

# How to Prevent Stress As A Pastor



**Premium Course**

**VERNON L WILLIAMS**

*Author of The Power to Rejoice: 21 Days to Victory Over Your Problems*

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# CHAPTER 1

## HOW I CAME TO DEVELOP THIS COURSE

There is a lot of information available on stress management. For example, a Google search lists more than a billion results for stress management.

Despite all of this information, pastor stress levels continue to rise. In fact, 63 percent of pastors say they are facing stress in ministry.\*

### A. REASONS FOR PASTOR STRESS INCLUDE:\*\*

1. The disparity between idealistic expectations and reality.
2. Lack of clearly defined boundaries, tasks never get done, workaholic, "I have to do everything" mentality.
3. Feeling inadequate to lead an army of volunteers.
4. Trying to please everyone.
5. Trying to be a "servant" to everyone.
6. Time management problems.
7. Problems with self-esteem.
8. Multiplicity of roles.
9. Inability to produce a "win-win" conflict resolution.
10. Clergy being basically insecure, lonely and too serious.

\*Lifeway Research

\*\*Pastorcare.com

## B. SIGNS OF STRESS:

1. **Physical:** Tight shoulders, insomnia, elevated heart rate, high blood pressure, grinding teeth, constricted breathing, clammy palms, fatigue, nausea, headaches, gastrointestinal problems (constipation, diarrhea and upset stomach), frequent colds and infections.
2. **Emotional:** Anxiety, irritability, inability to focus, social withdrawal, avoiding making decisions, lower productivity, job dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, difficulty engaging in new ideas, difficulty engaging in relationships.
3. **Spiritual:** Joylessness, lack of direction, loss of purpose, decrease in faith, disparity among values, beliefs and behaviors.

## C. IMPACT OF STRESS:

1. 38% of pastors have considered quitting full-time ministry in the last year (up 9 percentage points since the beginning of 2021)\*
2. Only 35% of pastors are considered “healthy” in terms of well-being.\*

With these things in mind, I created this course to help pastors live stress-free, joyful lives.

\*Barnas Pastor Poll

# CHAPTER 2

## COMMON METHODS FOR DEALING WITH PASTOR STRESS AND WHY THOSE METHODS FAIL

### 1. BAND AID METHOD. (BAM)

Examples of this method include smoking, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, infidelity, and watching pornography.

The advantage: Short term relief. The disadvantage: Long term problems.

### 2. STRESS MANAGEMENT METHOD. (SMM)

Examples of this method include reading, hiking, working out, playing or watching sports, playing board games, watching a movie.

The advantage: Temporary relief. The disadvantage: May lead to additional stress due to trying to find time to fit these activities into your schedule.

### WHY THOSE METHODS FAIL

They address the symptoms of stress, not the cause.

# CHAPTER 3

## MY METHOD FOR DEALING WITH PASTOR STRESS AND WHY MY METHOD WORKS

My method for dealing with pastor stress is called the Prevent Pastor Stress Program.

### WHY MY METHOD WORKS

- A. It addresses the underlying cause of pastor stress – pastors' thoughts.
- B. It dispels common myths about stress.

### MYTH NUMBER 1: STRESS IS A NORMAL PART OF BEING A PASTOR. EVERYONE EXPERIENCES IT.

**Truth:** According to the latest Lifeway Survey, 63% of pastors say they are stressed. If stress were a normal part of being a pastor, then 100% of pastors would say they are stressed.

### MYTH NUMBER 2: STRESS IS CAUSED BY PASTORS' CIRCUMSTANCES.

**Truth:** This is the classic case of misdiagnosis. The first step to finding a cure for any problem is making a correct diagnosis. If stress were caused by pastors' circumstances, then every pastor who experienced the circumstance would be stressed. However, everyone who experiences the same circumstance does not have the same reaction to the circumstance.

Let me give you an example of how two pastors who experienced the same circumstance but reacted entirely differently. Marvin and Fred are pastors at churches of approximately two hundred members.

Each was called in to counsel two long-time members who were engaged in a conflict. Both sought to help bring about a win-win for the members. Neither was successful in doing so.

Marvin became very stressed and viewed himself as having failed to bring about a win-win that would have restored the relationship between the two members.

On the other hand, Fred did not become stressed at all. How? He resisted the urge to resolve the conflict in his own strength and wisdom. Instead, he spoke the truth in love to the two members and left the resolution of the conflict up to God.

So, the circumstance did not cause Marvin's stress. Instead, what he thought about the circumstance caused his stress. This illustrates that there is only one cause of stress - one's thoughts about circumstances, not the circumstances themselves. As Proverbs 4:23 says: *Be careful what you think because your thoughts control your life.* Notice that it does not say circumstances control your life.

