Dear Readers,

When Kaye Centers told me that she was going to do research on the educational affirmations I said, *Hurrah!* Those of us who have used them know that the affirmations can make a profound difference in our own lives and we have listened to stories of the powerful ways others have used them. Now, I thought, we will have *scientific proof* of how they work, why they work, and to what extent they are effective. That was my dream.

Kaye has completed her project and received her Doctorate in Education, and I have read her dissertation. In this *WE* Kaye shares what she has learned. I did not get my dream package, it was way too big, but I did get very helpful information.

From Kaye's work I have learned:

- the significance of a strong theory base in the development of affirmations.
- that affirmations need to be researched qualitatively.
- that more research is needed on the effectiveness of giving "you" or "I" affirmations, the impact of using present, present progressive, of future tense verbs, and the use of general or specific objects.
- how to be more critical of research results.

There is a paucity of research on affirmations – no other reputable study. Because the issues involved in studying affirmations are so complex there need to be many separate studies.

My dream was not realistic. This research is far more complicated than I had imagined. I am, however, greatly enriched by what I have learned. I hope it is helpful to you.

Kaye's project which identifies theory and connects it with the affirmations is a different type of research than Dr. David Bredehoft has done on the effectiveness of the *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair* program and than he and I have done on the effects of childhood overindulgence.

Working with Kaye has given me a clearer view of different types of research and I am anxious for someone to do qualitative research on the affirmations, on *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair* and on *Growing Up Again, Parenting Ourselves, Parenting Our Children.* It is gratifying that qualitative research is finally becoming respectable and that accurate methods of doing it are being developed.

Enjoy,

Jean Illsley Clarke

Educational Affirmations for Healthy Self-Esteem: An Exploratory Factor Analysis
By Kaye L. Centers

Dear *WE* Readers:

Jean Clarke has asked me to write about the research I conducted with the original 54 Educational Affirmations (the prenatal and

preparing for death affirmations had not been identified when I started the study). I have recently received a Doctorate of Education in Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology from Western Michigan University. I am a psychologist in Michigan, and I have worked as a parent educator and psychotherapist. I am married and have three young adult children.

I first learned about Jean Illsley Clarke and her book, *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair* in 1978 when I attended a Midwestern Transactional Analysis Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. At that time I had three young children, including a 4-month-old baby. I was hungry for useful parenting information for myself, and to teach to other parents. I read Jean's book and taught from it, and found it very useful.

A few years later I attended Jean Clarke's Facilitator's Workshop and learned about her Educational Affirmations published in the Help! For Parents series (Clarke, et al, 1986b) and Growing Up Again (Clarke & Dawson, 1989). By then I was the professional facilitator of a chapter of Parent's Anonymous (PA), a group for abusive parents. When I introduced the Educational Affirmations to PA, I noticed that the parents seemed to internalize many of the Affirmations for themselves, and I encouraged them to use them with their children.

I thought that the concepts and content of *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair* and the Educational Affirmations would be helpful in the Southwestern Michigan region where I lived. More parent education classes were needed, not just for abusive parents but for all parents. I helped organize a coalition of agencies. We identified future facilitators, and had Jean come to Berrien County to train 24 people.

> Our effort to organize parent education opportunities was successful and hundreds of parents attended the classes.

However, by the late 1980's and early 1990's funding sources were demanding some kind of documentation that the programs they funded were worth while. Although I believed that the SEAFA program and the affirmations were valuable, we had no "scientific proof." I was intrigued by the idea of researching prevention programs such as SEAFA, and I had had a life-long desire to go to graduate school. So in 1990 I began a Master's program at Western Michigan University with the intention of eventually completing a doctorate.

In order to receive a degree, doctoral candidates must submit a dissertation after they have completed all their required classes. A *dissertation* is a five-part paper that carefully describes a piece of scientific research they have conducted. The first three chapters comprise the Research Proposal. Chapter 1 explains the rationale for the study, Chapter 2 reviews the scientific literature concerning the question under study, and Chapter 3 outlines the methods that will be employed in the research. Once the proposal is approved by the committee of professors supervising the student, the student conducts the research. Chapter 4 of the dissertation states the results of the research, and Chapter 5 discusses the meaning of results, possible implications of the results for practice, and suggests future research that is needed. For my dissertation, I researched Clarke's Educational Affirmations.

The Powerful Big Three: Research, Theory, & Practice

Many people ask, "Why do we need scientific research?" The answer is, of course, that products and services sold to people need to be validated as helpful. For example, we would not take medicines without some assurance of their safety and usefulness because they may be a waste of money at best, or harmful at worse. The same is true for educational and therapeutic interventions. Research is needed to assure us that we are not wasting time or money, and that the intervention is not harmful.

The Scientific Method
The scientific method is one of many ways of making sense of the world. It is a

methodical way of organizing ideas, observations, and accumulated knowledge to help us understand things, usually some sort of problem or theoretical concept. *The goal of science is to describe, explain, predict and control* whatever is being studied. First the problem must be defined by being carefully described. Scientists then attempt to explain the problem by proposing a theory of the source, course, and outcome of the problem. They then conduct careful research to confirm or refute the theory.

> Usually many studies are needed to thoroughly research a theory, and good research almost always generates more questions that need to be researched.

A third goal of science is to gather enough data to be able to predict when the problem or phenomena will occur. Finally, by describing, explaining, and predicting the problem, research can be conducted to find ways of controlling the intensity, the duration, or the outbreak of the problem.

Research. Research is the process used in the scientific method; it uses a variety of tools to methodically investigate a problem, phenomena or issue. Research is needed to confirm or refute theories, and can also be used to propose new theories. Any research is helpful if it contributes to the body of scientific knowledge. *However, there is never any perfect research—all forms of research have inherent flaws.* It is up to the researcher to report the innate flaws and the limits of their particular piece of research. Furthermore, no one experiment or study can definitively "prove" anything, particularly in the social sciences. It can only "suggest" and imply what appears to be true based on the limitations of the study and what is already known.

There are two basic research approaches, quantitative and qualitative. The most common type of research is *quantitative research*. The purpose of this type of research is to *quantify or count* something, such as the frequency, duration, or distribution of something.

Quantitative research can count the whole population of something (such as a U.S. census), but more typically, quantitative researchers employ statistical procedures, which are various methods of estimating the whole of something based on a small representative sample of the larger population. Statistical estimates can be very accurate if the sample is carefully chosen and carefully defined.

Another approach to research is the *qualitative approach*. Rather than quantifying phenomena by counting things, qualitative approaches use in-depth interviews with just a few individuals to attempt to discover *underlying meanings* people make of phenomena. Qualitative research is often helpful in forming hypotheses, developing theories , studying complex phenomena, and for conducting program evaluations. A famous example of qualitative research is Carol Gilligan's study published as a book entitled In a Different Voice. In this study, the author interviewed women to determine how they made meaning of their moral choices.

