



# HOW TO SQUASH ANTS: A PROCESS GUIDE FOR THOSE IN A HELPER ROLE

ANTS is an acronym that stands for **Automatic Negative Thoughts** or self-defeating language that limits a person's ability to feel motivated or productive. You might have one or two naturally, however, it becomes a problem when our ANTS get in the way of our daily function; especially when supporting a grieving child. ANTS can be unwanted, unhelpful, and, most importantly, *believable*.

Helpers are anyone who is invested in supporting a grieving child. Volunteer facilitators, educators, counselors, parents, and caregivers...really any caring adult who is supporting any person who is going through some type of loss, stress, or adversity. Helpers are heart people at their core and part of Good Grief's mission is to equip those in a helper role with the knowledge, skills, and tools to support others without burning out. The following is a suggested guide on how to address the ANTS that may present themselves in you or your young griever's lives.

## 1 RECOGNIZE IT

The first step is always awareness and identification of the ANT you are experiencing. Trap that bug – take the thoughts from the inside and make them tangible. One way this may be achieved is by writing your experience down as a way to visualize, examine, and make meaning out of it.

## 2 REFRAME & RELEASE

This is where the squashing comes into play! Once you have identified and named your ANT, talk back to it - ANTS can warp our perception. Ask yourself: "*How much truth is there to this ANT?*" Reframe your ANT into a learning opportunity in order to stay motivated and try a new plan that might work better in your support.

## 3 PRACTICE SELF CARE

It is easy for those of us in helper roles to carry the worries, stories, and burdens of others with us. We have to work intentionally to care for ourselves in order to be present for others. Good Grief thinks about self-care under four main categories: emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual. We do this because this represents all aspects of what it means to be human. When we get burdened, stressed, taxed, and overwhelmed it manifests in different ways within these four quadrants. Self-care in these four quadrants can look different for everyone. You know yourself best!

## 4 CONNECT WITH RESOURCES

Get familiar with the resources available in your community for you as well as the people you serve. We recognize this is a learning process, and we can all benefit from learning new skills that we can add to our toolbox. Good Grief, for example, has free resources for you to access online. If you are looking for grief support locally, we recommend the *National Alliance for Children's Grief* for additional resources.