The logical conclusion is that our thoughts, not our circumstances, create our stress.

**“MEN ARE NOT DISTURBED BY THINGS, BUT BY THE VIEW THEY TAKE OF THEM. --EPICTETUS**

Changing how you think about your circumstances, like changing any habit, takes effort. However, doing so will empower you to prevent pastor stress. Indeed, I have many clients who had been experiencing high levels of stress, but are now living stress-free and joyfully as a result of applying the strategies outlined in this course.



### MYTH NUMBER 3: THERE IS “GOOD” STRESS.

**Truth:** This notion was created by Dr. Hans Selye, the founder of the modern stress concept. Selye found that activities like sports and sex also produced a surge in stress hormones, so he promoted the idea of good stress. But research has demonstrated that:

- 75% to 90% of all physician visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints.
- Stress is linked to the six leading causes of death.

Does that sound like something that could ever be good for you? I think you would answer “No” Whereas stimulation is good for you (see #5 below). stress is never “Good.”

In more than 25 years of coaching, I have never had a client say, “You have to help me. I am experiencing too much good stress.” However, I have had thousands ask for help in overcoming stress. The bottom line is, stress is never “good.”

### MYTH NUMBER 4: STRESS IS A MOTIVATOR.

**Truth:** Some mistakenly believe that if people did not have stress, they would lack motivation and would sit around all day and do nothing. My response is that, although young children have no stress, they do not lack motivation. You can prove it by driving by a school playground or park. (See #5 below)

### MYTH NUMBER 5: STRESS IMPROVES PERFORMANCE.

**Truth:** You may have noticed that when you have a goal or a deadline, you can see an improvement in your focus and performance. However, you should be mindful of two things about the performance improvement:

- A. It is temporary.
- B. It is due to *stimulation*, not stress.

You may have seen football players gathering for a “pep” talk just before kickoff. They are seeking stimulation for a specific period of time, i.e. the 60 minute duration of the game.

“IF YOU’RE SUCCESSFUL AND STRESSED, YOU’RE SUCCEEDING IN SPITE OF YOUR STRESS, NOT BECAUSE OF IT.” -ANDREW BERNSTEIN

## MYTH NUMBER 6: THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH STRESS IS TO MANAGE IT.

When stressed, many people attempt to “manage” it through various techniques, some of which are healthy, some of which are unhealthy.

Healthy techniques include:

- Going for a walk
- Spending time in nature
- Sweating out tension with a good workout
- Getting a massage
- Gardening
- Spending time with loved ones, including a pet
- Listening to music
- Watching a funny movie
- Playing board games
- Meditating
- Deep breathing exercises
- Tai chi
- Taking a vacation

Unhealthy techniques include:

- Smoking
- Alcohol abuse
- Drug abuse
- Overeating
- Watching pornography
- Having an extramarital affair

**Truth:** If you have used any of these tactics, whether healthy or unhealthy, you may have found them to be helpful in the short term. Ultimately, however, the stress returns when you come face-to-face with the circumstance that you experienced as stressful.

That is because both healthy and unhealthy techniques only help you manage the symptoms of stress. They do not address the cause of stress.

If your car's "check engine" light came on you would not "manage" the symptom of the problem by covering it with masking tape so that the light is no longer visible. You would take your car to a mechanic to: 1) determine what is causing the "check engine" light to come on and, 2) take the appropriate steps to remove the cause.

Since we know that your thoughts are the cause of your stress (your "check engine" light coming on), the appropriate step to remove the cause is to think differently about your circumstances.

"STRESS DOES NOT COME FROM WHAT'S GOING ON  
IN YOUR LIFE, IT COMES FROM WHAT YOU THINK  
ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE."  
- ANDREW BERNSTEIN

# CHAPTER 4

## PREREQUISITES FOR MAKING THE PREVENT PASTOR STRESS PROGRAM WORK

There are five prerequisites for preventing pastor stress:

### 1. ADMIT THAT YOU ARE STRESSED.

Some pastors refuse to admit (even to themselves) that they are stressed for fear of showing a weakness. But in order to prevent stress, you must begin by admitting that you are stressed.

“YOU CAN’T CHANGE WHAT YOU DON’T ACKNOWLEDGE.” - DR. PHILLIP MCGAW

### 2. DISPEL THE COMMON MYTHS ABOUT STRESS.

- Myth Number 1: Stress is a normal part of being a pastor. Everyone experiences it.
- Myth Number 2: Stress is caused by circumstances.
- Myth Number 3: There is “Good” stress.
- Myth Number 4: Stress is a motivator.
- Myth Number 5: Stress improves performance.
- Myth Number 6: The best way to deal with stress is to manage it.

