control Failure

## Mindfulness Worksheet

Date / Time:

So far today, have you brought kind awareness to your:

Thoughts?  Heart?  Body?  None

To begin this Meditation on Self-Affirmation to Reduce Self-Control Failure, please bring kind awareness to

- why you chose this topic
- how your belly, chest, and head each feel when you reflect on this topic
- the emotions that you can associate with these visceral feelings
- the positive or negative impact of any stories you believe in regarding this topic
- the fact that many others are feeling similarly about this topic as you
- how you might feel with increased awareness around this topic
- when you can apply increased mindfulness to this topic in your day-to-day life



### PURPOSE / EFFECTS

By affirming one's one sense of self, one can strengthen one's self-control. Positive feedback from oneself and from others, but most especially expressing one's core values, strengthens the personal will.

This strengthening can counteract the individual's automatic or habitual response and replace it with a conscious willful response. This empowers the individual to change himself or herself and his or her ability to manage his or her life.

This form of self-affirmation can be used against procrastination, addictive and compulsive behavior, discouragement at difficult tasks, and other minor problems that result from a lack of self-control. It also has been shown to improve mood and long-term self-esteem.

### METHOD

#### Summary

Express your core values to help strengthen your willpower.

#### Long Version

- Expressing one's core values is a courageous act that affirms the self. In this exercise, we will focus on this aspect of self-affirmation because it has been shown to be the most effective of its forms.

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- ▶ Think for a long and introspective period about your core values. What defines your worldview? What do you consider your own personal guidelines for living well in the world. Your core values could be anything—compassion for others, dedication to one’s work, a good sense of humor—as long as they are real.
- ▶ Don’t pick something just because it makes you sound like a saint. Remember, the point of this exercise isn’t to win an essay contest for “best human being.” You are trying to affirm the very deepest and most meaningful parts of your self.
- ▶ Write a short essay explaining one of your core values and why it is important to you and to others. You might also want to include an instance in which this value had made a difference in your life.
- ▶ You might want to begin a journal which you use to write about these core values. You could treat each value as the subject of a newspaper-style editorial piece, in which you can express your most deeply-held values.
- ▶ As a supplement to this exercise, express these values in the real world. If you believe strongly in honesty, endeavor to be honest and to promote honesty in others. This also acts as a self-affirmative act.
- ▶ Over time, you may find that this self-affirmation has increased your ability to self-control. Continue to practice this expression in your everyday life to maintain the strength of your willpower.

## HISTORY

Dr. Roy Baumeister developed the idea of willpower as something that can be strengthened with exercise and depleted with disuse beginning in the 1980s.

Researchers Brandon J. Schmeichel and Kathleen Vohs released a paper in early 2009 summarizing the findings of a series of experiments in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

In these experiments, subjects had their egos “depleted” and then attempted to counteract this depletion using self-affirmative strategies. The results showed a remarkable power in self-affirmation to empower the individual and to increase self-control; it even strengthened some subjects’ pain tolerance!

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### ■ CAUTIONS

Though growing one's self-control has been shown to help reduce addictive and compulsive behaviors, serious addictions or psychological compulsions may require more assistance than just self-affirmation.

### ■ NOTES

This program of self-affirmation is very helpful in reducing the tendency to procrastinate. Putting things off is a perfect example of the kind of self-control failure the scientists wanted to work against. By affirming your strength through your core values, you affirm your ability to act -- that is to say, your ability NOT to procrastinate.

*Thank you for your mindfulness practice.*