> The value of research is the slow methodical accumulation of evidence that adds to the base of knowledge about a particular subject.

Theory. Scientists observe phenomena and then attempt to describe and explain it with a *theory*, that is, *a carefully thought out statement of what is thought to be true that accounts for all of the observed phenomena and any previously established facts.* The theory is not fact; it has not been proven to be true. It is a best guess about what is thought to be true. Several different theories may account for the same observed problem or issue and all may make sense. Theories needs to be tested by research (i.e., carefully applied rules of inquiry). The researcher usually states a research question or hypothesis (usually a small piece of a larger theory). She then sets about gathering data that will either support or refute the hypothesis. When a hypothesis is tested, the results of the research must then be critiqued in terms of the soundness of the methods used, and how the

outcomes may validate, discredit or change the theory. Good theory and good research lead to sound knowledge.

Practice. Practitioners are the consumers of scientific theory and research; they master particular skills in order to implement the theory and research in their field. In the medical and social sciences practitioners include parents, teachers, therapists, social workers, doctors, and nurses, in other words, anyone who attempts to help others grow or heal. Practitioners do not have to be researchers, but good practitioners usually use one or more theories to help them understand their work. Practitioners should know how to understand and use sound theory and good research as well as common sense and appropriate ethics to guide their practice.

As knowledge is learned using theory and research, practitioners should incorporate new knowledge and should discard disproved ideas or old information that was once thought to be sound. It is obvious that practitioners need to stay informed about current theory, research, and knowledge, and they should constantly hone their skill development.

Educational Affirmations and Research

From the beginning of graduate school I knew I wanted to research the Educational Affirmations. There are many questions to be answered concerning affirmations in general, and Educational Affirmations specifically. The most obvious question I wanted to answer with research is, "Do they work?" I heard many personal accounts from clients and colleagues of the power of the affirmations, but personal accounts testifying to the helpfulness of affirmations are not scientific research—these accounts need to be systematically researched and transformed into empirical evidence.

The basic belief underlying Clarke's affirmations is that adults who believe the messages will have healthy self-esteem and will be better able to care for children. Is this true?

- Do the affirmations promote healthy human development?
- Are they a useful way to define and measure self-esteem?
- Do they affect children differently from the way they affect adults?
- Are the affirmations more potent for some populations than others?

These exciting questions concerning Educational Affirmations need to be investigated. At that point I could find no research that had attempted to establish the validity or efficacy of the Educational Affirmations, nor had there been any systematic investigations concerning if, how, when, or with whom they were salient.

What comes first

As I learned more about how to conduct research, I learned that before I could proceed with any of these questions, I had to investigate a very basic issue: **"Do the Educational Affirmations reflect the underlying theory on which they are based?"** In other words, before more research can proceed, it must be established that the affirmations actually reflect the theoretical constructs. So my study became limited in scope. For my dissertation, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis of a transformed version of the Affirmations to identify the underlying constructs or factors that are contained in the Affirmations.

Doing

You can explore and experiment and I will support and protect you.

Before I share more about my research, I will offer some general background. First, I will define the *terms* I used in my research and summarize what I learned when I reviewed the scientific literature on affirmations. I will include a *little history* of the first modern use of affirmations. Next I will present a synopsis of the *theoretical foundation* of the Educational Affirmation. Then I will explain my research. This overview is not intended to be a thorough or

scholarly discussion of my research. When my research gets published in a scholarly journal, WE readers will be informed.

General Background of My Research
Definition of Terms
Definition of affirmation. Warm greetings, blessings, and affirmations of faith are all forms of affirmations in the general sense of saying "Yes!" to people, ideas, and beliefs. These forms of affirmation have been around for millenniums. However, the term *affirmation* has also come to mean *a conscious and positive thought or statement that is intended to reinforce positive qualities or bring about change in oneself or others.* It is this meaning of the term I will be discussing.

Definitions of self-esteem. In an exhaustive review of the self-esteem literature, Mruk (1995) analyzed and compared the definitions of self-esteem offered by major theorists in the past 100 years. Mruk concluded that, when studied collectively, there seems to be general agreement that self-esteem is the personal evaluation of one's competence and worthiness, is both cognitive and affective, and is dynamic (i.e., both stable and open to change). Theorists agree that self-esteem is also socially constructed, that is, affected by what other people say about and to the individual, and how the individual interprets others' actions and messages.

Clarke's Educational Affirmations are intended to be used as a means to promote healthy self-esteem. Clarke defined *self-esteem* as "one's assessment of the extent to which one is lovable and capable. Self-esteem is nourished by recognizing one's own lovableness and capabilities and by being recognized as lovable and capable by other people" (1978, p. 272). She also added that it is "behaving in ways that are respectful to ourselves and to other people. It is true humility" (Clarke, Gesme, London & Brundage, 1993, p.19). Clarke (1978) asserts that belief in people's lovableness is reinforced by

Identity and Power

I love who you are.

giving and receiving affirmations for *Being*, that is, *unconditional positive messages that affirm people's value and right to exist just because they are alive.* Likewise, belief in people's capability is reinforced by giving and receiving affirmations for *Doing*, that is, *messages that reinforce positive behavior and that encourage helpful societal values, standards, and limits.* Thus, Clarke's definition of self-esteem contains the elements mentioned by Mruk (1995): a dynamic evaluation of one's worthiness (i.e., Clarke's "lovableness"); and socially responsible competence (i.e., Clarke's "capability") that is a result of affective, cognitive, behavioral, and social phenomena.

Structure

You can learn the rules that help you live with others.
— J.I. Clarke

A person having "high" or "positive" self-esteem in all of the references reviewed by Murk, as well as Clarke, are understood to have a positive sense of valuing oneself and one's creativity and rights, but also a sense of valuing others, and respecting societal rules of safety and social responsibility. However, the terms <u>high self-esteem</u>, <u>positive self-esteem</u>, <u>low self-esteem</u>, and <u>negative self-esteem</u> have also been used to describe the promotion of self-centered arrogance (Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996). For example, it used to be commonly assumed that people who commit violence and verbal aggression suffer from low-esteem but are trying to defend against it through anti-social behavior (Samenow, 1984). Now these conclusions are being questioned. In an interdisciplinary review of evidence about the causes of aggression, crime, and violence, Baumeister, et al. pointed out that it is an over-inflated ego, not low self-esteem, that usually leads to violence.

