

*Increase Your Peace from A to Z Simple Steps to Find Calm Amid Chaos, is a mini-directory for stress relief, providing uncomplicated solutions to decrease anxiety every day.*

## **Increase Your Peace from A to Z: Simple Steps to Find Calm Amid Chaos**

By Lea Grimaldi

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# INCREASE YOUR PEACE FROM A TO Z



Simple Steps to  
Find Calm Amid Chaos

Lea Grimaldi

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## Chapter 1

### *A*: Affirmations

“An affirmation opens the door, it’s a beginning point on the path to change.” Louise L. Hay

An affirmation is a positive statement focusing on something we want to manifest. I have been using affirmations to improve my life since first being introduced to them many years ago. The key with affirmations is to put them in your own words and state them in the present tense, as if what you seek is already real. For example, if you are having difficulty with a relationship, state the affirmation as though the relationship is exactly as you would like it to be.

How to practice: It is a good idea to say your affirmations in the morning, to set the tone for the day. I like to do ten sets of ten, for a total of one hundred. If you are feeling rushed and stressed, start with this:

*I am calm. There is plenty of time for me to achieve all that I need to achieve today.*

Below are some specific examples by category.

## HEALTH

If you are embarking on a lifestyle change such as improved fitness and diet, target your affirmations to that area. These can also apply if you have a chronic illness or condition.

- ◆ *I enjoy perfect health. I have plenty of energy to accomplish what I want to do. I eat healthy foods that nourish my body and I drink enough water to stay hydrated.*
- ◆ *My body is strong and getting stronger each day. I enjoy exercise for how it makes me feel.*
- ◆ *I always have plenty of energy to do everything I want to do.*
- ◆ *I love my body.*

- ◆ *I am healthy and happy in mind, body, and spirit.*

## **LOVE**

### **SELF-LOVE**

Self-love is the most important type of love, so start here.

- ◆ *I love and accept myself completely.*
- ◆ *I am worthy of love and joy.*
- ◆ *I take the time to look after myself.*

### **ROMANTIC LOVE**

- ◆ *I attract the perfect partner into my life.*
- ◆ *My partner loves me and I love them.*  
*They are kind, smart, funny, and treat me well.*
- ◆ *I have a great partner. We have fun together and want the same things out of life.*

## FAMILIAL LOVE

If the area that needs work is your relationship with your family of origin or a specific person, make the affirmation specific too.

- ◆ *My relationship with my father is great. He supports me and I enjoy spending time with him.*
- ◆ *I love my family and have a good relationship with them. I am thankful to have them in my life.*
- ◆ *My sister and I enjoy a close and loving relationship.*

## GENERAL LOVE (Friends, Coworkers, Life)

- ◆ *My relationships are full of love and positive connections.*
- ◆ *I have self-love, friend love, family love, and romantic love in my life.*
- ◆ *I am content with my life and things work out for me.*

## **ABUNDANCE**

- ◆ *I graciously and freely accept the abundance that surrounds me, and I know that I deserve the best in everything I do. I accept this abundance into my open heart and make it mine.*
- ◆ *I accept and receive all the good that is coming to me.*

## **MONEY**

- ◆ *Money flows to me. I am a money magnet.*
- ◆ *I have all the money I need to live happily. I easily make more than enough money to take care of my needs.*

## **WORK**

- ◆ *I have a job that I love. I do fulfilling work with people I respect and enjoy.*
- ◆ *I am always getting new opportunities to make money doing work that fulfills me.*

- ◆ *My job doesn't feel like work, because it brings me joy.*

## LACK OF TIME

If you feel stressed and overwhelmed, try general anti-anxiety affirmations.

- ◆ *I have more than enough time to get everything done. I am calm, I am peaceful.*
- ◆ *Things work out for me. All is well. Today is a wonderful day.*

When I was experiencing a particularly stressful time when my now-teenage children were a baby and a toddler, I would sing, “I am happy, I am strong, I am peaceful all day long.” It served as a reminder that I could be. When we act as if we already are healthy, wealthy, and happy, we are halfway there. The common saying, “fake it ’til you make it” is the intent behind affirmations. You are telling yourself that something is already that way, and therefore your body responds by calming down.

When you make affirmations part of your daily life, everything flows with more ease and grace. The idea is that form follows thought. We manifest what we put our energy toward. Where thought goes, energy flows. Create your own affirmations, using your own words so they are meaningful for you.

