

ANTS

AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

ANTS are not very nice thoughts that show up—UN-invited! They barge in, stir up your feelings, and convince you they speak the truth. Here are a few:

FILTERING ANT: Filters out positives so that all your attention is focused on the negative. It tends to ignore the facts.

- I know I got that award, but that's only because everyone else was messing around the whole time.
- My teacher said I did a good job, but I got 3 wrong! She was just being nice so I didn't feel like a loser.

ALL OR NOTHING ANT: Uses words like “always” “never” “nothing” “everything” “no one” “everyone”

- I never do anything right
- She's always mean
- No one likes me
- Everything is so hard

THE BLACK & WHITE ANT: Seems to think something is going to be “good” or “bad”—rarely “OK”

- This is horrible!
- I'm such a failure! (Didn't get an A)
- If I can't do this perfectly then I might as well forget it!

CATASTROPHE ANT: Says that if you do or don't do something, then the situation will be a disaster

- I have to do well on this test or I will fail
- What if I get sick—it will be SO embarrassing!

JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS ANT: Another kind of Filtering ANT, that takes one little piece of information and jumps to a conclusion that doesn't have much proof.

- My teacher didn't say hi to me, so I must be in big trouble
- My friend said no to coming over, so she must not like me

THE SHADOW ANT: Have you ever been in a dimly lit room that has lots of shadows and the shadows look really big and strange? But then you trace the shadow back to its source and realize it was only a Lego, or your batman figure, or your Barbie's pony tail? That's kind of how this ANT works—it makes things look big and strange in your mind, but when you look closer you realize it's something little.

- I feel worried about going to my friend's house, but I don't know why
- This seems like a really big deal, but I'm not sure why it's a big deal

EMOTIONS RULE ANT: Says that if I feel it, then it **MUST** be true!

- I feel nervous, therefore this sleepover is a bad idea
- I feel scared, so I just **KNOW** something bad will happen if I go down stairs by myself
- I feel worthless, therefore I am worthless and a total loser
- I feel frustrated with math, therefore I'm dumb

NAME CALLING ANT: Calls you or other people names.

- I'm stupid!
- He's such a weird-o.
- She's a bully!

MIND READING ANT: Makes assumptions about what other people are thinking and feeling **WITHOUT** checking the facts.

- My teacher doesn't like me
- Ann played with Jenny today so I know she doesn't want to be my friend anymore.

VICTIM ANT (AKA THE POOR ME ANT AND THE IT'S NOT FAIR! ANT): Makes you believe you are helpless and can't solve your problems and do anything for yourself. This ANT may cause whininess and complaining, which can lead to conflict with others.

- No Fair! How come HE gets to do that and I don't? You don't love me!
- Awe, why do I have to do that?
- It's not fair...the refs were making terrible calls! (Repeat many times).

SHOULD-Y AUGHT-Y MUST-Y ANT: These statement usually reflect unreasonable expectations. Then when you or someone else doesn't meet those expectations, then shame, anger, and resentment usually follow.

- He shouldn't do that.
- I should exercise every day.
- I should have gotten an A on that test.

I'LL TRY ANT: The word "try" often implies that you believe you will fail, which is not a helpful belief. Think of Yoda in the Empire Strikes Back, "Do or do not. There is no try."

- I'll try to work out every morning.
- I'll try to study for that test.
- I'll try to take a break when my emotions get too big.