

# Words to Carry

For parents, healers, protectors, and those becoming whole  
— from *Raising Fire* by Lee-Ann F. O'Brien

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*Come back here when the weight feels like too much.*

*Let these words meet you in the hard mornings.*

*A steady hand when the world feels sharp.*

*A quiet ember when everything inside you feels spent.*

*Even in the heaviness, your Head Fire is still burning.*

*Even in the ashes, you are still becoming.*

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## **What is a mantra — and why does it work?**

A mantra is a short phrase you return to on purpose. Not magic — a pattern interrupt. A way of redirecting your nervous system when anxiety, grief, or exhaustion starts running the show. You don't have to believe it yet. You're just practicing believing it.

Repetition rewires the story your mind defaults to. Think of it as tending your embers — one small, intentional act at a time. On their own, each feels small. But tended consistently, they connect and grow into something that can withstand wind and rain.

That's what these words are: embers. Keep tending them.

## **What is an affirmation — and why does it work?**

An affirmation is a present-tense statement you offer yourself as if it's already true. The brain doesn't fully distinguish between what is real and what is vividly imagined — which means repeating I am enough trains the mind to look for evidence that it is. Research in cognitive behavioural therapy supports this: the language we use about ourselves shapes how we perceive ourselves.

Affirmations aren't toxic positivity. They're not about pretending. They're a deliberate choice to soften the places that have gone rigid — to redirect your energy toward what's possible, rather than staying tethered to what hurts. You were worthy long before the world taught you to armor up. These words are just a reminder.

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**USE THEM HOWEVER YOU NEED**

- Tape one on your bathroom mirror.
- Tuck a few into your locker or your bag.
- Whisper them before your feet hit the floor.
- Write one on a sticky note on your car visor.
- Keep them in your coat pocket.
- Record them in your phone's notes app.
- Write one in your notebook before shift.

*This is a practice in remembering. In tending the flame. In trusting that even when the fire dims, it never goes out.*

**MORNING AFFIRMATIONS**

*For grounding, clarity, and compassion*

1. I am grateful for this life — and for one more day in it.
2. Today is a new beginning. I don't have to carry yesterday with me.
3. I lead with courage, not perfection. Brave is enough.
4. My presence is enough. I am enough.
5. I show up for myself the way I show up for everyone else.
6. I am healing. I am growing. I am becoming.
7. I have the power to change things — starting with how I see myself.
8. I am worthy of love. It is all around me, even when I can't feel it.
9. Every hard thing I've walked through has been building something inside me.
10. Today, I will look for the good. It's there. I just have to notice it.

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**MANTRAS FOR THE HARD DAYS**

*To come back to when everything feels heavy*

1. This is hard. But I can do hard things. I've already proven that.
2. I am confident. I am calm. I am capable.

3. It's okay to rest. My worth doesn't disappear when I slow down.
4. I don't have to be who I was yesterday. I'm allowed to evolve.
5. I am not broken. I am wounded. And wounds can heal.
6. I am enough. No one has the power to make me feel differently.
7. Healing doesn't happen all at once. Small embers still count.
8. I accept myself as I am right now — and I trust where I'm going.
9. I am safe. I am still here. That matters.
10. My Head Fire hasn't gone out. It never does.

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*These are the words I return to — again and again.*

*I hope they carry you when your own words are too far away.*

*I hope they remind you that you're building something sacred.*

*One breath. One page. One moment at a time.*

**Keep going.**