### 3. ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU CREATE YOUR STRESS.

There is only one cause of stress - one's thoughts about the circumstances, not the circumstances themselves. With that being the cause, all stress is self-inflicted.

“IF YOU ARE DISTRESSED BY ANYTHING EXTERNAL,  
THE PAIN IS NOT DUE TO THE THING ITSELF BUT TO  
YOUR OWN ESTIMATE OF IT; AND THIS YOU HAVE THE  
POWER TO REVOKE AT ANY MOMENT.”  
- MARCUS AURELIUS

### 4. BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE TO PREVENT STRESS.

“YOU CAN BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN OR BELIEVE THAT  
YOU CAN'T. EITHER WAY YOU WILL BE RIGHT.”  
- HENRY FORD

If you do not believe it is possible to prevent stress, you will not take the steps to do so and the result is that you will not prevent stress. This is what is known as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

### 5. DECIDE TO TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR THOUGHTS.

The word decide means “To make up one's mind.”

“DECISIONS, NOT CIRCUMSTANCES, DETERMINE  
DESTINY.” -TONY ROBBINS

Our thoughts shape our lives in three significant ways:

1. Our feelings - Whether we are happy or sad, confident or doubtful, at peace or stressed, content or frustrated, pleased or angry.
2. Our actions - Whether they are self-defeating or self-promoting.
3. Our results - Whether they are what we want or what we don't want.

It works this way: Circumstance⇒Thought⇒Feeling⇒Action⇒Result

AS KING SOLOMON SAID, "BE CAREFUL HOW YOU THINK; YOUR LIFE IS SHAPED BY YOUR THOUGHTS."

(PROVERBS 4:23 GNT)

Studies show that the typical person has as many as 60,000 thoughts per day, with 80 percent of them being negative. That means you could have as many as 48,000 negative thoughts per day. Dr. Aaron Beck, one of the founders of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, developed an acronym for negative thoughts. He called them ANTS - for Automatic Negative Thoughts. The concept was further developed by Dr. Daniel Amen.

They determined that ANTS:

1. Show up uninvited.
2. Can be about yourself, others or life in general.
3. Are repetitive. (95% are the same as yesterday).
4. Are believable.
5. Are irrational.
6. Make you feel bad about yourself, others and life in general.
7. Lead to harmful feelings and actions.
8. Wreck your health.
9. Prevent you from achieving your goals.

Despite their impact, we give negative thoughts free rein to come into our mind and determine our feelings, actions and results. It's like we are sitting in the back seat and our thoughts have the steering wheel and taking us wherever they like. This process is the result of a habit - something you learned to do, and then practiced until it seems like a natural way to behave.

When you decide to take control of your thoughts, you are saying that you are going to monitor your thoughts and only allow helpful, positive ones to enter your mind.

### WITH THAT IN MIND, THIS COURSE HAS TWO GOALS:

1. To identify the 12 types of negative thoughts (ANTS) that cause pastors stress.
2. To show you how to take control and eliminate those types of thoughts.

# CHAPTER 5

## HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PREVENT PASTOR STRESS PROGRAM

In order to prevent pastor stress, you must use the **C-A-R** process.

The **C-A-R** process is based on 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV) which says *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*

### HERE IS HOW THE C-A-R PROCESS WORKS:

**Circumstance:** You have been counseling a church member and the member abruptly quits the counseling process.

**C** Capture your ANT. Example: I am a failure because I could not get the member to remain in the counseling process and make the necessary behavior changes.

**A** Ask a question to challenge your ANT. Example: What is another way I can think about this circumstance?

**R** Replace your ANT with a positive, Bible-supported thought. Example: I perform my counseling duties to the best of my ability. I refuse to take responsibility for what members decide to do with the counseling. (Supporting Bible verse: For we are each responsible for our own conduct. Galatians 6:5 NLT)

Replacing your ANTS with positive thoughts is critical. As Joel Osteen said, “When negative thoughts come - and they come to all of us - it’s not enough to just not dwell on it. You’ve got to replace it with a positive thought.”



## 6 TIPS FOR CREATING POSITIVE THOUGHTS TO REPLACE YOUR ANTS:

### 1. Use the present tense.

Instead of saying “I will”, “I am going to”, “I need to,” “I would like to,” etc., keep the replacement thought in the NOW. This establishes in your mind that the desired change is true today, not some day in the future. This replaces fears and doubts with confidence. Use “I am.” According to Jack Canfield, the words “I am” are the two most powerful words in the language. Joel Osteen says, “Whatever follows the “I am” will eventually find you.” Instead of saying: “I am going to become a successful pastor.” Say: “I am a successful pastor.” Other examples of present tense include “It is,” “I take,” “I set”, and “I work.”

