



How to Eliminate Your ANTs! (Automatic Negative Thoughts)

Do you notice ANTs every time you go in your kitchen? Or do you seem to have more ANTs in your car or at the office? I'm not talking about the tiny social insects that tend to show up at every picnic or can be found in your teenager's bedroom. I am referring to the ANTs, or Automatic Negative Thoughts, that jump into your head, pushing all the willpower and positive thoughts you need to reach your goals to the wayside. ANTs, even the smallest ones, can sabotage your weight loss hopes.

People with good emotional health are aware of their thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Learning to listen for and recognize self-destructive thoughts is the first step to conquering them.

ANTs usually fall into the exaggerated or all-or-nothing category. They start with lines like, "I should have..." "I can't..." or "I'll never..." The result is stress, a bad mood and other negative emotions that keep you stuck – stuck in your rut and stuck in your tight pants.

Common ANTs that keep you overweight and unhealthy include:

- "I don't have time to cook a healthy meal."
- "I'm never going to be thin again, so what's the point?"
- "I will never have time to exercise like I should."
- "My kids and husband won't want to eat healthy and they'll complain."
- "It's too complicated to count points, carbs, calories, etc."

The solution is to learn to talk back to your ANTs and shut them down before they can send you down the wrong path. Replace them with words of support and encouragement.

4 steps to eliminate Your "ANTS"

- List your negative thoughts: Become a student of your "favorite" irrational & negative thoughts.
- Stop your creeping ANTs. Identify and interrupt these thoughts when they occur.
- Kill your ANTs. Challenge the accuracy and truth of your ANTs to neutralize their power.
- Replace your ANTs. Replace them with helpful, balanced and encouraging thoughts.

Instead of: "I never have any energy to exercise, so I will be a cow forever."

Say to yourself: "I am tired but I will do what I can today and that's OK."

Instead of: "It's too complicated to count points, carbs or calories."

Say: "I'm going to watch what I eat because I care what goes in my body and I'm worth taking care of."

While it may come easier to put ourselves down and let these ANTs raid our lives and challenge our every weight loss effort, we can do something about it! You wouldn't talk to your friend in such an insulting way, so be just as kind to yourself. Once you begin to notice and challenge each invading negative thought, you will form new habits of replacing them with words and actions of care and support.

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