> On both empirical and theoretical grounds, therefore, we must reject the view that low self-esteem causes violence. Aggressive, violent, and hostile people consistently express favorable views of themselves. And even if one could document hidden low self-esteem beneath the surface of apparently high
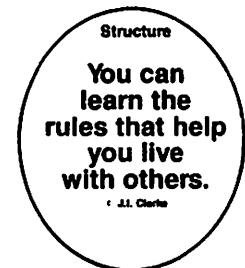
self-esteem (for which empirical support is scant), it would still be necessary to regard the surface egotism rather than the hidden self-doubts as causally crucial. (p. 28)

Our review has indicated, however, that it is threatened egotism rather than low self-esteem that leads to violence. Moreover, certain forms of high self-esteem seem to increase one's proneness to violence. An uncritical endorsement of the cultural value of high self-esteem may therefore be counterproductive and even dangerous. (p. 29)

Thus, the terms *high-, low-, positive-* and *negative- self-esteem* have become so ambiguous and controversial in the literature that, for the purposes my research, the term *healthy self-esteem* was used to distinguish the type of socially responsible self-esteem that the self-esteem theorists seem to be advocating, and not the *inflated* (i.e., self-centered) *self-esteem* that is discussed by Baumeister et al.

History of Affirmations
Summary Scientific Literature Concerning Affirmations

When I reviewed the educational, psychological, and sociological literature I discovered the following important points:

- First, several kinds of affirmations are being advocated and being used in educational and therapy settings.

> - There was virtually no research validating the efficacy of *any* affirmations.

- There are many ideas and opinions, but only two carefully articulated *theories* (one by Emile Coue, 1922; the other by Jean Illsley Clarke, 1986) about how affirmations ought to be constructed and used.

The First Modern Use of an Affirmation

The earliest reference found in the scientific literature of an affirmation (i.e., an intentional positive statement intended to change behavior) is the repetitional statement, "Every day in every way, I'm getting better and better," presented as a technique to help people overcome a variety of problems. This statement was developed and presented by Emile Coue (1922; 1923) at the Psychological Congress in Paris, France in 1916 (Paulhus, 1993).

Coue had his patients repeat the statement 20 times in the morning and 20 times in the evening. He called the technique conscious autosuggestion rather than affirmation. He hoped that a person's psychological makeup could be influenced for the better by the force of frequent self-repetition of this general positive statement.

As an outgrowth of psychoanalytical theory, Coue reasoned that frequent repetition of the statement permitted the imagination (i.e., the unconscious) to bypass the will (i.e., the conscious that tends to resist positive change) to allow the positive idea to become inculcated through the natural processes of association and amplification. He believed that the integration of the affirmation would, in turn, lead to better psychological and physical health.

Coue stipulated that affirmational statements should be general (i.e., "I am getting better") and not be specific (i.e., "My headache is getting better and better") because the unconscious may focus on the negative aspect (i.e., the headache) and lead to more problems. He also stated that the affirmation should be repeated effortlessly and without thinking so that the will would not resist the message.

Although the technique was popular and widely practiced in Europe, Coue's theory was barely known in the United States, perhaps because most of his papers, published in Europe, were in French. Paulhus (1993) stated that after his death in 1924, Coue's ideas went out of favor, and little became of them. Although there does not appear to be any empirical attempts at the time to validate Coue's theory (Paulhus, 1993), Coue's affirmation is one of the earliest modern uses of an affirmational statement intended to bring about change in people.

Theoretical Foundations of Educational Affirmations
Purpose of the Educational Affirmations

The Educational Affirmations are based on an underlying theoretical belief that people need to be affirmed for Being and Doing throughout their development. The affirmations are designed to affirm people's ability to complete the theorized tasks of the seven developmental stages, described in the next section. The Educational Affirmations are intended to be used three ways (Clarke, 1996):

1. First, they are aimed at children to help them decide to do the task of each developmental stage. However, in addition to offering children affirmations, parents must also teach and support the skills that are needed for children to actually accomplish the task.

2. Next, they are designed to be a bare-bones parenting program as reminders to parents about what they should be saying and doing with their children to promote children's development.

3. Finally, the affirmations are recycling messages for all adults to finish and strengthen earlier developmental tasks in more sophisticated ways and to continue working on tasks of adulthood. The belief here is that if adults have not incorporated and integrated these messages and accomplished the related developmental task, they will be unable to offer them effectively to children.

Description of Clarke's Educational Affirmations

Clarke's affirmations consist of 54 statements that are divided into seven stages based on Erikson's (1963, 1983) psychosocial stages. All of the 54 affirmations were designed to be positive (i.e., they do not contain the words "don't") and simple enough so they do not need to be explained or interpreted. The stages are named for the major developmental tasks of each developmental level. The age ranges suggest the chronological time at which each message first receives strong focus as a developmental task even though it may be present before and after that stage. After that particular age, people may refocus on each task many times in response to life experiences and eras of natural growth (Clarke & Gesme, 1988).

The first six stages contain 7 affirmations each, while the Adult stage, which is the longest one, contains 12. The colors of the rainbow were chosen to color-code developmental stages "to remind us that the tasks are natural and sequential" (Clarke & Gesme, 1988, p. vii). The last affirmation in each stage (the last two affirmations in Stage VII) are the only affirmations that contain the word "love." These eight statements form a subset of messages called Love Affirmations that say "I love you unconditionally for being yourself and for doing your developmental tasks" (p. vii).

> **Structure**
> I love you even when we differ; I love growing with you.
> c. J.I. Clarke.

Rules for Giving Educational Affirmations

There are rules about giving Educational Affirmations to self and others (Clarke & Gesme, 1988). Adults are encouraged to give affirmations to themselves even when they do not believe them because it is believed that the affirmations encourage the healthy, growing, loving part of oneself.

However, there are precautions about giving affirmations to others. For example, people should not give an affirmation to someone else if they do not feel and believe it themselves because the receiver may sense the giver's conflict and feel confused instead of affirmed.

If adults cannot give some of these messages to a child, they should do what they need to do to take care of themselves (e.g., get help, rest, education, therapy) so that they can believe the messages and give them sincerely. Finally, it is also important that care-giving adults (i.e., parents and teachers) must be available and willing to help children learn the skills necessary for them to accomplish the developmental task that is being affirmed.

Overview of Underlying Theories

The theoretical frameworks that underlie the Educational Affirmations are Transactional Analysis (TA) developed by Eric Berne and psychosocial developmental theory developed by Erik Erikson.

Transactional Analysis. Transactional Analysis is a theory of personality that was postulated by Eric Berne in the 1950s. The key parts of the theory that apply to the affirmations are as follows:

> TA adheres to the presence of three active, dynamic, and observable ego states labeled the Parent, the Adult, and the Child, each of which exists and operates in any individual. Each person has a basic innate need for strokes (recognition) and will design a life script (plan), formed during childhood, based upon early beliefs about oneself and others. These existential beliefs are reinforced by repetitive, stereotyped games (unstraight social interactions) with others. (Dusay & Dusay, 1989, p. 405)

Dusay and Dusay explain that each ego state is characterized by its own "mannerisms, a special repertoire of words, thoughts, emotions, body postures, gestures, voice tones, and expressions" (p. 406). The Child acts and sounds like an actual child regardless of the individual's chronological age, whereas the Adult resembles a computer that processes information in a logical, factual way. The Parent is the internalized representation of the individual's familial and cultural stories, behaviors, and values, as well as one's actual parents. The ego states are capitalized to distinguish them from the biological entities of parents, adults and children.