### 2. Keep it simple (K.I.S.)

“The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary can speak.” - Hans Hofmann Use short, powerful sentences. This makes the thoughts easy to recall throughout the day when you need a boost of motivation or confidence.

Example: “I am responsible for choosing when, where and how I spend my time. And I choose to spend my time in a way that helps me accomplish my goals.”

### 3. Put it in writing.

By copying the replacement thought word for word, the brain absorbs the message through the act of writing. An alternative method is recording yourself reading your positive thoughts and listening to them throughout the day.

### 4. Support the replacement thought with a relevant Bible verse.

Quoting God’s word reminds you of his never-ending love and power, which gives you confidence, peace and joy.

**5. Repeat the replacement thought.**

Regular repetition of positive statements conditions your brain to not only accept them as fact, but to look for ways to make them happen. Set aside five minutes three times per day - in the morning (while shaving or putting on makeup), midday, and evening (perhaps at bedtime) - to repeat the positive thought. If you have recorded the replacement thought, play your recording in the background on the commute to work, during a jog, as you go about your day, and just before bedtime.

**6. Visualize yourself being exactly the way your replacement thought says you are.**

A word of caution: The C-A-R process is not a quick fix, band-aid solution for taking control of your thoughts. Instead, it takes time and effort. As Dr. Caroline Leaf says, it takes 21 days to break down a core habit and build up a replacement one. Then it takes 42 days to practice the new way of thinking in order to avoid falling back into the habit. But remember, we are not talking about a temporary solution. Instead, this is a change that lasts and determines how you feel, the actions you take and the results that you get.

With that being said, let's dive right in. I have identified the 12 types of ANTS that cause pastors stress.

**Read the definition and example(s).**

Complete the ANT Prevention Worksheet in order to overcome each type of ANT.

# CHAPTER 6

## THE ALL-OR-NOTHING ANT

Also known as “Black-and-White Thinking,” this ANT is characterized by an unwillingness to see shades of gray. In other words, you see things in terms of extremes – something is either fantastic or awful, you believe you are either perfect or a total failure.

This type of ANT is dangerous because it fails to recognize progress you have made, creates low self-esteem, derails attempts to change your behavior and keeps you stuck in a destructive rut.

Complete the All-or-Nothing ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### ALL-OR-NOTHING ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office preparing my sermon. I am looking ahead.

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#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: If I don't preach a perfect sermon every week, I am a failure.

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#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: If I don't preach a perfect sermon every week, I am a failure.

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**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: What is another way I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

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**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: I am a successful pastor. I never demand perfection of myself, but I expect the very best of what I have to give - and that's what I get. (Supporting Bible verse: No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

Romans 8:37 ESV)

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**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

I block out fifteen hours of uninterrupted time each week for sermon preparation. I use the appropriate reference material (commentaries, Bible dictionary, books that I have read, etc.) I include anecdotes from real life to make my sermons relevant to my members.

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# CHAPTER 7

## THE LABELING YOURSELF ANT

This ANT involves making negative characterizations about yourself based on one instance or experience. It is dangerous because it represents a belief that you cannot improve, keeps you focused on the past, prevents you from setting goals, steals your confidence and prevents you from achieving all that you could.

Complete the Labeling Yourself ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### LABELING YOURSELF ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in the pulpit wrapping up my sermon. The last Powerpoint slide has the wrong scripture verse.

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#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: How could I have made that mistake? I am stupid.

---



---

#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: How could I have made that mistake? I am stupid.

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---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: How else can I think about myself?

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**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: Despite the mistake, I am not stupid. In fact, I am God's masterpiece. (Supporting Bible verse: For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10 NLT)

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**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I act confidently. I also have someone review my Powerpoint slides to check for errors.

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# CHAPTER 8

## THE LABELING OTHERS ANT

The labeling ANT involves making negative characterizations about others based on one instance or experience. It is dangerous because it dehumanizes others, allows you to justify your bad behavior towards them (e.g. attacking, avoiding, gossiping, seeking revenge) and it prevents teamwork and cooperation.

Complete the Labeling Others ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### LABELING OTHERS ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am at home. My parents call and invite me and my family to join them on a 7-day cruise to celebrate their sixtieth wedding anniversary. I requested an additional week of vacation. The elders denied my request.

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#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: The elders are inconsiderate for not granting me an additional week of vacation.

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---

#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: The elders are inconsiderate for not granting me an additional week of vacation.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: How are the elders like me and how can I put myself in their shoes?

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**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: I am sure the elders have a valid reason for their decision. I am not judging or condemning them. (Supporting Bible verse: Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; Luke 6:37)

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**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I am meeting with the elders to negotiate an additional week of vacation each year.

