

Chapter 5: TAKE THAT ANTs!

CONCRETIZING THE CONCEPTS

Lead a discussion about the chapter's concepts. Then, divide a poster in two parts, drawing a line vertically down the middle. At the top of the first column, write "ANT . . . automatic negative thought." At the top of the second column, write, "GET REAL." Ask the group to pick a particular ANT and then brainstorm true, realistic thoughts that might be more helpful to have. Write down all the ideas. Repeat this with a few more ANTs, so the children see that each ANT can be replaced with more positive, balanced thoughts. When they understand and have practiced this skill, then play the following game. (In real life, we don't harm any living creature! Even ants play a role in our ecosystem and are important to the world.)

ANT SQUASHING GAME

Prep Work: Write in marker a common ANT on each of six or more index cards. Examples could be:

- I work too slowly.
- I am not smart enough.
- I am not brave enough.
- They will never be my friends. I won't even try.
- Oh! That would be embarrassing. I am not going to try that.
- I will probably just make a mistake. If I can't do it right, it isn't worth doing.

Directions: Read aloud what you have written on each card. Ask the kids if they have ever had ANTs like this negative self-talk that bugs them. Ask for suggestions of what other ANTs might bug kids. Write their suggestions on additional index cards in marker, one per card. Shuffle the cards. Explain the game.

The Game: A volunteer comes up to the front of the room or the middle of a circle, draws a card from the pack, and then says, in a voice this ANT might use, whatever is written on the card. Whoever thinks they have a true, realistic thought to balance out the ANT and "squash" it raises a hand. The volunteer chooses someone. That person says what an effective realistic thought would be, and, in reaction to this thought, the volunteer throws the index card (ANT) on the ground and stomps on it. The person who offered the realistic thought can then grab an index card and say the next ANT the way it might talk. Continue the game for as long as the ideas flow.