Affirming that something is a certain way, such as “I am healthy and strong,” is a form of positive thinking. I believe that on a cellular level the body hears the message and believes it. The repetition creates a belief in the body as well as the mind, and pretty soon, it is the truth. It also works in conjunction with our other behaviors. If we are trying to be healthier, repeating these affirmations will help reinforce healthy behaviors, such as eating nutritious food and exercising.

However, it must be said that *just* affirming will not make it so. We must put the steps in place to make the changes.

Studies are beginning to support affirmations. According to a 2013 study by J.D. Creswell, self-affirmation improves problem solving and performance on tasks related to executive functioning. Whether there is hard science backing affirmations or not, if they make us feel better and calmer, they are worth trying.

**Action Item:** Incorporate affirmations into your daily practices.

**More reading:** *You Can Heal your Life* by Louise Hay (Hay House Publishing, 1999)



## Chapter 14

# N: Now!

“Be here now.” Baba Ram Dass, spiritual visionary

Look around and really be here. Give your full attention to the person you are with. Try really paying attention to what you’re doing. Being mindful and giving mundane tasks our attention helps reduce stress.

### Washing Dishes Exercise (Buddhist)

Take your time washing the dishes. Really pay attention to every sensation. Notice your senses.

**Sight:** Look at what you are doing. Be in the moment. See all the details of the dish. What color is it? Is it a round plate or a bowl or a frying pan?

**Touch:** How does it feel? Is it smooth, textured, heavy or light in your hand? Is it fragile, like crystal or china?

Do you need to be careful with it? How does the water feel? Is it hot?

**Smell:** What are the smells? Can you smell the residue of food and is it unpleasant? Do you enjoy the smell of the dish detergent? How do the scents make you feel?

**Hearing:** Does the sound of the rushing water drown out other sounds so you can really get lost in the moment? Is it a calming background noise? Is it jarring or disturbing to you if pots hit one another or a dish slips out of your hand?

Noticing what is happening as we go about our daily tasks helps keep us engaged and helps calm us down.

Mindfulness has been proven to reduce anxiety and depression. When we are present in the moment, we cannot regret the past or worry about the future. When we are present, we are right here, right now. Decisions and action happen in the present moment, and life is made up of a series of present moments, connected by our breath.

After many recent school shootings, I was very worried about my boys going to school, as I'm sure many people were. After 9/11, air travel changed forever. If we allow anxiety about what might happen rule our actions, we may never leave our houses. Being present and practicing mindfulness helps us stay focused on what is actually happening here and now.

Worry is wasted energy. Being present now, in each moment, we realize that everything is fine, until it may not be. But to worry about something that may never come to pass only drains our own energy and steals the joy from our lives. If we are worrying what *if*, we miss what *is*. We miss our life that is happening right now.

Mindfulness can help reduce stress. According to a study on present moment awareness, mindfulness has been shown to increase an adaptive response to daily stressors. Another study by Donald and Atkins (2016) showed that mindfulness produced less avoidance and more coping than relaxation or self-affirmation controls. My takeaway from these findings is that being

present in each moment equips us to best handle issues when they arise.

Here are some tips to becoming more mindful each day.

- ◆ Stay focused on the task at hand.
- ◆ Notice everything as it comes into your experience.
- ◆ Acknowledge and accept the current situation.
- ◆ Stay grounded and make decisions from your center.
- ◆ Live with an open heart and mind.
- ◆ Be present, but also set goals for the future.

**More Reading:** *Wherever You Go, There You Are, Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*, by Jon Kabat-Zinn (Reed Business Information, 1994)



## Chapter 23

# W: Water

“I think I was a mermaid in another life.” Anonymous

Water helps with stress relief in many ways, from staying hydrated to participating in water sports to sitting on a beach gazing at the ocean.

Drink up. Stay hydrated for stress relief. Even being slightly dehydrated can increase anxiety. Water plays a huge role in our physical processes, and when we don't have enough, cortisol levels rise. Cortisol is a hormone that makes us feel stressed and anxious. Water also plays a part in balancing mood, so staying hydrated means we are less likely to experience depression and anxiety. When the body is not properly fed and hydrated, it starts to produce more cortisol and adrenaline, to fuel its needs. This further triggers the stress response, and the cycle continues.

The amount of water each person needs varies depending on size, age, and activity level, but the Mayo Clinic advises drinking eight to ten eight-ounce glasses of water each day, or about 64 ounces. In stressful situations, it is important to drink even more water. If you are feeling anxious or stressed, a simple glass of water could bring your stress levels down. Adding caffeine to the mix of cortisol and adrenaline helps boost energy, but caffeine can also increase the release of cortisol. So if you do have coffee, make sure to drink one glass of water for each cup of coffee consumed.