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# CHAPTER 9

## THE OVERGENERALIZATION ANT

This ANT involves viewing a single occurrence that did not go as planned as a negative pattern. It includes using “always,” “never,” “everything,” “every time,” “no one” and “everybody” and “nothing.”

It is dangerous because it creates low self-esteem, insecurity, fear, lack of initiative and causes you to miss out on opportunities. Complete the appropriate Overgeneralization ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### OVERGENERALIZATION ANT WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 1

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office checking my emails and reviewing the number of requests for me to attend meetings or activities.

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---

#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: I never have enough time.

---



---

#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: I never have enough time.

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---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: Do I have strengths or skills that I am ignoring?

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**8. Replace your ANT in Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

I am responsible for choosing when, where and how I spend my time. And I choose to spend my time in a way that creates the greatest benefit, as I see it.

(Supporting Bible verse: Look carefully, then, how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:15-16 ESV)

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**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, Uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I plan my day the night before. I set my day in order to accomplish my priorities, while allowing time to relax and spend time with my family.

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## OVERGENERALIZATION ANT WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 2

Example: I say “No” when a request would create a problem for me.

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### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am serving communion. I forgot to pray before having members take the elements.

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### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: I always mess up when I serve communion.

---



---

### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

### 4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: I always mess up when I serve communion.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: Am I judging myself more harshly than I would others?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT in Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

I enjoy my work. I accept that I may make mistakes occasionally and I get past them.

(Supporting Bible verse - The one thing I do is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead. Philippians 3:13 GNT)

---



---



**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

---

---

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I live each day to the fullest, perform my duties to the best of my ability and leave the past in the past.

---

---

## OVERGENERALIZATION ANT WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 3

### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office. I just learned that a staff member has betrayed me.

---



---

### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: Everything works against me.

---



---

### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

### 4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.

Circle one of the two categories . Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

### 5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: Everything works against me.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: Is it really true that everything works against you?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT in Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

I turn it over to God. (Supporting Bible verse: If God is for me, who can be against me? Romans 8:31 NIV)

---



---

**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I live each day filled with joy.

---

---

## OVERGENERALIZATION ANT WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 4

### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office. My anniversary at the church was last week and no one mentioned it.

---



---

### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: No one appreciates what I do.

---



---

### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

### 4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

### 5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: No one appreciates what I do.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: What would I say to a friend who was thinking this way?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT in Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

I feel good about myself because I am not longing for man's approval.

(Supporting Bible verse: Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is in heaven. Matthew 5:12 ESV)

---



---

**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I live each day filled with joy.

---

---

## OVERGENERALIZATION ANT WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 5

### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office. I just found out that one of the elders who supported me has resigned from the elder board due to health reasons.

---



---

### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: Nothing ever goes right for me.

---



---

### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

### 4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

### 5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others



**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: Nothing ever goes right for me.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: What would I say to a friend who was thinking this way?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT in Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Things do not happen to me, things happen for me.

(Supporting Bible verse: We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 NIV)

---



---

**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I rejoice always.

---

---

# CHAPTER 10

## THE MENTAL FILTER ANT

This ANT involves picking out a single negative detail and focusing on it exclusively.

It is dangerous because it can lead to physical problems (headaches, tense muscles, stomach pain), emotional problems (depression and anxiety), and performance problems (low energy and procrastination).

Complete the Mental Filter ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### MENTAL FILTER ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in the sanctuary greeting members after the service. Five members said I did a good job of delivering the message. One member said I was a bit long-winded.

---



---

#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: I am hopeless.

---



---

#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: I am hopeless.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: Is there another way I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: I control what I think and how I think. Therefore, I choose to think only those thoughts which help me and are of genuine benefit to me. (Supporting Bible verse: Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Philippians 4:8 ESV)

---



---

**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I politely listen to comments from members, but resist making negative characteristics about myself as a result of those comments.

---

---

# CHAPTER 11

## THE DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE ANT

This type of ANT acknowledges positive experiences but rejects them instead of embracing them.

It is dangerous because it reduces motivation, increases anxiety and prevents celebrating accomplishments.

Complete the Disqualifying the Positive ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### DISQUALIFYING THE POSITIVE ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in a meeting with the elders. They complimented me on the way I conducted the baptism.

---



---

#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: Anyone could have done what I did.

---



---

#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: Anyone could have done what I did.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: What would I say to a friend who was thinking this way?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT in Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: Since God has given me the ability to achieve, I give him all the glory.

(Supporting Bible verse: So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 ESV)

---



---

**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: Rather than rejecting positive experiences, I embrace them by giving God the glory.

---

---



# CHAPTER 12

## THE FORTUNE-TELLING ANT

This type of ANT predicts that things are not going to go the way you want them to go.

