

Affirmations

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What affirmations are

Affirmations are clear, behaviourally specific acknowledgements of something your partner actually did. They name one concrete action and the effect it had on you. They are small moments of recognition that re-insert awareness, appreciation, and contact into the relationship. They are not emotional processing. They are not “deep talks.” They are simple, precise gestures that strengthen the daily rhythm between two people.

What affirmations are not

An affirmation is not a thank you. It is not gratitude. It is not appreciation for a personality trait or a general quality. It is not commentary on the relationship as a whole. It is not about what you did. It is not an opening line for a longer conversation. It is not a hidden invitation to fix something. It is never a hook.

A hook is when you say something positive and immediately follow it with a complaint, criticism, or request for improvement. “I appreciated that you helped with dinner... I just wish you did that more often.” That is not an affirmation. That is criticism wearing a mask. An affirmation stands on its own with no add-ons.

Affirmations are never instructions. They are never requests for change. They do not aim to shape behaviour. They simply acknowledge something that already happened.

How to form an affirmation

You name the behaviour, name the impact, and stop. That is the structure. “When you checked in with me yesterday before my meeting, it helped me feel more settled.” Nothing else. No extra sentences to explain, no background story, no escalation into a conversation. Clean, contained, specific.

Starting with the past

In the beginning, it can help to pull from earlier moments in the relationship. This is called harvesting the past. You simply name a behaviour that mattered. “When I was recovering from the operation, you were incredibly attentive with the day-to-day things. It meant a lot at the time, and I still remember it.” This works if it is behaviourally anchored and not a generalised compliment.



Noticing what didn't happen

Sometimes an affirmation names an absence, but only when handled gently. “When your parents visited, you didn't make the comments we talked about before. I noticed it, and it helped me feel understood.” The focus remains on what happened in real terms. The moment must stay clean of any implied correction or expectation.

Daily practice

Each person gives one affirmation per day. Format does not matter. Message, voice note, spoken line — all acceptable. Each partner completes the task independently. It is not reciprocal. You do it whether or not the other person has done theirs. That independence keeps it uncontaminated.

Receiving an affirmation

When you receive an affirmation, you acknowledge it. Nothing more. No discussion. No explanation. No turning it into a conversation about the relationship. You let it land and move on.

Why this works

Affirmations soothe the relationship. They pull small, positive experiences into awareness and make them visible again. They reintroduce the feeling of being seen, valued, and appreciated — usually long before the deeper therapeutic work has had a chance to reorganise the larger pattern. This matters enormously in the early stages of couple therapy, where the relational field is often raw, tense, or depleted.

Affirmations also lower the overall emotional intensity over time. With enough consistency, they change the texture of the relationship, making room for harder conversations later. They ease defensiveness. They soften the edges. They create micro-experiences of safety that accumulate.

A foundation for a healthier relationship

Affirmations eventually form one of the foundations of a healthy relationship. Not because they solve problems, but because they change the emotional climate in which those problems are addressed. They strengthen connection in small, sustainable ways. They reduce reactivity. They shift how partners listen to each other. And they make space — real space — for more difficult relational work later on.

