“Problems worthy of attack prove their worth by hitting back”
— ‘Problems’, p. 2 in GROOKS, by Piet Hein

Dr. Spencer’s Mantra for the relief of anxiety that accompanies attempts to prove theorems

The mantra consists of three parts:

1. The **LINES** or **VERSE** [To be chanted slowly, as appropriate, several times]
   (It is suggested that if a line has \(k\) words, it be chanted \(k\) times, shifting the emphasis from word to word.)
   The LINES:
   WHAT EXACTLY AM I TRYING TO PROVE?
   WHAT ARE THE HYPOTHESES? [WHAT MAY I ASSUME?]
   WHAT IS THE CONCLUSION I SEEK?
   WHAT DO SOME OF THE ELEMENTS LOOK LIKE?
   WHY DO I BELIEVE IT?
   WHAT IF IT WASN’T SO?

2. The **COMMAND** [To be heeded and obeyed regularly]
   WRITE IT DOWN. WRITE IT DOWN CAREFULLY. WRITE IT DOWN COMPLETELY.

3. The **REFRAIN** [To be repeated as often as necessary, before and after the command]
   WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?? [Of course, the mood of the refrain should be changed as the mood of the sentence changes. E.g., WHAT WOULD THAT MEAN?]

If symptoms persist, see your local doctor.