It is dangerous because it treats the prediction like it is an established fact, it steals motivation, leads to feelings of helplessness and can even lead to depression.

Complete the Fortune-Telling ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### FORTUNE-TELLING ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office preparing my sermon for Sunday. I realize that, even after sleeping, I wake up tired. I need a sabbatical.

---



---

#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: If I ask the elders for a sabbatical, they are going to deny my request.

---



---

#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: If I ask the elders for a sabbatical, they are going to deny my request.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: What evidence do I have that the elders will deny my request?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: If I don't ask, the answer is "No." If I ask, the answer could be "Yes."

(Supporting Bible verse: For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Jeremiah 29:11 ESV)

---



---

**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

I am meeting with the elders to request a 3-month sabbatical.

---

---

# CHAPTER 13

## THE MIND-READING ANT

This ANT involves concluding (without checking it out) that someone has a negative impression of you.

It is dangerous because it can lead to low self-esteem and anxiety. Complete the Mind-Reading ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### MIND-READING ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office. I sent an email to the elders requesting that we change our regular meeting so I can go out to celebrate my birthday.

---



---

#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: The elders think I am selfish.

---



---

#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: The elders think I am selfish.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: What is another way I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: I don't know that for sure. I am asking each of them to share their impression of my request. I am quick to listen.

(Supporting Bible verse: Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. James 1:19 ESV)

---



---

**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I am meeting with the elders to get their impressions.

---

---

# CHAPTER 14

## THE CATASTROPHIZING ANT

This type of ANT involves expecting something unbearable or intolerable to happen. It is based on “What if” questions.

It is dangerous because it leads to anxiety, fatigue, depression, hopelessness and lack of motivation.

Complete the Catastrophizing ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### CATASTROPHIZING ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office, reviewing attendance. Attendance (and the size of the offering) has been declining over the last three months.

---



---

#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: What if I am laid off? That would be devastating.

---



---

#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: What if I am laid off? That would be devastating.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: Is there another way I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT in Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: With my skills and abilities I would get an even better job right away. Besides, God will meet my needs.

(Supporting Bible verse: And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19)

---



---



**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I perform my duties to the best of my abilities and to the glory of God. I have no worries about the possibility of being laid off.

---

---

# CHAPTER 15

## THE “SHOULD” ANT

This ANT involves statements that you make to yourself about what **you** “should” do, what you “should not” do, what you “ought” to do, or what you “must” do.

It is dangerous because it can lead to low self-esteem, guilt, anxiety, depression and self-condemnation.

This ANT also involves statements that you make to yourself about what **others** “should” do, what others “should not” do, what others “ought” to do, or what others “must” do.

It is dangerous because it can cause you to be disappointed by others' failure to meet your expectations, causing you to be angry and resentful.

This ANT also involves statements that you make to yourself about what **life** “should” be like, what life “should not” be like, what life “ought” to be like, or what life “must” be like.

It is dangerous because it can cause you to be disappointed by life's failure to meet your expectations, causing you to be angry and resentful.

Complete the “Should” ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### “SHOULD” ANT WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 1

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office thinking about my inability to resolve a conflict between two members of the church.

---



---

**2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.**

Example: I should be able to negotiate a win-win in conflicts between members. I am a failure.

---



---

**3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: I should be able to negotiate a win-win in conflicts between members. I am a failure.

---



---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the thought.**

Example: Are there other ways I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

---



---

**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: I am at peace knowing that I made a committed effort to resolve the conflict between the two members.

(Supporting Bible verse: You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Isaiah 26:3 ESV)

---



---

**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I perform my duties (including counseling members who are having conflicts) to the best of my ability. I leave the ultimate resolution to the individuals involved in the conflict and to God.

---



---

## “SHOULD” ANT WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 2

### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office thinking about a member who was in counseling, but ignored my advice.

---



---

### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: Members should always follow the advice I give them in counseling.

---



---

### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

### 4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

### 5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

## 6. **C**apture your ANT from Step 2.

Example: Members should always follow the advice I give them in counseling.

---



---

## 7. **A**sk a question to challenge the thought.

Example: Who says things should be this way?

---



---

## 8. **R**eplace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.

Example: I would prefer that members follow the advice that I give them in counseling but ultimately it is up to the counselee as to whether or not they follow the advice I give.

(Supporting Bible verse: For we are each responsible for our own conduct. Galatians 6:5)

---



---

## 9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I perform my counseling duties to the best of my ability. I leave the application of the advice to the individual involved.

---

---

## “SHOULD” ANT WORKSHEET EXAMPLE 3

### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office. My wife called and said the hot water heater has stopped working.

---



---

### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: Life should be problem-free.

