

ANTs

by Betsy Barbieux

ANTs. Most people are infested with them. Right now, day after day. And the bad thing about ANTs is they spread. You could be an innocent bystander. But you'll get them if you don't protect yourself. You have to intentionally stop them. You can't just hope they'll go away. Procrastination will only make them worse. Procrastinating is the same as saying "yes, come on in. You're welcomed here. Make yourself at home. Bring your relatives. Mi casa es su casa."

And they do. Eventually you are overrun. You try to exterminate them and you fail. You try to get your friends to help and they can't. You leave the house more often, or sleep longer, or eat more, drink more, or spend more. They won't go away.

You could be having a big problem with ANTs right now. These ANTs are of a particular species. Though the species is as old as man, it is a fairly new discovery. Modern specialists have been testing treatments for only the last 100 years, though you find some remedies contained in ancient literature.

Some people are better than others at killing them. But if you're not successful at killing them the problem is you're not using the right pesticide. You're trying to get rid of them the cheap and easy way. Ironically, though the solution to the pest problem is not "out there." The answer lies within.

So what is this species of ANTs? Dr. Daniel Amen, author of *Change Your Brain, Change Your Life*, calls these "ANTS," Automatic Negative Thoughts. No human being is without them. It's something we all have, every day, practically every hour-day and night.

You're probably having some right now, right in the middle of hurricane season and right before your winter residents return!!!

You could be having ANTs about your incomplete hurricane repairs from last year's storms. The seawalls aren't capped yet. Your contractor was forced to stop construction because turtle season was more important than tourist season or property values. You still haven't received all your insurance proceeds. Seems there is a huge gap between what you thought flood insurance covered and what your insurance company says it covers. Too late you learn the difference between flood waters and wind driven rain. And those signs that you thought were covered under your policy? Now you find out they weren't. Guests keep passing you by because there is no sign. Now you learn that sidewalks and walkways are not covered. You've dipped and dipped into your reserves. You've assessed. You've secured loans guaranteed by future special assessments. What happens now if you have another hurricane season like the last one? Worry, worry, worry. If only .. What if..? The worry becomes circular and goes around and around, especially at night. This is crazy; it isn't even your property! You're just the manager, yet you take responsibility for it and worry about it as if it were your own.

But before we get ahead of the situation and make a mountain out of an ant hill, maybe there are a few lessons we can learn from real ants. You know the little insects that leave that tell tale trail across your kitchen floor.

First of all, offensive action is the best defense. Ants were created to build cities, protect the queen, collect food, and nurture the larvae. Ants were created to take action. Can you imagine what a dump truck full of sand must look like to an ant? It must look to the ant like what our hurricane repairs look

like to us. That load of sand could be the insurmountable projects we have as managers or our personal financial disasters or the relationship that is surely going to kill us.

Have you ever watched ants build a city in an ant farm? Give them a week and you'll see amazing feats of construction. They take action, one grain of sand at a time. But moving only one grain of sand at a time your ANTS will say it is impossible, the task is too large, the risk too great, the expense too high. But to the worker ant, it's the only thing to do. Keep moving forward one step at a time. Somehow the ants know there is eventually a payoff. For them--a city. For the manager who takes action--the completed seawall, the loan approval, a fair settlement on your insurance claim. For you personally--that debt paid off or a relationship mended.

Second, ants are persistent. They keep doing what they know to do whether it looks like they are getting anywhere or not. You should do the same. Set your face toward your goal. Don't be distracted to the left or the right. Do what you are good at doing. Delegate what you are not good at doing. Often it is cheaper to hire someone than to learn it yourself. Don't let good get in the way of the best. Do something, anything consistently that moves you toward your goal no matter how impossible it seems.

Third, ants are objective. They maintain that objectivity by working together in groups. Make yourself be around other people who can give you a reality check. Don't take yourself so seriously. Let others help you brainstorm solutions to your personal and professional dilemmas. There is strength in numbers. Two or three brains are better than one. You can't brainstorm by yourself. Once you've brainstormed some ideas, write them down, and get into action. Then you are back at step one. Action-Persistence-Objectivity. Keep repeating these three steps and your ANTs won't control you. You'll control them.

Worry looks around, sorrow looks back, faith looks up.

Betsy Barbieux, Professional Development Coach, Image Inside & Out, 352/728-5075,
<http://www.ImageInsideOut.com> or e-mail: Betsy@ImageInsideOut.com