TA holds that human beings need strokes (i.e., units of attention) to survive and that humans engage in transactions to get and give strokes. Transactions occur between the ego states within individuals and between people. The transactions can be analyzed for their social and overt level as well as their psychological and covert level of communication. Psychological games and intimacy are the most powerful ways of giving and getting strokes. A psychological game is a set of hurtful, covert transactions that leads to a payoff of negative strokes, whereas intimacy is a set of unconditional healthful transactions that leads to a payoff of positive strokes. Other types of transactions may lead to positive or negative strokes, but these are not as potent as games or intimacy.

Clarke utilized several TA concepts as a basis of her SEAFA program. Most behavioral parenting programs focus on teaching parents how to act authoritatively; these programs presume that parents are motivated and capable of acting appropriately. Clarke, however, focuses on the parents' need to feel good about themselves as persons and on their abilities as parents so that they *can* perform authoritatively. Clarke's major premise is that parents must take care of their own needs, including their need for self-esteem, in order to give effective care to their children.

In the SEAFA program, Clarke (1981) teaches parents about how the ego states function as parts of the personality in normal development. The Parent is called the Nurturing and Structuring Part, the Adult is called the Problem Solving Part, and the Child is called the Spontaneous and Adaptive Part. The program teaches skills that enhance the positive development of each personality part. Parents are encouraged to replace unhelpful or dysfunctional aspects of their own personality with more adaptive ones as they are learning to offer helpful and healthy messages to their children. Clarke believes that it is up to parents to offer healthy messages and to teach children behavioral skills in order to invite their children to have positive self-esteem and constructive life scripts, but that children decide what messages they will hear, integrate and act upon.

Clarke (1996) and Clarke & Dawson (1986) believe the healthy messages that parents need to give to their children and themselves are contained in the Educational Affirmations. In line with TA theory, affirmations are intended to be offered internally from adults' Parent ego states as invitations to their own internal Child
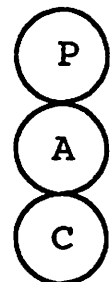
ego states to consider the message. Therefore, all of the affirmations are stated in the form of you-statements. The messages are offered as you-statements until the inner Child spontaneously changes the message to an I-statement. For example, a woman may say to herself, "You can think and feel at the same time" as an invitation to her inner Child to trust and accept that her inner Parent will allow the Child to have strong feelings and protect her from negative self-talk, while expecting that she will think about consequences before acting. When the inner Child believes the message, it is internalized and spontaneously becomes, "I can think and feel at the same time."

In the same manner, affirmations are also stated as you-statements from an adult caregiver's Parent ego state to children's Child ego states as permissions for children to do their developmental tasks. It is hoped that children will incorporate the message into their developing internal structure and rules. Again, according to TA theory, children will spontaneously change the *you* to an *I* when they understand and believe the message.

For example, every time a father notices his daughter acting too shy or too rebellious when faced with conflict, he might give her the affirmation, "You can learn when and how to disagree." He must also explain and demonstrate how and when to disagree with others politely and effectively. After many times and ways of offering this affirmation, the daughter may eventually incorporate this message so that when she needs to disagree with a powerful figure in her life like a boss or a spouse, she will have the courage (i.e., internal permission) and skills to do so assertively. She will be able to say to herself, "I can know when and how to disagree." This process is thought to reduce cognitive dissonance and rationalizing and, thus, promote personality integrity (Festinger, 1957).

The choice of which affirmation to give is determined by the developmental stage of each person or the current need of each person. Psychosocial developmental theory forms the conceptual framework for Clarke's stages.

Psychosocial Developmental Theory.
Erik Erikson (1963, 1983) postulated his theory of psychosocial development as an outgrowth of Freud's psychosexual development ideas. Erikson stressed the social aspects of development and the interface of society and the developing person. Erikson divided childhood into stages that approximated Freud's stages. However, his stages were defined "in terms of modes of action employed by the child and the modalities of social interaction characterizing interpersonal exchanges at each stage" (Achenbach, 1992, p. 661). Erikson theorized that psychosocial stages occur through the process of *epigenesis*, that is, the development of new characters from an initially undifferentiated entity.

> This indicates that each part exists in some form before "its" decisive and critical time normally arrives and remains systematically related to all others so that the whole ensemble depends on the proper development in the proper sequence of each item. Finally, as each part comes to its full ascendance and finds some lasting solution during its stage . . it will also be expected to develop further under the dominance of subsequent ascendancies and most of all, to take its place in the integration of the whole ensemble. (Erikson, 1983, p. 29)

In other words, Erikson maintained that failure of the appropriate mode to dominate a stage may disrupt subsequent stages, much the way a developing embryo would be disrupted if its heart, for example, was not developed well enough before its ribs or legs. The heart, in this case would atrophy, and the embryo would die or be malformed. In the psychosocial sense,

Erikson theorized that the needs of the developing person are all present at any one time, but some needs come into ascendance before others.

If these needs are not attended to by the social context in a timely manner, the individual is hindered in development. These needs are thought of as developmental crises or nuclear conflicts.

Erikson suggested that each particular stage has a fundamental crisis that must be resolved if the individual is going to grow into a functioning, moral and social person. For example, in the first developmental stage, the nuclear conflict is basic trust versus basic mistrust. If the parents meet babies' needs, children are likely to develop a basic sense of trust in their world, their parents, and in themselves. If this basic trust is developed, children will be able to go out into the worlds of school and dating. If it is not developed, children are hindered in their ability to go into strange places like school or work and to make friends and establish other relationships. Erikson (1963) originally postulated seven developmental psychosocial stages, but later (1983) added an eighth stage.

Erikson's theory engendered much research. In a review of the literature Achenbach (1992) pointed out that

> several studies have found
> evidence for sequences of
> conflictual concerns like those
> that Erikson hypothesizes . . .
> Even though the hypothesized
> conflicts do seem to exist,
> however, these studies have
> suggested that some conflicts
> typically remain salient even as
> later ones rise and fall . . . [and
> that] an interweaving of Piaget's
> theory and Erikson's theory, in
> particular, can provide a sense of
> understanding normal
> development and its problems" (p.
> 662).

Overview of Clarke's Stages Compared to Erikson's

Clarke's developmental stages are similar to Erikson's, but are described by the developmental task that needs to be accomplished rather than the chronological stage of life (Clarke & Dawson, 1989). The following is an overview of Clarke's stages compared to Erikson's.

