

Affirmation's what you need

Positive self-talk is a key tool in transferring the good work done on the training field out onto the real playing field



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE...Affirmation makes sure what happens on the training field is put into action against the opposition
Picture: Ray Ryan / SPORTSFILE

7. Include at least one dynamic or feeling word
Use the emotional feeling you'll have as if you've already achieved

buzz words triggers the mental picture of the action performed effectively and regularly in training. There are nine guidelines for creating effective affirmations:

1. Start with the words 'I am'
This is 'I am' if the player is affirming himself; 'you are' if the coach is affirming the player.

2. Use the present tense
Describe what you want as though you've already done it, as if it's already accomplished, for example 'I am the best tackler in this competition and nobody is passing me with the ball today.'

3. State it in the positive
Affirm what you do want, not what you don't want. The subconscious does not hear the words don't or no. For example, 'Don't slam the door,' is heard as 'Slam the door.' Use do not don't. The subconscious thinks in pictures and patterns positively so say, 'I am going for a win' rather than, 'I no longer fear losing.' The former sees enjoyment, the second holds on to the fear.

4. Keep it brief
For example am scoring 1-4 today, assisting in five other scores and making four turnover tackles. Vague affirmations produce vague results.

6. Include an action word ending with 'ing'
For example, 'I am still sprinting as fast at the end of the game as at the start.'



John Morrison

THORKE was a significant change in the Armagh side that went out of the Ulster championship against Cavan in such a tame manner and the team which was so free scoring in the early stages of the All-Ireland qualifiers. There was a reason why the team went from being all fingers and thumbs, to playing with fluency.

Rather than just telling the game plan, Armagh were now actively training the game plan and then affirming it in team feedback and team talks at training and in the pre-game team talk.

By affirming, the spoken word triggers the memory pictures of what was done in training and so the players know exactly what to do and do perform it in game time.

Affirming players rather than 'telling' players before a game makes them feel they have played the game in their head before the actually play the game.
What is an affirmation? It is a statement that describes a goal in its already completed state. For example I am enjoying this game because I am stepping up, launching tight to my man and denying him possession throughout. This action phrase in

the goal. For example, enjoying, proudly, calmly, enthusiastically, and so on.

8. Make affirmations for yourself or your team, not for others
Make them describing your behaviour or a specific player's behaviour, for example I am/you are, I can/you can, I do/you do.

9. Add 'or something better'
'I am scoring six points today or something better. We are winning 90 percent of today's kick-outs or better'

Remember, you must be training what you want to do - not telling - if you want to use affirming.

Affirming, and affirmations are three natural brain functions and abilities

(i) Asking what you want breeds discovery, learning and understanding.

(ii) Acting as if you are doing it through affirming self-talk. Talking to oneself is a natural strength.

(iii) This self-talk triggers the memory to subconscious or by muscle memory produce an action picture from training to play to. Raised self-esteem and confidence and a better performance is the result.

I have found players have a better focus and more success with this approach than doing nothing at all. It becomes a positive habit.

Try it yourself. Affirm. Tell yourself what you've done, rather than how you'll do it.

Affirming rather than telling is the key to success.