

Dismantling Automatic Negative Thoughts

- Killing ANTs -

Thoughts are one of the six raw materials of reality creation, and so they have an important impact on what we create. In other words: when we have recurring or circulating negative or toxic thoughts about a subject, that will turn our experiences in this area of our life into more negative ones.

The following exercise is adopted from Dr. Danial Amen, a well know brain specialist, who teaches his clients how to deal with automatic negative thoughts (ANTs), using the powerful liberation process developed by Byron Katie.

He identified the 9 different kinds of negative thoughts that can plague us. He found it helpful to start with recognizing what kind of thought you are dealing with. After that is is easier to dismantle its power with the four questions from Byron Katie.

Here are the 9 categories of ANTs he identified:

1. **“All or Nothing” Thinking** - Thinking something is either all good or all bad. Getting caught in generalizations.
2. **“Less-Than” Thinking** - Comparing and seeing yourself as less than others.
3. **“Stuck on the Negative” Thinking.** - Unable to see any positive aspects in a situation.
4. **“Bad Fortune Telling”** - Stuck in imagining the worst possible outcome without much evidence.
5. **“Mind Reading”** - Convinced you know another person is thinking something negative without talking to them.
6. **“If Only” Thinking** - Arguing with the past... or believing your happiness depends on something that absent or unattainable.
7. **“Guilt Driven” Thinking** - Driven to make choices disconnected from what *you* want.
8. **“Labeling”** - Attaching a negative label to yourself or someone else. Verbally abusing yourself.

9. **“Blaming”** - Blaming someone else for your problems. (Blaming is also one of the Self Pity Patterns and therefore especially self-destructive)

To “kill” any of these ANTs, notice and identify the kind of thought that’s harassing you, then question your thought.

A powerful way to do this is to use the four questions of Byron Katie’s “The Work”:

- Question 1: **Is it true?**
- Question 2: **Can I absolutely know it's true?**
- Question 3: **How do I feel/react/what happens when I believe that thought?**
- Question 4: **Who would I be without that thought?**
- Turnaround: **Look for an opposite statement that is more true.**

You can also use Tomma’s exercise “Changing a Belief Cluster”

For more information on Daniel Amen’s practice of killing ANTs, visit:

<https://www.amenclinics.com/blog/do-you-have-an-ant-infestation-in-your-head/>

For more information on Byron Katie’s Work, go here:

<https://thework.com/instruction-the-work-byron-katie/https://thework.com/instruction-the-work-byron-katie/>