Stage I. Clarke's Stage I, Being, which begins at birth to about 6 months, includes Erikson's Stage I (Infancy) and his psychosocial crisis Basic Trust versus Mistrust. During this stage babies must decide "to be," that is, to decide to trust that adults will meet their needs by being nourished, cuddled and cared for when they call or cry.

Stage II. Clarke's Stage II, Doing, from about 6 months to about 18 months, includes Erikson's Stage II (Early Childhood) and his psychosocial crisis Autonomy versus Shame, Doubt. The Doing Stage is a time when it is important for children to decide to trust others, to explore their world, to trust their senses, to be creative and active, and to get support while doing all these things.

Stage III. Clarke's Stage III, Thinking, from about 18 months to about 3 years, includes Erikson's psychosocial Stage III (Play Age) and his psychosocial crisis Initiative versus Guilt. During this stage children begin to separate from parents and learn to think and solve problems. They must learn to express and handle feelings, especially feelings of anger.

Stage IV. Clarke's Stage IV, Identity and Power, from about 3 years to about 6 years, continues Erikson's psychosocial Stage III. The tasks of this stage focus on play and learning activities that help children establish individual identities, learn skills, and figure out roles and power relationships with others.

Stage V. Clarke's Stage V, Structure, from about 6 years to about 12 years, includes Erikson's psychosocial Stage IV (School Age) and his psychosocial crisis Industry versus Inferiority. In this stage children learn more about familial and social structure and rules. They install their own internal structure including an understanding of the need for rules,

BEING
I love you
and I
care for you
willingly.
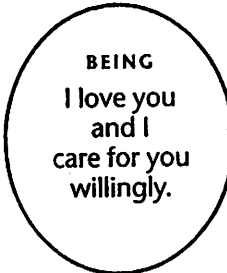
the freedom that comes from having appropriate rules, and the relevancy of rules. Examining the values on which rules are based is important. Another major task of this stage is acquiring many kinds of interpersonal, social, and academic skills.

Stage VI. Clarke's Stage VI, Identity, Sexuality, and Separation, from about 13 years to about 19 years, includes Erikson's psychosocial Stage V (Adolescence) and his psychosocial crisis Identity versus Identity Confusion. During this stage adolescents focus on personal identity, separation from the family of origin, and sexuality. They make some of their identity and separation choices by recycling the tasks of earlier stages (i.e., Being, Doing, Thinking, Identity and Power, and Structure) with sexuality added.

Identity, Sexuality, Separation

You can know who you are and learn and practice skills for Independence.
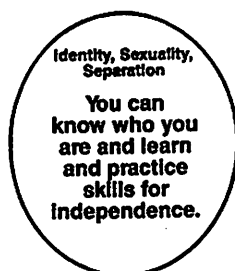
Stage VII. Finally, Clarke's Stage VII, Interdependence, adult ages, includes Erikson's psychosocial Stages VI, VII, and VIII (Young Adulthood; Adulthood, and Old Age) and his psychosocial crises Intimacy versus Isolation, Generativity versus Stagnation, and Integrity versus Despair. The developmental tasks of adulthood focus on becoming psychologically independent from families of origin, and then interdependent with other adults. Adults must also establish life work, causes, and commitments. Adulthood also includes regular recycling of earlier tasks in ways that support the adult tasks.

Explanation of the Research on the Educational Affirmations
Research Procedures
Instrument and Data Collection. To conduct my research, I needed to perform a statistical procedure (i.e., factor analyze) an instrument based on the Educational Affirmations. To create the instrument, I surveyed people about their belief in the affirmations. Initially I attempted to simply ask people whether they believe the original 54 affirmations. The respondents complained that it

was very difficult to respond "true" or "false" to the affirmations because they were compound ideas and because their belief in any one affirmation depended on the context. To overcome this problem, I created the Preliminary Educational Affirmations Scale (PEAS), based on established principles of scale development. For the PEAS, I transformed the affirmations into 103 one-thought items (questions) that were stated in I-statement format. The respondents were allowed to answer on a 7 point continuum (*always true* to *never true*). Some of the questions were stated negatively, so that I could identify stereotypical responding. By stating random questions negatively, I would be able to identify answer sheets where the respondents marked "always true" to every statement, for example. I did not include these bad protocols in my analysis.

To collect data, a colleague administered the PEAS to 520 adult students attending a community college in Southwest Lower Michigan. The data collection took two years. Once the data was collected, all of the responses to each of the 103 items were then correlated with each other.

Factor Analysis. I then employed a statistical procedure called factor analysis. In factor analysis, the researcher wants to be able to identify the number and nature of *factors* or *hypothetical constructs* that underlie a larger number of things, and how much of the variability in the data (a technical term) is merely chance occurrence. Ideally factors ought to account for at least 51% of the variability of the data (i.e., more than chance alone), but in social science, this is seldom the case. Once I identified the number of factors present, I compared the contents of the factors (i.e., PEAS items) with the hypothesized independent factors of Doing and Being and with the (alternative) hypothesized intercorrelated factors representing the seven developmental stages. Because the study was exploratory, I was interested in discovering any factors that may be present, rather than merely confirming the theory.

Research Results
The results of the factor analysis of my data suggested the presence of two independent

or uncorrelated factors. The items that represented Factor 1 seemed to be concerned with learning, acceptance of oneself and growth. Since the desire to grow and to love oneself has to do with one's existence, this factor seemed to support the hypothesized factor of Being.

The items that represented Factor 2 seemed to suggest one's ability to relate or be connected to others in a healthy way. Many of the items that loaded on Factor 2 fit very closely with the idea of *differentiation* as theorized by Bowen (1978) in family systems theory. Intrapsychic differentiation is the ability to separate feeling from thinking (Hovestadt & Fine, 1987; Nichols & Schwartz, 1998). It is also the ability to know where "one ends and another begins" (Friedman, 1991, p. 141). The ability to differentiate from one's family and significant others and to have one's own values and goals while at the same time maintaining an emotional connectedness with them is a key element in healthy development and functioning according to Bowen's theory. Bowen perceived differentiation as a process rather than a goal, and full differentiation is never fully attained.

The process of differentiation requires the development and practice of various interpersonal skills or capabilities (i.e., Doing), although more specific than Clarke's theory would require. Taken all together, however, the items that loaded on Factors 1 and 2 appear to provide modest support for the hypothesized principle factors of Being and Doing. The factor analysis suggests weak but respectable support for the underlying theory.