---



---

### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

### 4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.

Circle one of the two paragraphs. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

### 5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others



## 6. **C**apture your ANT from Step 2.

Example: Life should be problem-free.

---



---

## 7. **A**sk a question to challenge the thought.

Example: Are there other ways I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

---



---

## 8. **R**eplace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.

Example: I am at peace knowing that even in the midst of problems God provides. (Supporting Bible verse: And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19 NIV)

---



---

## 9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I am complaint-free because of my confidence in God's promises.

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# CHAPTER 16

## THE PERSONALIZATION ANT

This ANT involves assigning blame to yourself without any logical reason to believe you are to blame.

It is dangerous because it causes frustration, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.

Complete the Personalization ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### PERSONALIZATION ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office. I received a text message informing me that two prominent families have left the church.

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#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: It is my fault that the families left. I am a terrible leader.

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#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Add one of the two paragraphs. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: It is my fault that the families left. I am a terrible leader.

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: What is another way I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

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**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: If I ever had any doubts about myself in the past, today is a good day to put them aside. (Supporting Bible verse: And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down. Deuteronomy 28:13)

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**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, Uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I serve my members to the best of my ability. I resist taking responsibility for other people's decisions and behavior.

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# CHAPTER 17

## THE BLAMING ANT

This ANT involves holding other people responsible for your circumstances.

It is dangerous because it steals confidence, stymies growth and leads to a failure to achieve your mission.

Complete the Blaming ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### BLAMING ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office. I am reflecting on the fact that am responsible for leading a large group of volunteers.

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#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: It is my seminary's fault that I am not an effective leader.

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#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the ANT in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: It is my seminary's fault that I am not an effective leader.

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**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: Are there other ways I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

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**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: I never blame anyone else for the circumstances of my life. I like challenges and I meet them head on, face to face - today especially. (Supporting Bible verse: I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13)

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**9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I am enrolled in a course on leadership through the community college.

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# CHAPTER 18

## THE EMOTIONAL REASONING ANT

This ANT refers to the acceptance of one's emotions as fact. It can be described as "I feel it, therefore it must be true."

It is dangerous because it can lead to low self-esteem, frustration and hopelessness. Complete the Emotional Reasoning ANT Worksheet to overcome this type of ANT.

### EMOTIONAL REASONING ANT WORKSHEET

#### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office preparing my sermon for Sunday.

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#### 2. Write your ANT about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: I feel like I can't properly perform all of my pastoral duties, therefore I must not be able to.

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#### 3. How do you feel when you have the ANT in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

**4. Rate your stress level when you have the ANT in Step 2.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

**5. How do you act when you have the thought in Step 2?**

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

**6. Capture your ANT from Step 2.**

Example: I feel like I can't properly perform all of my pastoral duties, therefore I must not be able to.

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---

**7. Ask a question to challenge the ANT.**

Example: Are there other ways I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?

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---

**8. Replace your ANT from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.**

Example: Feelings are not facts. I know that I can accomplish anything I choose, and I refuse to let anything negative hold me back.

(Supporting Bible verse: I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13 NIV)

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Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful

**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I carry out my preaching, counseling and leading duties with confidence, never questioning my ability to do so.

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## EPILOGUE

1. The circumstances may vary, but stress is always caused by one thing - your thoughts about the circumstances; not the circumstances themselves.

*The truth is that stress doesn't come from your boss, your kids, your spouse, traffic jams, health challenges, or other circumstances. It comes from your thoughts about these circumstances. Andrew Bernstein*

Thought⇒Feelings⇒Action⇒Results

This is why King Solomon said: Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts. (Proverbs 4:23 GNT)

2. Allowing your thoughts to create stress is a habit. As John Dryden said, “We first make our habits, and then our habits make us.”

3. In order to prevent pastor stress, you must develop the habit of using C-A-R: **C**apture each ANT. **A**sk a question to challenge each ANT. **R**eplace ANTS with positive Bible-supported thoughts.

4. Discover encouraging Bible verses to replace ANTS in my popular book, [The Power to Rejoice: 21 Days to Victory Over Your Problems](#).

5. Any time you begin to feel stressed:

- a. Identify the type of Automatic Negative Thought (ANT) you are having. (See the Contents section of this workbook.)
- b. Complete the 11 steps of the ANT Prevention Worksheet for the specific type of ANT you are having. (See the worksheet in the back of this workbook. Feel free to make copies.)
- c. Practice reading/reciting the positive, Bible-supported replacement thought (or listening to it, if you recorded it) four times per day for 21 days.
- d. Continue reading/reciting the thought (or listening to it, if you recorded it) for 42 days to get the habit firmly ingrained.

6. If this program does not help you prevent pastor stress, then it won't cost you a penny.

Here's why My 100%, iron-clad guarantee of satisfaction.

