

ANT Therapy - Overcoming Your ANTs Exercise

Your Brain Is Wired For Automatic Negative Thoughts, Here's How To Change It

ANTs stands for automatic negative thoughts, the thoughts that come into your mind automatically and ruin your day. We think of these negative thoughts like ants at a picnic that infest your psyche and ruin your body. In this section, you can learn how negative thinking holds you back and negatively affects your weight, moods, and brainpower. You can learn to kill the ANTs so you can take control of your thinking to get smarter, happier, more focused and more energetic.

Here are the 6 "ANT Killing" principles we use to help people feel better fast.

1. Every time you have a thought, your brain releases chemicals. That's how our brains work: you have a thought, your brain releases chemicals, an electrical transmission goes across your brain and you become aware of what you're thinking. Thoughts are real and they have a direct impact on how you feel and how you behave.

2. Every time you have a mad thought, an unkind thought, a sad thought or a cranky thought, your brain releases negative chemicals that make you feel bad. Think about the last time you were mad. How did you feel physically? When most people are mad, their muscles get tense, their heart beats faster, their hands start to sweat, and they may even begin to feel a little dizzy. Your body reacts to every negative thought you have.

3. Every time you have a good thought, a happy thought, a hopeful thought, or a kind thought your brain releases chemicals that make your body feel good. Think about the last time you had a really happy thought. What did you feel inside your body? When most people are happy their muscles relax, their heartbeat and breath slow. Your body also reacts to your good thoughts.

4. Thoughts are very powerful! They can make your mind and body feel good or they can make you feel bad. Every cell in your body is affected by every thought you have. That is why when people get emotionally upset they often develop physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomachaches.

5. Thoughts lie; they lie a lot, but it is your unquestioned or uninvestigated thoughts that make us sad, mad, nervous or out of control. Unfortunately, if you never challenge your thoughts you just "believe them." The negative thoughts invade your mind like ants at a picnic. One negative thought, like one ant at a picnic, is not a big deal. Two or three negative thoughts, like two or three ants at a picnic, become more irritating. And 10 or 20 negative thoughts can cause real problems.

6. You can train your thoughts to be positive and hopeful or you can just allow them to be negative and upset you. Once you learn about your thoughts, you can choose to think good thoughts and feel good, or you can choose to think bad thoughts and feel lousy. That's right, it's up to you. Research has shown that positive emotions - especially a sense of awe - can reduce inflammation that will hurt your health. You can learn how to change your thoughts and change the way you feel.

Here are 7 Strategies To Overcome Your ANTs

Many of the tools you need to overcome your ANTs are already at your disposal. Here are seven strategies that we recommend:

1. Eliminate ANTs as they attack

You can do this in three simple steps. First, write down the negative thought. Next, identify which ANT species (either one or multiple from the list above). Third, ask yourself if the thought is 100% accurate. As soon as you remind yourself that it's not true, the ANT begins to weaken.

2. Stop the thought by paying attention to it

Perhaps it seems counterintuitive, but think of your ANTs like an attention-starved child. As soon as you acknowledge the child (or ANT), it will begin to loosen its demand for attention and control. So acknowledge the thought and then move on.

3. Start every morning by saying, “Today is going to be a great day!”

Before you get out of bed in the morning, set your intentions for the day. When you direct your thoughts to “Today is going to be a great day,” your unconscious brain will help you uncover the reasons why it will be so. Each morning, remind yourself (out loud, if possible) that this day will be a good day.

4. End every evening by asking, “What went well today?”

Before you close your eyes for the night, write down (or meditate) on three things that went well that day. Doing this will set up your dreams to be more positive, giving you a better night’s sleep, which in turn helps you stay in control of your thinking patterns.

5. Create optimism with a dose of reality

Be forward thinking and learn to see the possibilities that are all around you. A more- optimistic outlook is generally associated with a higher quality of life.

6. Change the “B” stuff

People or events cannot make you do anything on their own. It is your interpretation of those situations that cause your behavior. That perception is what is referred to as the “B” stuff. Questioning the “B” can make a huge difference in your relationships.

7. Watch the movie *Pollyanna*

If you need a lesson in positive thinking and turning bad situations into good, then this classic Disney movie (or the book on which it’s based) is highly recommended.

9 Different Types of ANTs:

1. **All-or-Nothing ANTs:** Thinking that things are either all good or all bad.
2. **Less than ANTs:** Where you compare and see yourself less than others.
3. **Just the Bad ANTs:** Seeing only the bad in a situation.
4. **Guilt Beating ANTs:** Thinking in words like should, must, ought, or have to.
5. **Labeling ANTs:** Attaching a negative label to yourself or someone else.
6. **Fortune Telling ANTs:** Predicting the worst possible outcome for a situation with little or no evidence for it.
7. **Mind Reading ANTs:** Believing you know what other people are thinking even though they haven’t told you.
8. **If Only and I’ll Be Happy When ANTs:** Where you argue with the past and long for the future.
9. **Blaming ANTs:** Blaming someone else for your problems.

Kill the ANTs Worksheets

Spent some time completing these exercises and discuss with your Licensed Brain Trainer.

The ANT-killing formula is simple. Whenever you feel sad, mad, nervous or out of control

1. Write down your negative thought.
2. Figure out which ANT species it is.
3. Talk back to it – challenge the thought!

Examples:

ANT	Species of ANT	Kill the ANT
My wife never listens to me	Always Thinking	That's just not true. She often listens to me. Today she is just distracted.
The boss doesn't like me.	Mind Reading	I don't know that for sure. Maybe she's just having a bad day. I need to talk to her.
I'm a failure.	Labeling	Sometimes I fail, but I always look to learn from it.
It's my husband's fault.	Blaming	I will look at my part of the problem and look for ways to make it better.

Your thoughts matter. Kill the ANTs and train your thoughts to be positive and it will benefit your mind, mood, and body.

What's your ANT?

What type of ANT is it?

Kill the ANT by talking back to it - challenge it!

Write down three of your most common negative thoughts. Identify the species of ANT in the thought and then challenge it.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

5 Questions to Emotional Freedom

Another technique we teach patients comes from Dr. Amen's friend Byron Katie. If you don't question your thoughts, your brain believes them and will act as though they are true. Again, whenever you feel sad, mad, nervous, or out of control write down the ANT. Then ask yourself five simple questions.

Automatic Negative Thought:

1. Is it true?

2. Can I absolutely know that it is true?

3. How do I feel when I believe the thought?

4. Who would I be or how would I feel without the thought?

5. Turn the thought around to its opposite and ask yourself if the opposite of the thought that is troubling you may, in fact, be true?

Challenging your thoughts in this way lets you question their rationale and helps you see how untruthful you can be to yourself. This exercise also lets you see how your negative thoughts make you feel badly about yourself and your life – and your emotional response to them makes you vulnerable to relapse. Identifying how you would feel without the thought and turning the questions around allows you to see yourself and your life through a more realistic, positive and hopeful light.