Conclusions Concerning the Research

I came to two important conclusions concerning my research. First, my research results were limited because I used a *transformed version* of the Educational Affirmations. The PEAS items were not stated in accordance with Clarke's theory but were consciously made to conform to conventional quantitative scales (i.e., positive and negative I-statements using present tense verbs). An independent panel of three experts had determined that the PEAS items reflected the *meaning* of the affirmations. However, after reflecting on the literature about affirmations in

general and on the results of my research, I decided that the factor analysis fell short of fully exploring the Educational Affirmations because the research did not explore Clarke's theory of affirmation *construction*. Second, I concluded that a quantitative instrument was not the most helpful way to assess people's belief in the Educational Affirmations because these affirmations are developmental. The Educational Affirmations would never be presented to anyone all at once like the PEAS items did. Furthermore, the PEAS items asked about the degree people believed the statement; they did not get at how people used the affirmations. In order to fully explore what happens when people hear the Affirmations, other types of research, particularly qualitative methods, need to be employed. So, in short, what I learned from my research is that:

- There is some support that the Educational Affirmations reflect Clarke's underlying theory that the affirmations support Being and Doing.
- The instrument used in the study did not fully reflect Clarke's theory of affirmation construction, and therefore provides only limited insights concerning the Educational Affirmations.
- Qualitative approaches may be more useful in studying the Affirmations.

The Three Cs of Affirmations: Thinking About Construction, Content, and Context

In the process of reviewing the literature and studying Clarke's underlying theory, I became aware that there are many questions concerning affirmations in general that need to be discussed and researched. One of the most important things I discovered while conducting my research was that there has been no discussion in the scientific literature concerning the construction, content, and context of affirmations. These issues are important ones for practitioners.

Construction of Affirmations

From elementary grammar, it will be recalled that the subject of a sentence acts on or

does something to the object of the sentence. In this section the construction of affirmational statements as sentences that contains subjects, verbs, and objects will be explored and discussed.

Subject of an Affirmation. Most of the references that describe how to construct an affirmation suggest that the subject of an affirmation should be the first person singular pronoun I. The logic behind I-affirmations is that if people repeat "I am . . ." messages enough times then the new belief will set in and override the old message that said, "I am not . . ." (Clarke, 1996). Clarke argues that, instead of using the first person singular pronoun I, the subject of an affirmation should be the second person singular pronoun you, because I-affirmations can set up cognitive dissonance. Clarke's logic, based in Transactional Analysis, for using you-affirmations is as follows:

> Let us say, as an example, that I have a deep belief that I do not belong, then you tell me to say twenty times a day, "I belong here." I object.
> - First--No matter how much good will you have toward me, this is your message, not mine.
> - Second--Saying your prescribed, "I belong here," can set up dissonance in me and even more anxiety, discomfort or depression than I had before.
> - Third--If I try to say it and give up, I have added another failure, another proof that I don't belong here.
> If, instead, you say to me, "You belong here," I can listen to you with all three of my Ego States, Parent, Adult, and Child. My Parent Ego State might say, "She seems to mean that!" My Adult might say, "It seems reasonable that I ought to belong here." My Child can say, "No way!" But the
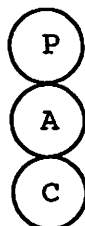
thinking, the internal dialogue between the Ego States, has started. Then if my Parent says, "This fits with my values," and my Adult says, "This seems to be a healthy message," the affirmation now belongs to me, I have chosen it. I can say to my child within, "You belong here." My Child can argue or disbelieve, but if my Parent and Adult Ego States unite to insist on giving the message and deliberately choose to behave as if I belong here, eventually my Child will spontaneously say, "I belong here." (Clarke, 1996, p. 6)

Although most of the Educational Affirmations begin with *you*, several begin with *I*. When Clarke begins affirmations with *I*, the statements reflect interpersonal relationships: "Sometimes it [the affirmation] says I feel this for you, as in I love who you are. That is very different from telling someone to say, 'I love who I am' " (Clarke, 1996, p. 6). Other examples of relational affirmations include "What you need is important to me," and "I love you when you are active and when you are quiet."

Verb Tense of an Affirmation. The next element of a statement is the verb tense. In brief, there is no research on whether the verb tense used in affirmations should be:
- Present tense, such as, "I do" or "I am."
- Present progressive voice: "I am becoming," or "I am learning."
- Future tense: "I can become," or "I can learn."

Clarke consciously used the verb *can* along with an action verb because most people do not distinguish the between *can* and *may* (J. I. Clarke, personal communication, December 3, 1998). In other words, *can* might be heard and understood in the present tense as a directive to do something, but it might also be heard in the future tense as a permission to continue learning.

Object of an Affirmation. The object of an affirmational statement is the behavior, quality, skill or standard that is intended to be changed or reinforced. The object of the verb can be general (e.g., "You can learn *what you need* to learn") or specific (e.g., "You can learn *math*"). Clarke's Educational Affirmations are general rather than specific, and are related to theoretical developmental tasks rather than general well-being.

Content of Affirmations

Separating Behavior from Traits. Clarke has maintained that when offering affirmations to separate Being (i.e., traits) from Doing (i.e., behavior), it is important to be specific about the person's behavior (e.g., "Thanks for helping me pick up the books") rather than global about the person's traits (e.g., "You are wonderful). The need to separate behavior from traits is supported by the results of research conducted by Mueller and Dweck (1998).

> These researchers studied the difference between praising an attribute and praising an action and concluded that certain kinds of praise may hurt children.

In a series of experiments, fifth graders were given a math test that they all easily passed. Some were praised for their intellect by being told, "You must be smart at these problems." Some were praised for their hard work by being told, "You must have worked hard at these problems." A control group received no feedback. Then the researchers assigned harder math problems and noted how each child responded to the work.

They discovered that praising children for being *intelligent* tended to cause them to despair more quickly than children who were praised for being *industrious*. The children who were praised for being smart worried about failure, compared their scores with scores of other, and were less enthusiastic, and less determined as problems became more difficult. On the other hand, children who were praised for being industrious tended to put more effort into solving the math problems, concentrated on learning new ways to solve the problems, and maintained persistence with a high level of interest.

The researchers concluded that students who were praised for their intelligence may have thought of it as a fixed trait and failure meant that they lacked ability. On the other hand, the children who were praised for industry may have attributed their failures to insufficient effort, not lack of ability.

Mueller and Dweck suggested that when it comes to praising a child's intelligence, parents and teachers should, "as in criticism, 'separate the deed from the doer' by applying praise to children's strategies and work habits rather than to any particular trait. Because children cannot be insulated from failure throughout their lives, great care should be taken to send them motivationally beneficial messages after success" (p. 50).

These researchers did not examine how children might react to combining praise for intelligence with praise for industry, nor did they explore what happens when hard work fails to produce favorable results. Although they did not directly address the technique of affirmation, their research highlights the subtleties and dilemmas of choosing the most helpful words for affirmations.

