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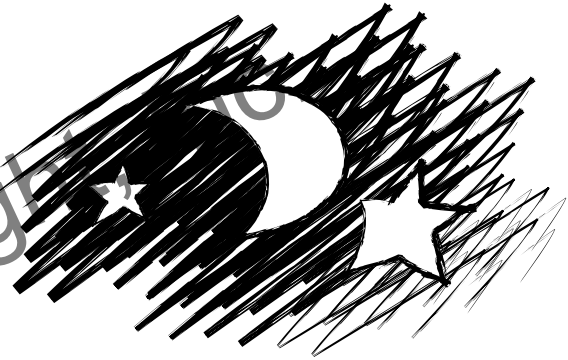
Ten Common Fears Kids Face With Suggestions On How Grown-ups Can Help

The following are a few examples of how parents and helping professionals can help with specific fears that children and teens encounter. This is a short list with a specific suggestion for each. Pages 71-82 in the kids' section of this book provide many more examples of common fears and specific strategies to overcome various fears. We highly encourage you and your child or teen to read this part of the book for many more creative coping strategies that are written in "kid friendly" terms.



1. Sleeping Alone in Own Room

Suggestion: If you are in this situation, likely your child is sleeping in the parent(s)' bedroom. A good way to work toward getting your child in his/her own room is the "sleeping bag method." This method involves having your child sleep in his/her sleeping bag while moving steadily from location to location ever closer to his/her bedroom. Each night the child moves at least a few feet toward the goal. Once momentum is gained, this process tends to move right along.



2. Being Afraid of the Dark

Suggestion: Darkness is an innate fear with many kids. As with most fears, working on it gradually is wise. "The Dimmer Method" is one such approach. Find a light (preferably a night light) that has a dimmer switch. Dim the light to a comfortable level for your child making it as conducive for sleep as possible. Each night dim the light a little more. It may take several weeks, but sooner or later your child should be conditioned to minimal light and eventually total darkness.

3. Monsters and Other Scary Imaginary Beings

Suggestion: Locate an empty spray bottle and label it “Monster Spray.” Also, get a small flashlight. Explain to your child that this “monster spray bottle” will keep any monsters away. Explain that just in case you think you see one, use your flashlight to prove that the monster spray is working. It always does.



4. Being Overwhelmed—Too Much to Do

Suggestion: Lou Holtz in his book *Winning Every Day* emphasizes the acronym WIN. This stands for **W**hat’s **I**mportant **N**ow (1999). When facing daunting tasks, teach the WIN acronym to your child. This will help him/her to set priorities and take one positive step after another when climbing the proverbial mountain.

5. Separating from Trusted Adults

Suggestion: The “Magic Number Check Up” works well for separation anxiety. Simply say to your child that he or she will need to separate from you or another trusted adult for a magic number of minutes. For example, have the child go alone upstairs to his or her room for an agreed upon time period. Make sure the child has some control in terms of how many minutes. This “magic number” for example may be only one or two minutes for starters. The magic number grows steadily until separation from trusted persons is reasonably comfortable. When the magic number reaches ten minutes to fifteen minutes, usually the battle has been won!



Strategy 10: ANT Killing

(suggested grade levels 4-12)

People so often have thoughts that cause problems for them. Thoughts like, “It’s terrible; I can’t stand it; Everything is awful;” etc. cause us problems. These types of thoughts bring about unhappy and anxious feelings. If left unnoticed, these unhelpful thoughts become a bad habit. We call them **ANTS**, which stands for Automatic Negative Thoughts.

