



# Automatic Negative Thoughts

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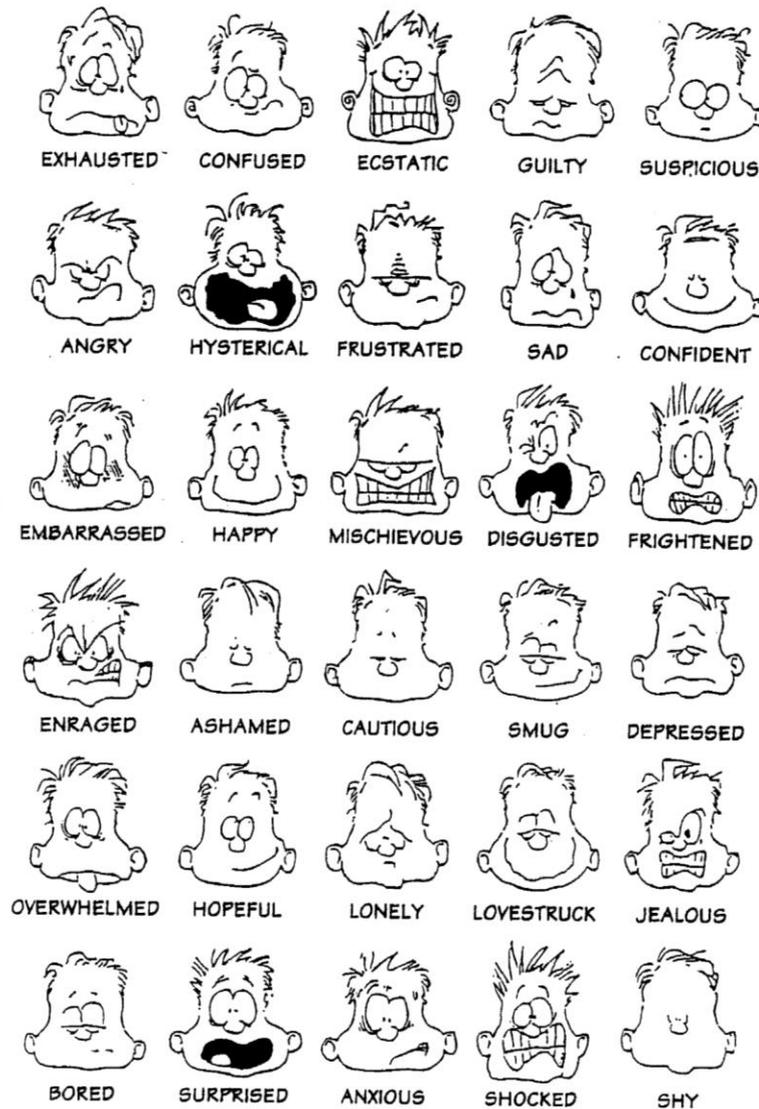
# The Brain is Wired for Negativity

Look at these expressions. How many of them are positive?

All humans are hardwired with 6 emotions which give rise to many emotional states. The basic emotions are:

- Anger
- Disgust
- Surprise
- Sadness
- Fear
- Joy

Why are humans wired this way?



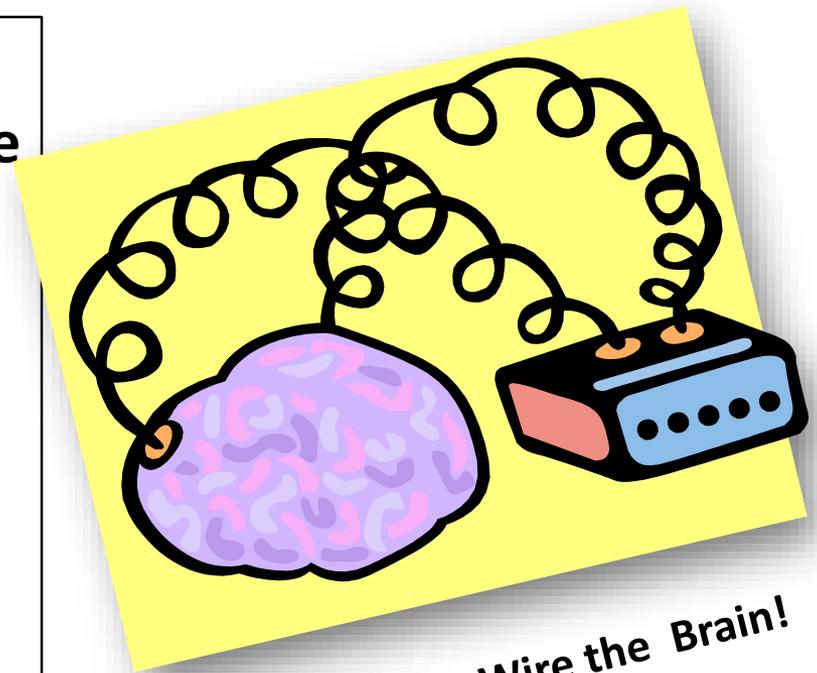
# About Negative Thinking

- Thoughts have physical consequences in the brain. When we think, chemicals are released that change our behavior and how we see the world. It is harder for our brains to switch from negative thinking to positive thinking than to switch from positive thinking to negative thoughts. We tend to hold on to negative thoughts longer and incorporate them into our belief systems easier.

# “I Think, So I AM”

The brain is the only organ that shapes internal structures based on external influences.

