

“I don’t chase, I attract”

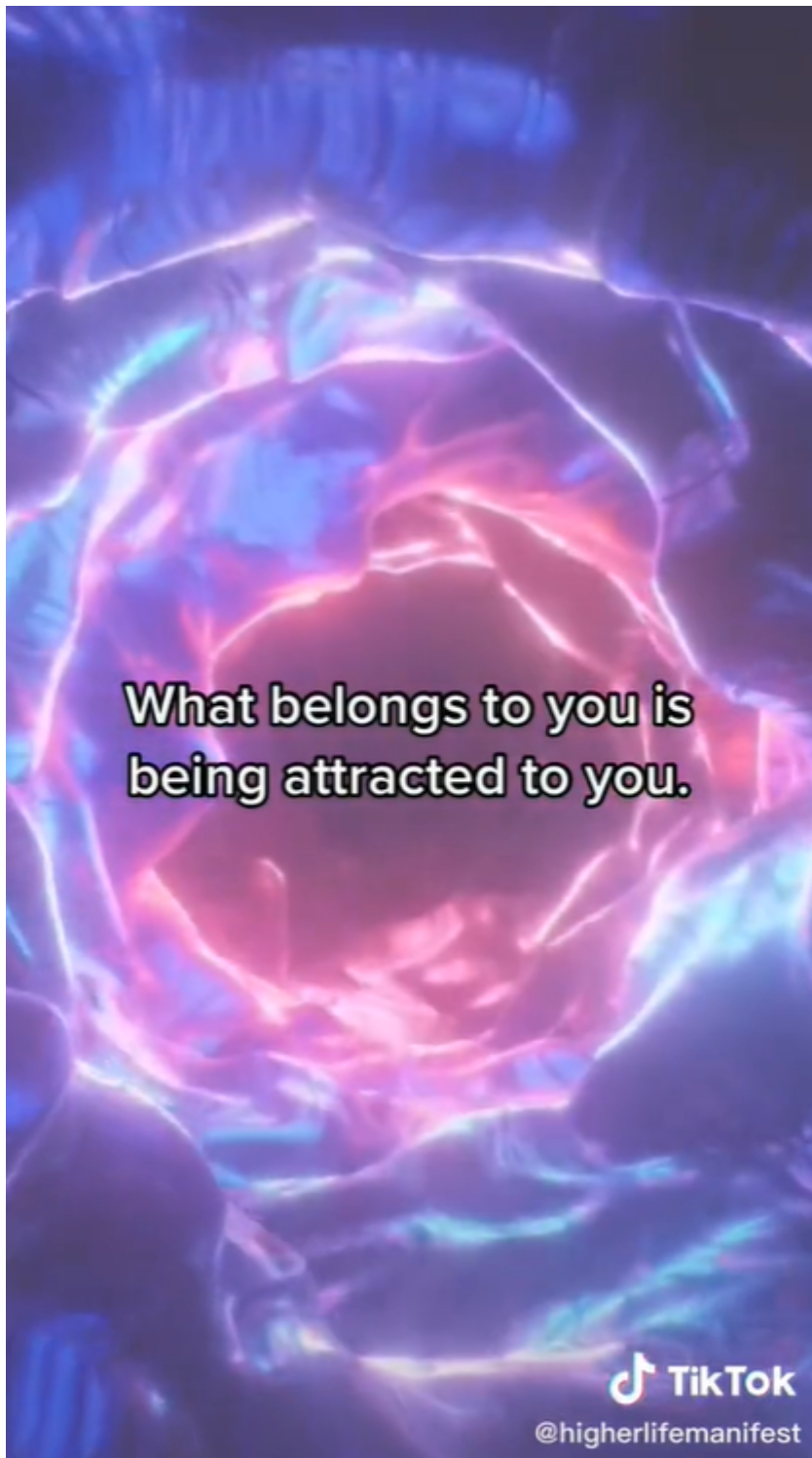
How did a seemingly forgotten new age practice take the internet by storm? And is it really the life changer you are looking for?

The internet rise of manifesting

If you’ve spent more than a day on the internet as a Gen Z, you know what manifestation is – maybe it was the crystal girl that popped up on your For You page for no apparent reason, or that one friend who has everyone’s birth chart memorized and won’t shut up about it. And in the unlikely case you don’t - it’s one of the post New Age practices turned into an internet craze. In its essence, it is the belief that good things will come to you only if you think about them hard enough. And while ridiculous at first, many would swear manifestation is a life-changer.

It gained mainstream popularity mainly through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram and Twitter during the early pandemic in 2020. And it’s easy to see why people found it so attractive – in a time where nothing felt certain and life felt paused, strangers on the internet would promise that commenting “I claim!” on a video loaded with “strong positive energy” would clear up your skin, make your crush obsessed with you, and get you into your dream university. What a bargain!

