



Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program

Why Mantras Work

"The quieter you become, the more you can hear." ~Ram Dass

A mantra is a word, sound, or saying that is repeated silently to help quiet frustrating, angry, negative, self-deprecating, or judgmental thoughts. Mantras generally work to help tame thoughts that are counterproductive and unhelpful to being a healthy, happy, and wise human being. One of the most famous mantras is simply making the sound "Om," but equally popular are prayers, signals to focus on the body ("I breathe in, I breathe out"), and encouraging statements or affirmations. We know from years of neuroscience research that meditation positively changes the brain. Recent research on word repetition suggests that using mantras creates a reduction in activity in the parts of the brain responsible for self-judgment and self-reflection. Basically, repeating a mantra curbs our internal thoughts that deal with criticizing or thinking about our past, and the thoughts that worry about the future and what other people think about us. Considering the fact that law students and attorneys have high rates of stress and anxiety, which increase the activity in the parts of the brain regarding self-judgment and self-reflection, it would be helpful for you to use meditation and mantras to counteract the negative effects of your stress. Incorporating meditation/mantras into your law school routine now will also serve you well as a practicing attorney.

Mantras do not have to be spiritual or complex. In fact, there are many sayings that are helpful mantras to refocus and calm our overactive brains. Here are some examples:

- "Where there's a will, there's a way."
- "An act of kindness is an act of rebellion."
- "There is no time like the present."
- "When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you."
- "Breathe in calm, breathe out smile."
- "You are the sky; everything else is just the weather."
- "I am fulfilled; I am fearless."
- "I am grateful for how my life is unfolding."

What are some of your favorite quotes, sayings, mantras, or prayers? Print them up or write them down and post them around your home or study space. Put some in your calendar, on the back of your phone, or as your screen saver. Remind yourself throughout the day when

you read the quotes that it only takes a moment of repeating a word or phrase to calm your mind and relax your body.

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