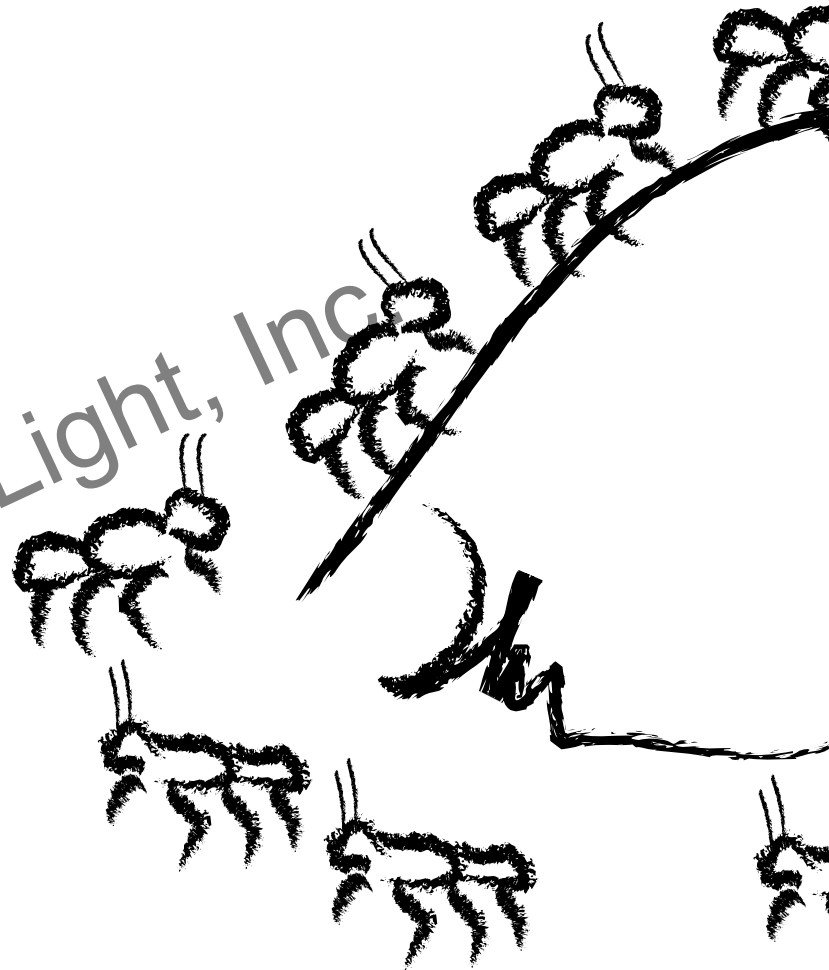
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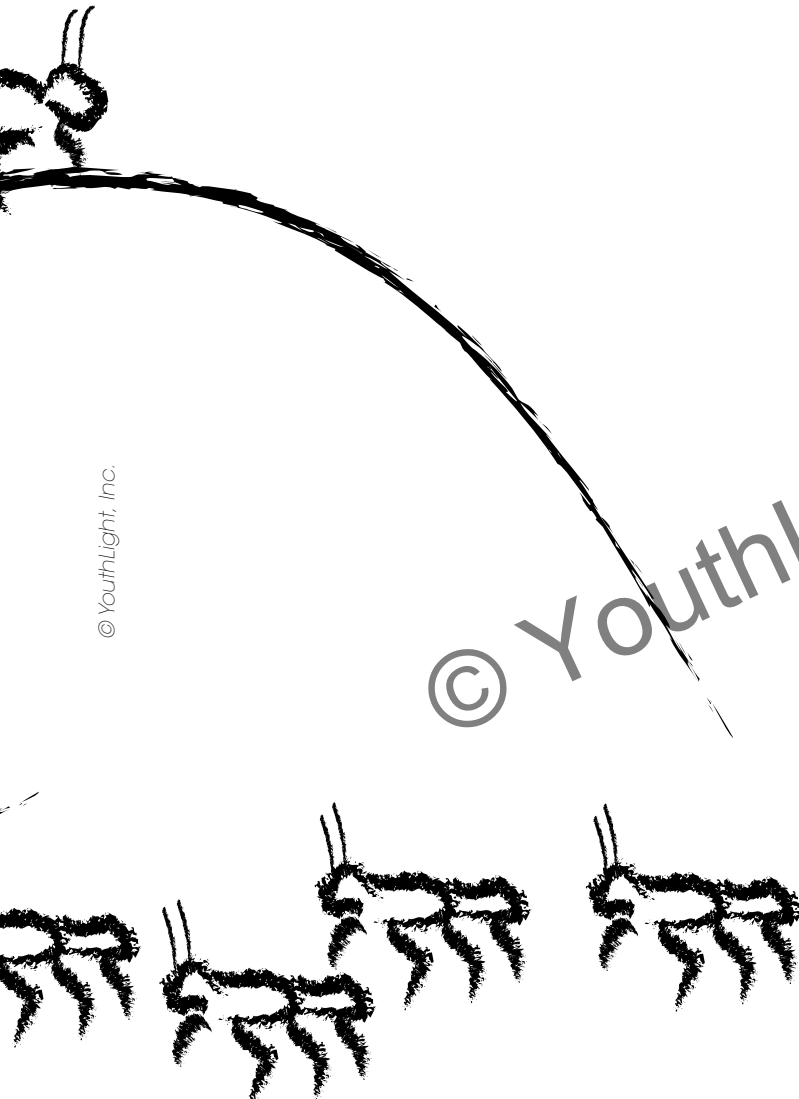
Negativebad

Thoughtsideas

Automatic Negative Thoughts are bad or unhelpful ideas that just happen over and over in our minds.

Like ants, they can cover you in no time and cause you to be miserable. Instead of being miserable, we want you to become **ANT** killers. **ANT** killing involves catching and killing your negative thoughts as you notice them. In this way, you don’t allow yourself to think in negative, unhelpful ways. Instead learn to replace them with good thoughts that help you to work out problems and feel better about yourself.





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The following is a list of thoughts from the ANT hill. Try to catch these thoughts before you start to believe them. Circle any automatic negative thoughts which you have had that need to be killed.

ANT HILL

1. It's just awful.
2. I can't stand it.
3. It's just too scary.
4. I'll just die if it doesn't go my way.
5. I can't handle it.
6. I'll only be happy when things change.
7. If only things were different, I'd feel better.
8. This is the worst thing.
9. It must work out.
10. It just figures this would happen.
11. It shouldn't be this way.
12. Life is always bad.
13. Everything is just awful.
14. It's impossible.
15. This could only happen to me.

Notice the circled words. Become aware of the ANTS you have and become an ANT killer.

Adapted with permission from Frank, K. and Smith-Rex, S., (1996), *Getting Over the Blues: A Kid's Guide to Understanding and Coping with Unpleasant Feelings and Depression*. Minneapolis, MN: Educational Media.