

# From the Grove

## A MENTAL WELLNESS NEWSLETTER

by Dr. Wanda Hall-Myers

### Do You Need to Shift Your Focus? Part 2

In last week's newsletter, the focus was on perspective and how perspective serves as the lens from which you view the world.

You may recall being asked the questions: So, how do you see things? Do you only see tribulation? Or do you also see cheer?

The new questions this week: How do you view COVID-19? Do you only see the number of deaths? Or do you also see the number of recoveries? Do you only see quarantines and inconveniences? Or do you also see bonding and creativity?

Have you paid attention to your thoughts and noticed what you have been saying to yourself?

I want to introduce a concept called Automatic Negative Thoughts aka ANTs. Just like ants can take over a picnic, ANTs can take over your mind. We all have them and they are a normal part of life. They can be defined as thoughts that occur in everyday situations that tend to be unhealthy and often irrational. If you're not careful, these thoughts can make situations worse than they are and lead to chronic stress or other mental health disorders.

Let's review a few characteristics of Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs):



#### **They are uninvited.**

These thoughts just seem to come out of nowhere. You don't have to create them, they just show up. Have you ever asked yourself, "Where did that thought come from?"

#### **They are always negative.**

ANTs are not positive. You may find yourself thinking for example, "I'm always messing up." or "I know I won't be chosen for that position."

#### **They cause you to feel bad about yourself.**

ANTs will bring down your mood and squash your confidence. For example, be mindful of thoughts such as "I'm a failure." or "God doesn't love me."

#### **They are self-sabotaging.**

These thoughts will keep you from moving towards your goals and desires and may include for example, "God won't hear my prayer so why bother praying?" or "I can't lose weight so no need to exercise."

Again, paying attention to your thoughts is important. You want to notice your Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTs) and learn to challenge them. Often, you have to talk back to the thoughts and remind yourself that you do not have to be controlled by them. In some cases, professional help may be needed.