I totally guarantee your satisfaction with this unique course. If you apply the steps and they do not equip you to prevent pastor stress just return it to me within 31 days. I'll give you a prompt and full refund. That way, you risk nothing.

7. Visit [vernonwilliams.com](http://vernonwilliams.com) for additional resources to help you prevent pastor stress and burnout and live with joy.

8. Direct questions and comments to me at [vernonwilliams@verizon.net](mailto:vernonwilliams@verizon.net)

9. I wish you all of God's best as you prevent pastor stress and live every minute with joy.

## ABOUT VERNON L. WILLIAMS

Vernon L. Williams, The Work Stress Prevention Coach, is an author, speaker, and coach renowned for challenging, encouraging, and equipping clients to prevent stress and burnout. From the beginning of his entrepreneurial career, Vernon has had the reputation of exceeding clients' expectations.

Clients include MedStar Health, Social Security Administration, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, Baltimore City Community College, Howard Community College, U.S. Capitol Police, International Association of Workforce Professionals, and Breakthrough Beverage Corporation, as well as hundreds of business owners. Church clients include Mount Jezreel Baptist, Grace Fellowship Church, Grace Community, Bethel A.M.E., Celebration, Huntington Baptist and Bridgeway Community

After over twenty years of leading high-performing corporate customer service and marketing teams, Vernon was "downsized." Instead of being stressed over the event, he saw this as an opportunity to become an entrepreneur and help clients achieve their professional and personal goals. Vernon attributes his success to his unparalleled ability to help clients visualize what they want their lives to look like and develop a comprehensive plan for achieving their vision.

Vernon is the author of **five books**: *The Power to Rejoice: 21 Days to Victory Over Your Problems*, *Rejoice Through Problems: 13 Steps to Victory*, *Paddle Your Own Boat: 10 Rules That Guarantee Career Success*, *425 Ways to Stretch Your \$\$\$\$*, *3 Rules That Guarantee Career Success* and **eight e-Books**: *Top 7 Myths That Perpetuate Stress (And How to Dispel Them)*, *How to Prevent Stress As A Nurse*, *How to Stop Worrying: 9 Guaranteed Tips For Christians*, *12 Steps to Preventing Business Owner Stress*, *How to Eliminate the 13 Types of Thoughts That Sabotage Business Owners' Success*, *Positive Mindset Strategy For Business Owner*, *Delegation Strategy for Business Owners* *How to Help Your Child Get A Debt-Free Degree* and **three courses**: *How to Prevent Stress As A Pastor*, *Prevent Work Stress: 12 Steps to Success* and *Stop Negative Thoughts Today*

Vernon has a Master's Degree in Applied Behavioral Science from Johns Hopkins University.

## ANT PREVENTION WORKSHEET

### 1. Identify a circumstance that you experience as stressful.

Use the present tense in answering the following questions: Where are you? What happens?

Example: I am in my office preparing my sermon for Sunday.

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### 2. Write a concise sentence that describes your thought about the circumstance in step 1.

Example: "I feel like I can't perform all of my pastoral duties, therefore I must not be able to.

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### 3. How do you feel when you have the thought in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Frustrated, discouraged, angry, afraid, overwhelmed, defeated, hopeless, depressed, disappointed, powerless, downhearted

### 4. Rate your stress level when you have the thought in Step 2.

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be High.

### 5. How do you act when you have the thought in Step 2?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words. Complain, cry, hold a pity party, smoke, drink, use drugs, withdraw, worry, eat more/eat less, sleep more/sleep less, shop, attack others, blame others

## 6. **C**apture your thought from Step 2.

Example: “I feel like I can’t perform all of my pastoral duties, therefore I must not be able to.”

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## 7. **A**sk a question to challenge the thought.

Example: Ask: “Are there other ways I can think about the circumstance in Step 1?”

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## 8. **R**eplace your thought from Step 2 with a positive, Bible-supported thought.

Example: Feelings are not facts. I know that I can accomplish anything I choose, and I refuse to let anything negative hold me back.

(Supporting Bible verse: I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength (Philippians 4:13 NIV))

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## 9. How do you feel when you have the new thought in Step 8?

Circle words that apply. Feel free to add words.

Encouraged, peaceful, positive, worry-free, relaxed, relieved, optimistic, grateful, uplifted, assured, inspired, invigorated, heartened, confident, revitalized, hopeful



**10. Rate your stress level when you have the new thought in Step 8.**

Circle one of the two categories. Low (1, 2, 3) or High (8, 9, 10) Note: It should be Low.

**11. How do you act when you have the new thought in Step 8?**

Example: I confidently and competently carry out all of my pastoral duties.

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