

A CBTANDFEELINGGOOD.COM WORKBOOK EXTRACT: 'ABOUT NATS':



We all have lots of thoughts that go through our minds everyday. When people get anxious or depressed many thoughts can be irrational and unhelpful, causing upsetness and self limiting behaviours. We call these **negative automatic thoughts** – and we must build awareness of what they are, and when they happen, and what effect they have, before we can examine and challenge and replace them with healthy thinking.

Negative automatic thoughts (NATs) are:

Involuntary/automatic – you don't *decide* to think these thoughts, but they've become hardwired over time and lurk and linger, controlling your moods and behaviour, controlling the quality of your life. Without deliberate awareness you may not even realise you're having them.

Irrational – NATs are the messengers of emotional reasoning and fortune telling and mind reading – they're generally distorted, irrational and illogical – we aim to ask 'where is the evidence for this?', until we accept new rational evidence based thinking in their place.

Enemies – NATs appear to protect you from discomfort by persuading you to practice self sabotaging behaviours - like *avoidance* of something it has decided is a hazard or danger (socializing! a new career! opportunities! new relationships! Take your pick...) - or 'attack as a proactive defence' (often a defence against an imaginary slight), and so on . . . But actually, they just stop you living an exciting happy life!
Not invincible! – you can take control of your thinking and moods and behaviours if you put in the work!

Here are some examples of negative automatic thoughts:

- I can't cope
- Applying for jobs is a waste of time, there are no jobs.
- I'm on the scrapheap
- I'm a failure
- I'm a bad person
- Everything is just too hard
- I'm stupid
- I'm unattractive
- My problems will never go away
- No one really cares what happens to me
- Nothing will ever work out for me
- There is nothing to look forward to
- I'm not ready to do things right now, maybe in a few months
- I can't do anything right.

I am
Broken. Useless. Empty. Alone. Sad.
Too fat. Not talented. Hopeless.
Pathetic. Lonely. Angry. Not smart enough.
Not pretty enough. About to break down.
Crushed. Stupid. Betrayed. Anxious.
Rejected. Defeated. Depressed. Tired.
Not fun enough. Nobody's second choice.
Not experienced enough. Not her.
Confused. Annoying. Not perfect. Smiling
on the outside, dying on the inside.
Not giving up, even though
i'll never be good enough.

It's important to remember that these sorts of thoughts can *seem* true when you are anxious or depressed, but in reality, they are irrational, and you can learn how to challenge them / not accept them. Continue on to see the behaviours that can result from this thinking... [extract ends]