Problems with Shame. Clarke and Dawson (1989) claim that when people confuse being with doing they may experience feelings of shame. When feelings of shame overwhelm people and prevent them from taking appropriate action, and when shame is inappropriate for the situation (e.g., feeling ashamed for one's nationality), then shame presents a problem. For this reason, affirmations should carefully distinguish between affirming Doing and affirming Being. For example, a man may have confused his Being and Doing in an erroneous belief that in order to be smart, he must know everything, which, of course, is impossible. When he is told, "You are smart" (i.e., a statement about Being), he may feel ashamed because he knows that he does not know everything.

Accent the Positive. By definition, the term *affirmation* connotes a positive message. The notion of positivity brings up several affirmational issues. The first issue is whether affirmations should be *encouraging positive, healthy processes* or whether affirmations should make people feel good.

> Many of the affirmations promoted in popular self-help literature appear to have the goal of making the recipients feel good.

However, if the technique of affirmation is intended to bring about and reinforce positive growth or change in people, then inviting people to always feel good is not an appropriate use of affirmations. It is important to remember that growth usually requires hard work and may not feel particularly good while people are engaged in it.

The second issue related to positivity is the idea of *emphasizing positive thinking.* One criticism of affirmations is that they may focus only on the positive. Holder (1990) particularly blasted the emphasis on positive thinking because it can inhibit performance by creating inner conflict, that is, dissonance, as discussed above, and by encouraging narcissism and disrespectful attitudes. He believes that objectivity and critical thinking should be encouraged instead.

A third question concerning the construction of affirmations is whether an affirmation *can contain the negative words no or not for the purposes of setting behavioral limits* by stressing what behavior is not acceptable. Setting limits is an important concept in parenting. Clarke (1978) asserts that in order for children to accomplish the developmental task of thinking clearly and separating their feelings from their behavior, parents must assist them in acquiring skills by setting appropriate limits. Clarke offers the affirmation, "It's OK for you to be angry and I won't let you hurt yourself or others" to help children, as well as frustrated or

Thinking

It's OK for you to be angry and I won't let you hurt yourself or others.

depressed adults, internalize limits and learn self-control for their own and society's welfare.

A fourth issue concerning positivity is how to appropriately *affirm each person's value* and place in society without promoting egocentrism. Often people with low self-esteem tend to see themselves as not having a right to even exist, let alone possessing other rights (Baumeister et al., 1996). On the other hand, people with inflated self-esteem tend to feel entitled to more than their share of life's resources and opportunities; they tend to be narcissistic and arrogant. Well intentioned but thoughtless affirmations to bolster self-esteem could actually bolster inflated self-esteem instead, with negative results for children and for society.

For example, a leader of a workshop on self-esteem urged his participants to stand up and yell, "I am the greatest!" (J. I. Clarke, personal communication, July 6, 1996). The logical implication is, of course, if I am the greatest, then you and others must be less than I am. It also implies that self-esteem is competitive and external, and it suggests that I am entitled. The idea of saying "I am the greatest" is a misinformed understanding of what self-esteem should be, and it is this understanding of self-esteem that Baumeister et al. (1996) were cautioning against when they stated, "the societal pursuit of high self-esteem for everyone may literally end up doing considerable harm" (p. 29).

In other words, children should not be taught to repeat and believe affirmations that encourage inflated self-esteem. Clarke's (1978) theory of self-esteem reasons that when children's intrinsic value (i.e., Being), is affirmed, and when their capabilities (i.e., Doing) are affirmed, they will not develop too low or too inflated self-esteem. As already described, Clarke emphasizes teaching children limits, standards, and skills as part of affirming existence and capabilities.

> The idea here is that children should be encouraged to feel good about themselves because they are intrinsically lovable and capable but this view of themselves should be based on a realistic perception of themselves in the greater scheme of life.

Context of Affirmations

Relationship. The relational context of affirmations is stressed in most of the clinical and educational literature. The most frequently cited reason therapists and educators gave for teaching people to affirm themselves is to help clients and students develop positive relationships with themselves. For example, it is thought that therapists model, demonstrate, and act out new ways of relating even while they are overtly engaged in discussing client problems, and it is through the therapeutic relationship, in part, that clients learn new ways of dealing with their problems (Cashdan, 1988; Kegan, 1982; Teyber, 1992).

Clarke (1978) and Clarke and Dawson (1989) assert that parenting, the process of providing nurturance and structure so that children learn skills, limits, and standards in order to become civilized and productive, occurs in the context of strong relationships. Clarke encourages parents to consciously and thoughtfully offer developmentally appropriate messages to their children rather than thoughtless, inflated-esteem building messages or negative damaging ones.

It seems logical that the meanings people make of their relationship with others may make any statement an affirmation or even a negation. It may be that outside of the context of a powerful relationship, affirmations may not be affirmations but rather glib and meaningless feel-good manipulations (Holder, 1990). Several questions concerning relational context of affirmations remain. For example, what kind of family relationships are needed for children to internalize healthy affirmations? What kind of relationship do people need with themselves to believe affirmations?

Repetition. Many authors who advocated the use of affirmations stress the importance of repeating affirmations several times daily. However, only Coue and Clarke offered theoretical explanation for the need for affirmational repetition. Coue (1922, 1923)
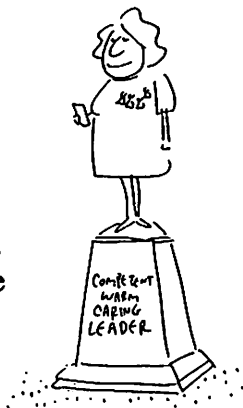
theorized that a person's psychological makeup could be influenced for the better by the force of frequent self-repetition of the statement, "Every day, in every way, I'm getting better and better." Coue suggested that the statement should be repeated 20 times morning and evening by holding a knotted string or rosary to aid in counting, if necessary. He warned, however, that the repetitions should be in a relaxed and effortless manner, and that the mind should be allowed to wander and to imagine other things while affirming in order for the unconscious mind to assimilate the positive message. According to his theory, purposeful and focused repetition would engage the resistance of the will, and the affirmation would not be beneficial.

Clarke (1978), Clarke and Dawson (1989), and Clarke and Gesme (1988) emphasized that affirmations need to be repeated by being offered in many ways and many times in relation to the developmental and recycling needs of people. To explain the need for repetition, Clarke (1981) offered the metaphor of affirmations as healthy food. She suggested that a nutritious variety of healthy messages needs to be offered, taken in and digested daily in order to develop healthy self-esteem.

Conclusion

I learned many things in the process of conducting my research. The main thing I learned is that much more research needs to be conducted on affirmations in general, and on the Educational Affirmations. In the meantime, the present state of research and theory suggests that practitioners should be cautious about advocating the use of affirmations in the form of present tense I-statements focusing on a goal, particularly if the goal is unrealistic or chosen by someone else, because of potential problems with dissonance. Affirmations should carefully distinguish between affirming people's behavior and people's existence to avoid engendering feelings of shame. At the present time affirmations in the form of you-statements using the present progressive voice (e.g., *am becoming*) as advocated by Coue (1922; 1923) and Clarke (1996), or using the verb *can*, (e.g., *can learn*) as advocated by Clarke (1996), and

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that support developmental and therapeutic processes in general, rather than specific, ways have some empirical support. I hope that my study will generate more research on the construction, context, and contents of affirmations as a technique for supporting growth and change.

