Did you know that every time you have a thought, your brain releases chemicals that have a direct impact on how you feel? Thoughts are real and powerful.

- Every time you have a thought that is good, happy, hopeful, kind or loving, your brain releases chemicals that make you feel good.
- However, when you have thoughts that are negative, mad, sad, hopeless or helpless, your brain releases chemicals that make you feel bad.

**ANT** stands for Automatic Negative Thoughts—the cynical, gloomy and complaining thoughts that come into your mind automatically. Think of these negative thoughts like ANTs at a picnic that infest your mind and spirit and ruin your day.

**You DON'T have to believe every thought that goes through your head.** Your thoughts do not always tell you the truth—sometimes they lie to you! It’s important to think about your thoughts to see if they help you or they hurt you.

Here are 10 different ways that your thoughts lie to you and make situations out to be worse than they really are. Think of these ten ways as different species or types of ANTs:

1. **All or nothing thinking:** Believing that everything is all good or all bad
2. **“Always” or “never” thinking:** Thinking in words like, always, never, no one, everyone, every time and everything
3. **Focusing on the negative:** Only seeing the bad in a situation
4. **Fortune telling:** Predicting the worst possible outcome to a situation
5. **Mind reading:** Believing that you know what another person is thinking, even though they haven’t told you
6. **Thinking with your feelings:** Believing negative feelings without ever questioning them
7. **Guilt beatings:** Thinking in words like should, must, ought or have to
8. **Labeling:** Attaching a negative label to yourself or to someone else
9. **Blame:** Blaming someone else for your own problems
10. **Denial:** Believing you do not have a problem

You can retrain your thoughts to be positive, realistic and hopeful—or you can just allow them to remain negative and upset you.

*When you correct negative thoughts, you take away their power over you!*

Challenging automatic negative thoughts (killing the ANTs) gives YOU control over your thoughts, moods, choices and behaviors. The **Feed Your ANTeater and Feel Better** worksheet on the following pages will help you identify your ANTS and lets you practice retraining your thoughts so can you feel better.