



Sometimes the way we think can keep us trapped in a vicious loop. Here are some examples of common Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs). Do you recognise any?

Step 1 – Identify Your ANTs

ANT	Description	Example
1. Fortune telling	1. Try to predict the future	1. "It will be terrible"
2. Mind reading	2. Thinking we can read others' minds	2. "He thinks I'm stupid"
3. Ignoring the positives	3. Only focussing on negatives	3. "I've done this well, but..."
4. Catastrophising	4. Expecting the worst outcomes	4. "It will be the worst thing ever"
5. Labelling	5. Giving labels to yourself or others	5. "I'm useless"
6. All or nothing reasoning	6. Viewing things as black or white	6. "I'm either perfect or a failure"
7. Overgeneralising	7. Drawing broad conclusions	7. "I'm a terrible person"
8. Global judgements	8. Labelling standalone incidents	8. "I'm bad at everything"

Step 2 – Identify Your Triggers

After identifying some of your ANTs, it is important to recognise the events and circumstances that lead to these thoughts. What triggers these thoughts? Do these thoughts appear whenever you have similar events happening? Can you recognise a pattern?

Step 3 – Take Your ANTs to Court

Next, you can consider whether you can replace any of these ANTs with ones that are more helpful and accurate. ANTs are rarely factual and they are often just one way we can look at events. That is, they are a response to triggers that have an impact on you, while other people would have different triggers and therefore would battle with other ANTs.

It may be difficult to change these ANTs at first as, after all, they are automatic. However, by recognising these, you can try challenging them. By addressing your common ANTs, you can start to feel better. Your mood may change and you may start to see yourself and situations in a more positive light.

Trigger	ANT	Alternative Thought
I was late to work	"I'm terrible at my job."	"These things happen. I'll catch an earlier train next time."

Some Questions to help you challenge your ANTs

- What are you basing your ANT on? What is the proof that the ANT is correct?
- Is there a different view you could take? Is there any way that you could view the situation positively?
- Can you gather evidence for the alternative thoughts?
- What would you say to a friend who could have these ANTs?
- Are these ANTs helping you in any way? Are they making the situation worse?
- Let's say the ANT is true – what is the worst that could happen? How might you deal with this outcome?
- Will this matter in one day from now? How about in a week or a month, or even a year?