And it is not the only spiritual practice that blew up – rituals previously considered taboo have become some of the biggest trends of the past year, with April of 2021 seeing a 15492% increase in Google searches for manifestation methods. From popular ones like astrology and crystals to more obscure ones like using an [egg to cleanse your aura](#) or casting a love spell through masturbation, the internet is your grimoire. Many of them owe their popularity to meme culture such as the infamous [“I don’t chase. I attract”](#) chant, or talking to the universe, which according to some teens on TikTok has a [“daddy energy”](#).



However, no matter how ridiculous, all methods have one thing in common – setting a clear goal, and creating a positive atmosphere in your mind where it can bloom into reality.

So what is the science behind this trend? Are manifestations really the metaphysical solution to all of your problems? Or do they just give you an extra push in confidence and provide you with the focus you need to achieve what you aspire to?

The psychology behind manifesting

I spoke to mental health advocate Tajdar Chaudry about his journey to self-love through manifestation, and whether it really is as mystical and wondrous as the media portrays it. The answer, to him, was no - "It is less supernatural than it is believed, parts of it we don't understand has to do with energy - manifestation is about having an honest relationship with ourselves, understanding and reframing our relationship with the world around us, making room for things that were naturally meant to be. Sometimes, what you manifest might not be what you initially set out for. Instead, it might be something to help you reframe what is happening in your life and give it more meaning."

His practice of manifesting includes inking - tattooing personal affirmations on his skin. He tells me about his latest tattoo - an Arabic sentence, which he roughly translates to "love is not an easy thing, it's like a river of fire and the only way through is to drown".

"Self-love is seen as selfish in society, it is not normalized within our culture in the 21st century." He talks about how affirmations have no effect, unless we see the world differently, starting with ourselves - understanding our own language of self-love, which may not be as grand as expected.

"The notion of self-love should really be felt. What you see in the media is someone else's notion of self-love and not yours. It is not a profound thing you would see in screenplays, or that would go down in history books - it's about small kindnesses, starting with yourself."

Does it work though?

I reached out to a couple of students at the University of Sheffield who had already set out on their manifestation journey and wanted to share their experience. Tia Xiourouppas, a journalism student, says she started manifesting during lockdown. "I was going through a really depressive period. I was hating myself and was honestly just so fed up with living and needed to do something to make me want to carry on. My whole FYP on TikTok and all my Youtube started to fill up with 'how to manifest' or 'manifesting my dream life' so i just decided to give it a try. At first I was doing silly little affirmations in the morning, then I started journaling every day, paving out what my dream life would be and how I want to view myself."

Whether it was placebo, or the classic fake it till you make it, manifesting seemed to work for Tia. "I was just forcing myself to like myself more. I don't always journal now, in fact I rarely do, but it's become a habit to affirm things to myself and just manifest good things into my life naturally."

Kamila Swierszcz, another student, whose spiritual journey started with the purchase of a single rose quartz in 2019 shares her thoughts about the mainstream rise of manifesting. "I'm sure everyone on TikTok has already heard the famous affirmation "I don't chase, I attract, what belongs to me will simply find me" at some point. And don't get me wrong, if you use it correctly, it can work wonders, but 90% of the creators show the wrong approach."

"Let's be honest, if you only say the sentence 3 times and do nothing about the goal you want to achieve, nothing will happen. No magic fairy will come and give you the job you want, the love of your life and the 5 bedroom house with a backyard pool without your effort. That is not how it

works. Yet, somehow, there are still people there who say, "Oh my god, I said this exact sentence for 2 days, and my ex-boyfriend and I got back together!". This sets up unrealistic expectations and puts pressure on others. Because if it worked for someone, why can't it work for ME? And when it doesn't work, the only thing you get out of it is frustration and anger."

To Kamila, another flaw of online spirituality is the excessive amount of products constantly thrown in your face. "You don't have to spend thousands on spirituality items, especially when you begin your journey. You are still valid even if you don't have that one crystal you saw on TikTok, and I think that's the thing that people forget to share on the internet."

So what if it doesn't?

"To some extent, it probably has a placebo effect," says Kamila. "but if a practice doesn't hurt anyone and makes you feel better about yourself or improve your behaviour, then why not do it? In my opinion, most of the manifestation process begins with changing your self-concept and applying positive thinking to life. Obviously, it depends on the method, but you can only benefit from that. I've seen many people starting to practice spirituality when they feel at the lowest of their lives and say it has changed their lives."



And maybe whether manifestation works or not isn't all that important after all. Think about it - what's the worst that can come out of you [chugging countless water glasses with your](#)

[dream life written all over them](#) (aside from a slight bladder problem)? Astrology and religion have become overused and boring, and in the years we live in, where not even an alien invasion would surprise us (probably), manifestation is a fun little breath of fresh air and a harmless way to feel in control of your life. And while it may not be everyone's cup of tea, to some it is the push they need to take onto a new journey of self-love and endless possibilities.

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Interviews conducted:

Kamila Swierszcz - 13/12

Tia Xiourouppas - 13/12

Theo Taylor - 13/12

Rebecca McPhillips - 14/12

Tajdar Chaudry - 15/12