### Automatic Negative Thoughts

Thoughts are real and they have a real impact on how you feel and behave. Your body reacts to every thought you have. Your thoughts cause your brain to release chemicals into your body that make you feel bad or good, depending on the kind of thought.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANT SPECIES</th>
<th>ANT DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>KILL THE ANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RED</td>
<td>AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS are particularly harmful.</td>
<td>Train your brain to be positive &amp; helpful. Here’s how to do it:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ANT #1: Always or Never Thinking**  
This is where you think in words like always, never, every time, or everyone. These thoughts are overgeneralizations which can alter behavior.  
Catch yourself the next time you say to yourself “I’m never going to lose weight,” “You’re always late,” or “Everyone understands this but me.”

**ANT #2: Focusing on the Negative**  
This ANT involves dismissing the good and focusing on the negative.  
As someone once said, “We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorns have roses.”

**ANT #3: Fortune Telling**  
Predicting a bad outcome to a situation before it has occurred. Your mind makes happen what it sees. This is a RED ANT because unconsciously, predicting failure will often cause failure.  
The reality is, you can’t predict the future, so instead reframe the thought with honest, rational thinking.

**ANT #4: Mind Reading**  
Predicting you know that another person is thinking something negative about you without them telling you. This is RED ANT because it commonly causes relational problems.  
Say to yourself, “I don’t know that for sure. Maybe she’s just busy studying for another class. I’ll speak to her about it or give her the benefit of the doubt.”

**ANT #5: Thinking with Your Feelings**  
Occurs when you have negative feelings without questioning them, i.e. a situation where you feel stupid which morphs into the thought that you are stupid.  
Whenever you have a strong feeling, check it out. Look for evidence behind the feeling. Do you have real reasons to feel this way or are your feelings based on events from the past?

**ANT #6: Guilt Beatings**  
Being overrun by thoughts of “I should have done... I’m bad because.... I must do better at... I have to...”). Guilt is powerful at making us feel bad. It is a lousy motivator of behavior.  
It is human nature to not want to do things whenever we think we “must” do them. It is better to replace guilt this phrases like “It fits with my goals to do...” or “I want to...”

**ANT #7: Labeling**  
Calling yourself or someone else a derogatory name. This diminishes your ability to see situations clearly and labels are very harmful.  
Eliminate negative labels like “I’m a lousy student” and instead say, “If I stay focused and study really hard, I can get good grades.”

**ANT #8: Taking Things Personally**  
Innocuous events are taken to have personal meaning. Or it feels like you are the cause of all the bad things that happen.  
When others don’t treat you as well as you’d like, don’t take it personally. Maybe your friend is just grumpy.

**ANT #9: Blame**  
Blaming others for your problems makes you a victim and prevents you from admitting your mistakes or learning from them. This RED ANT makes you powerless to change.  
Hold on to your personal sense of power and take personal responsibility to change the problems you have.
**Turn Your ANTs into PETs**

Another way to conquer ANTs is to turn them into PETs, *positive empowering thoughts.*

You do this by reframing your negative thoughts into something more uplifting and, ironically, probably more realistic.

To kill the ANTs, notice the negative thought, identify the species, and then reframe the thought with honest, rational thinking.

*“Don’t believe everything you think.”*

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**A.N.T.S. Log**

Begin to notice your A.N.T.S. by using the spaces below to log your thoughts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.N.T.</th>
<th>SPECIES</th>
<th>KILL THE A.N.T.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Write out the automatic negative thoughts</strong></td>
<td><strong>Identify the type of irrational thought</strong></td>
<td><strong>Talk back to the irrational thoughts</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You never listen to me</td>
<td>Always or Never Thinking</td>
<td>I get frustrated when you don’t listen to me, but I know you have listened to me and will again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole class will laugh at me.</td>
<td>Fortune Telling</td>
<td>I don’t know that. Maybe they’ll really like me speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m stupid.</td>
<td>Labeling</td>
<td>Sometimes I do things that aren’t too smart, but I’m not stupid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Information retrieved from: [https://bebrainfit.com/automatic-negative-thoughts/](https://bebrainfit.com/automatic-negative-thoughts/)

[https://www.creativityatwork.com/2011/01/10/amen-7-ways-to-optimize-your-brain-your-life/](https://www.creativityatwork.com/2011/01/10/amen-7-ways-to-optimize-your-brain-your-life/)