- ❖ Experience and external influences include the negative self-talk we use.
- ❖ Learning and habits shape the brain
- ❖ Brain chemicals can be addictive
- ❖ Negative thoughts and self-talk shape the brain and become the brain's operating design



Experiences Wire the Brain!

# What Species of A.N.T Do You Use Most?

*A.N.T. is abbreviated for automatic negative thoughts.*



1. Your thoughts have power and influence how you feel.
2. **Negative thoughts (*I can't...*) make you feel bad**
3. **Good (*I can...*) thoughts make you feel good**
4. **We can see these effects on brain scans and biofeedback devices.**

5. Thoughts are automatic. They happen!

6. **Thoughts can be dishonest, taunt, scare, tease, demean you, and reinforce antisocial behavior or perceived inadequacies.**

7. Being “politically correct” by saying what you can’t do or are not good at backfires for building self-confidence

8. **Your brain lies to you! Just because you think it, does not mean you have to believe it!**

**You can practice how to combat negative thoughts with positive or balanced thinking.**



# Identifying the A.N.T. Species

Always Thinking	Thinking that something is absolute. <u>EX:</u> “I always get frustrated when”... “I will never be able to ”...” Alicia is always complaining”...
Mind Reading	Believing that you can read minds and know what others think or feel even if they have not spoken to you <u>EX:</u> “I am not liked because I do not use technology”... “My boss thinks I am stupid”... “She only did that to show us up.”
Fortune Telling	Predicting the worst possible scenario or outcome. <u>EX:</u> “I am not going to use a computer because it will crash and” . . . “I am not going to use email because it always wastes my time” . . . “Everyone will laugh at me because” . . . Oscar is acting out because he is jealous of his new sibling.
Labeling	Using negative labels for yourself or others use <u>Ex:</u> “Alicia will not be able to do this because” . . . “African American boys are more physically aggressive because. . . “I’m stupid” . . . Hispanic children will not perform as well as other because...
Blame	Blaming others or circumstances your difficulties. <u>EX:</u> “If they would just go back to the way things were, there would not these problems” . . . “I can’t learn to use a computer because I am poor and we do not have one at home.” I hate the way she makes me feel.
Thinking with Feelings	Believing all the negative self talk without challenge <u>Ex:</u> “I will never figure this out”... “I quit, this is just impossible to figure out” . . . “These instructions are stupid”
Focus on the Negative	Seeing only what is bad or wrong in a situation <u>Ex:</u> “See, I told you that the instructions were lousy” . . . “This won’t work. We have tried it before and it failed.” “They will never pay preschool teachers what they are worth.”
Guilt	Thinking in words like, should, must, ought to or have to <u>Ex:</u> “They should be doing” . . . “I ought to at least be able to” . . . “I shouldn’t have” . . .

Source: Amen Clinics, Dr. Daniel Amen(2005) [www.amenclinics.com](http://www.amenclinics.com)

# Antidotes for A.N.T.S

## *Consciously Talk Back to Irrational Thoughts!*

### For Example:

- **A.N.T-** Thinking in “always” or “never” terms
- **A.N.T. Response-** “I always get frustrated when I start to learn how to use my computer”

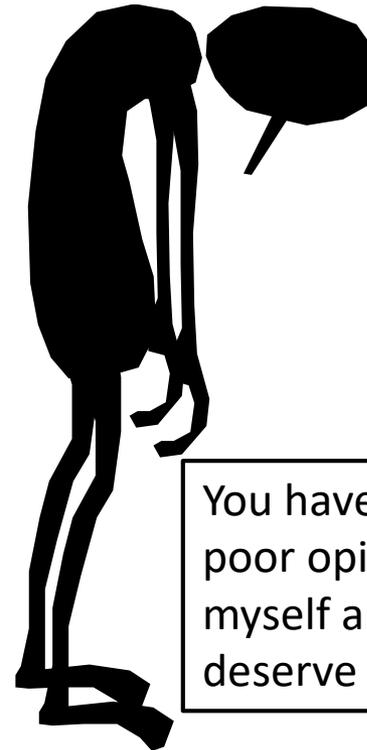


**BETTER RESPONSE-**“I get frustrated when the children all crowd around me when we are getting ready to go outside. Usually a fight begins and then there is pushing and shoving.” I know that stress will prevent me from thinking clearly and managing the situation so I am going to take it step-by-step and begin by being prepared and inviting a few children to get ready to go outside by holding our games and others will get to choose our “going outside” song.

**Practice makes permanent so, over time, practicing responding to A.N.T.s will lay down brain pathways to solve problems differently.**

# Other A.N.T. Killers...

- ✓ Take action to improve skills
- ✓ **Speak to others and collaborate**
- ✓ Realize that new learning is not meant to be easy. There is no learning in the comfort zone!
- ✓ **Uncertain feelings, anxiety, frustration, are all normal emotional states that embody the energy for change.**
- ✓ Practice “can do” body positions
- ✓ **Drink water and exercise!**



You have no idea what poor opinion I have of myself and how little I deserve it.

# Give Yourself a Break!

You and your brain are marvels! You have the most technologically advanced device in the world that updates itself minute-by-minute. Now read the following paragraph!





## The phenomenal power of the human mind

I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulacly uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg  
The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid! Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at  
Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttae inwaht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are,  
the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The  
rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is  
bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a  
wlohe. Amzanig huh? Yaeh, and I awlyas thought slpeling was ipmorantt.

NOTE: I read this somewhere and I just had to pass it around. I do not know  
the origins of the text



“I believe that anyone can conquer fear by doing the things she fears to do, provided she keeps doing them until she gets a record of successful experiences behind her.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