Another way water helps us destress is simply its meditative quality. Whether an ocean, river, lake, stream, or pond, find a body of water and watch it. Feel your stress dissolve. Our bodies are made up of more than 60 percent water, and when we sit by water, we automatically feel better. Research suggests that walking or sitting near water signals the brain to release the happy chemicals, such as dopamine, for a natural

high. Studies also support that surfing and enjoying the water can help veterans work through PTSD symptoms.

Since ancient times, rituals and gatherings have happened near the water, and today we often have weddings, celebrations, and vacations near or at an ocean, bay, or lake. It seems that we are programmed to feel good around water. According to marine biologist Wallace J. Nichols, we are. Something in our brains attracts us to it. He writes, “We are beginning to learn that our brains are hardwired to react positively to water and that being near it can calm and connect us, increase innovation and insight, and even heal what’s broken.”

Here are some of the main ways the brain benefits while we are near water.

- ◆ Water can induce a meditative state of mind. Many people enjoy sitting by the water and watching it. It can create a state of calm focus, somewhat similar to a meditative state. Being mindful can lower stress levels, relieve mild anxiety, reduce

pain and depression, and improve focus and sleep quality.

- ◆ According to research, people can experience feelings of awe when around water, which inspires a connection to something bigger than oneself. This may be why so many weddings are held near bodies of water, besides the photo op.
  
- ◆ Water helps get creativity flowing. I get many ideas in the shower, and I'd guess I'm not alone in this. In our busy, screen-dominated lives, we don't give our minds much opportunity to rest and wander. According to Nichols, stepping into the shower is similar to going to the ocean, albeit on a smaller scale. "You step into the shower, and you remove a lot of the visual stimulation of your day. Editorially, it's the same thing—it's a steady stream of 'blue noise.' You're not hearing voices or processing ideas. It's like a mini-vacation."

- ◆ Exercise near water to get the double benefit of the exercise plus the calming and stress-relieving benefits of water. Find a river or lake and jog or ride your bike. It is immediately calming.

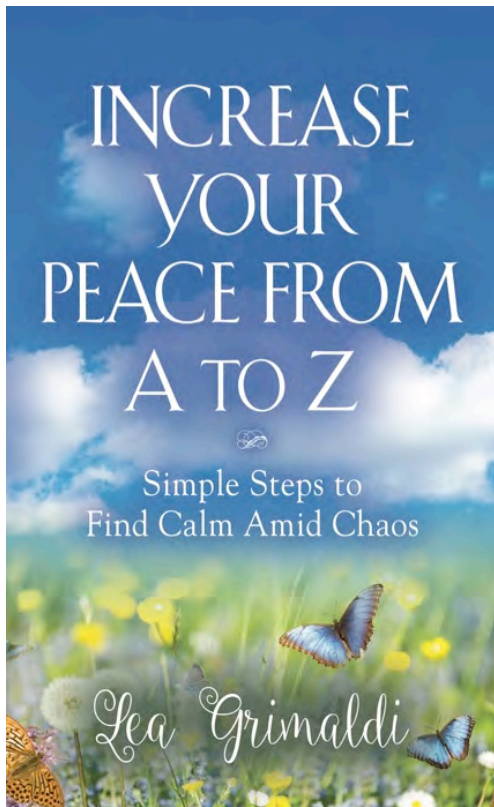
**Action Item:** Find some water near your home or work and try to visit it weekly, whether by jogging along a river or sitting on a beautiful beach.

**More Reading:** *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science that Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do* by Wallace J. Nichols (Back Bay Books, 2015)

## **About the Author**

Lea Grimaldi is a yoga, barre, and meditation instructor with nineteen years' experience teaching yoga and fitness classes in health clubs, studios, and corporations to everyone from schoolchildren to athletes to an eighty-eight-year-old woman with two hip replacements.

Her education includes a BA degree from the University of Delaware in English with a Journalism concentration. Lea has worked in trade publishing for Miller Freeman, Inc. as an editor and writer. Lea has been a member of Yoga Alliance since 2008, E-RYT500, member of YTAA (Yoga Teachers Association of Australia) obtained while living Down Under. She is a practicing Reiki Master and offers reiki sessions under Yoga4U, her yoga and reiki business. She lives with her husband and two boys, her greatest teachers, in Connecticut. You can find her on Facebook at <http://Lea.grimaldi.4/facebook.com> and Instagram @lea\_grimaldi



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