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Being

I love you and I care for you willingly.

Doing

I love you when you are active and when you are quiet.

Thinking

You can become separate from me and I will continue to love you.

Identity and Power

I love who you are.

Structure

I love you even when we differ; I love growing with you.

Identity, Sexuality, Separation

My love is always with you. I trust you to ask for my support.

Interdependence

You are lovable at every age.

Jean Illsley Clarke
J.I.Consultants

16535 9th Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55447 (612) 473-1840

ABOUT THE AFFIRMATIONS

1. **What are affirmations?**
They are life supporting messages — anything we do or say that lets others know that we believe they are lovable and capable. These messages affirm people's need and ability to grow and to do their developmental tasks.

2. **What do the ages by the stage numbers mean?**
The ages indicate the time at which each message first gets strong focus. After that we refocus on each developmental task many times according to our rhythms of growth or in response to life experiences. Each time we refocus we have the chance to learn to apply the skills in more sophisticated ways.

3. **What do you do with the colored ovals?**
Look at them and read them. Post them on the refrigerator, bathroom mirror, bulletin board, dashboard. Stick them on a book, gift, yourself. Put them in a lunch box, letter, greeting card, birthday present. Carry them in your pocket, billfold, purse. Keep a set by the telephone. Play with them with another person — read the ones they want to hear. Spread them face down on a table. Pick up three and read them to yourself. Choose four or five to focus on for a week. Read them aloud five times morning and night.

4. **Are there other ways to give the messages?**
Yes, lots. You give them by the way you touch, look and respond to, spend time with and pay attention to people.

5. **Why is it worthwhile to use these affirmations?**
We can use affirmations to help us remember that we are capable, lovable people. They help us love and care for others. They remind us that we are always growing and that there is hope.

6. **How can affirmations help us?**
We can use affirmations to help us raise our self-esteem so that we have healthier bodies and healthier minds. Our posture improves, we are more attractive, productive, loving and joyful.

7. **What are the "Love Affirmations"?**
The "love affirmations" are marked with hearts. They are the affirmations that say "I love you unconditionally for yourself and for doing your developmental tasks."

8. **Are there any rules?**
Yes. Don't give an affirmation to someone else at a moment when you don't feel and believe it. If you do, they may pick up the conflict in it and feel confused instead of affirmed. If you can't give some of these messages to your child, do what you need to do for yourself (get help, rest, education, therapy, whatever) so that you can believe the messages and give them.

Do give yourself affirmations even when you think you don't believe them. You will be tapping into the healthy, loving part of yourself.

Questions and answers by Jean Illsley Clarke & Carole Gesme

The affirmations are taken from *Growing Up Again* by Clarke and Dawson, Hazelden. To order affirmations printed on laminated ovals write to: Daisy Press, 16535 9th Ave. N., Minneapolis, MN 55447, (612) 473-1840 or Carol Gesme, 4036 Kerry Court, Minnetonka, MN 55345, (612) 938-9163.

EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL AFFIRMATIONS
From Growing Up Again

by Jean Illsley Clarke and Connie Dawson

Becoming, *prenatal stage*

Becoming — I love you just as you are.

- I celebrate that you are alive.
- Your needs and safety are important to me.
- We are connected and you are whole.
- You can make healthy decisions about your experiences.
- You can be born when you are ready.
- Your life is your own.
- ♥ I love you just as you are.

Being, Stage I, *0 to 6 months*

Being — I'm glad you are alive.

- I'm glad you are alive.
- You belong here.
- What you need is important to me.
- I'm glad you are you.
- You can grow at your own pace.
- You can feel all of your feelings.
- ♥ I love you and I care for you willingly.

Doing, Stage II, *6 to 18 months*

- You can explore and experiment and I will support and protect you.
- You can use all of your senses when you explore.
- You can do things as many times as you need to.
- You can know what you know.
- You can be interested in everything.
- I like to watch you initiate and grow and learn.
- ♥ I love you when you are active and when you are quiet.

Thinking, Stage III, *18 months to 3 years*

- I'm glad you are starting to think for yourself.
- It's OK for you to be angry and I won't let you hurt yourself or others.
- You can say no and push and test limits as much as you need to.
- You can learn to think for yourself and I will think for myself.
- You can think and feel at the same time.
- You can know what you need and ask for help.
- ♥ You can become separate from me and I will continue to love you.

Identity and Power, Stage IV, *3 to 6 years*

- You can explore who you are and find out who other people are.
- You can be powerful and ask for help at the same time.
- You can try out different roles and ways of being powerful.
- You can find out the results of your behavior.
- All of your feelings are OK with me.
- You can learn what is pretend and what is real.
- ♥ I love who you are.

Structure, Stage V, *6 to 12 years*

- You can think before you say yes or no and learn from your mistakes.
- You can trust your intuition to help you decide what to do.
- You can find a way of doing things that works for you.
- You can learn the rules that help you live with others.
- You can learn when and how to disagree.
- You can think for yourself and get help instead of staying in distress.
- ♥ I love you even when we differ; I love growing with you.

Identity, Sexuality and Separation, Stage VI, *adolescence*

- You can know who you are and learn and practice skills for independence.
- You can learn the difference between sex and nurturing and be responsible for your needs and behavior.
- You can develop your own interests, relationships and causes.
- You can learn to use old skills in new ways.
- You can grow in your maleness or femaleness and still be dependent at times.
- I look forward to knowing you as an adult.
- ♥ My love is always with you. I trust you to ask for my support.

Interdependence, Stage VII, *adult years*

- Your needs are important.
- You can be uniquely yourself and honor the uniqueness of others.
- You can be independent and interdependent.
- Through the years you can expand your commitments to your own growth, to your family, your friends, your community and to all humankind.
- You can build and examine your commitments to your values and causes, your roles and tasks.
- You can be responsible for your contributions to each of your commitments.
- You can be creative, competent, productive and joyful.
- You can trust your inner wisdom.
- You can say your hellos and goodbyes to people, roles, dreams, and decisions.
- You can finish each part of your journey and look forward to the next.
- Your love matures and expands.
- ♥ You are lovable at every age.

Toward Death, *Integration Stage*

- You can grow your whole life through.
- You can look upon the process of dying as a natural transition.
- You can make your preparations for leaving and die when you are ready.
- You can celebrate the gifts you have received and the gifts you have given.
- You deserve the support that you need.
- You can share your wisdom in your way.
- ♥ You are lovable just the way you are.