

IndieFlix presents

Angst

At Home Screening and Discussion Guide

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WELCOME

Angst is an IndieFlix Original documentary designed to raise awareness around anxiety. The film includes interviews with kids, teens, educators, experts, parents and a very special interview with Michael Phelps.

The goal is to help normalize the conversation about anxiety and mental health.

Most importantly we hope the film will help people identify and understand the symptoms of anxiety disorders and encourage them to reach out for help. Anxiety is treatable!

ANGST AT HOME DISCUSSION GUIDE

After viewing the film, ask your family if they or someone they know has ever felt the negative effects of anxiety. It is a great way to kick off the conversation.

Topics to discuss:

Feel free to pull questions from this list or come up with your own.

- Did you identify with anyone in the film? Why?
- What surprised you about anxiety in the film?
- What was your biggest takeaway from the film?
- Who would you contact at school or work if you or someone you know needed help?
- Who would you go to within your friend group for support?
- For parents, did you ever experience the negative effects of anxiety? If yes, what was that like and how did you work through it? If no, did you know anyone who dealt with extreme anxiety? (It's great for kids to know they're not alone and they can get through it.)
- Do you think anxiety is on the rise or are we just more aware of it? Why?

- Why do you think it's so hard to talk about anxiety and our mental health when it is experienced in some way by every human?
- In what ways do you think we can support someone who experiences severe anxiety?
- What are some signs our bodies can give us when we are experiencing extreme anxiety? (*ie: heart starts racing, start to sweat, want to avoid/escape, etc.*) What are some tools we can use when we are experiencing those signs of anxiety? (*Grabbing ice cubes, using the stress-breath, snapping*) Brainstorm a family plan of action for dealing with anxiety when it arises and write it down. Discuss ways to take a break, reboot and jump back in.
- In the days of early humans, anxiety played a positive role; it kept us alive when there was a threat (*ie: a caveman being aware of a lion nearby*). What sorts of things could be triggering anxiety for us in modern times? (*ie: social media, breaking news, negative self-talk, etc.*) How can we address dealing with these triggers? Come up with a plan of action to help find moderation (*ie: take a break from social media apps, say a positive affirmation every time you walk under a doorway, write gratitudes before going to bed, etc*)
- What are some situations at school that may create anxious feelings? (*ie: classroom presentations, applying for college, grades*). Talk about how you can address these situations, to make it easier to push through in the moment to reach our ultimate goals. Check in with your school or organization for ideas and support. Often times there are free resources available to you.

A FEW FACTS

Often, those who experience extreme anxiety feel ashamed and suffer in silence, but the good news is that there is hope. Anxiety disorders are highly treatable. Below are some common facts and signs from experts associated with Angst that kids struggling with anxiety may exhibit, as well as tips on how to respond.

FACT: Anxiety disorders are treatable.

FACT: Neuroplasticity of the brain is real. You can change the way you think about something. You can rewire your brain to positivity.

FACT: Distraction allows your amygdala (fight-or-flight part of the brain) a break. It can be helpful to distract your mind and give yourself some space for a short period, but prolonged isolation can lead to avoidance of anxiety producing situations which reinforces the negative thought process. Take a short break, reboot, and jump back in. Don't avoid.

Go here for more resources from your employer to support your mental health – they can connect you with trained professionals ready to help you or someone in need.

ANXIETY TIP SHEETS (3 tip sheets):

With the help of our experts we've rounded up some tips on anxiety support that can be posted on your refrigerator or bulletin board.

TIP SHEET 1 - HELPING A FRIEND WHO HAS AN ANXIETY DISORDER

Having supportive and understanding friends is an essential component to recovering from an anxiety disorder. How can you help?

Educate yourself - Understanding what your friend is going through will help you better support them. It will also help alleviate frustrations that you may have about his or her behavior.

Be supportive - Encourage your friend when he or she is having a tough time and be empathetic to what he or she is going through. Be respectful but do not support avoidance of stressful situations.

Don't try to change your friend - Modify your expectations of how you want your friend to be and accept your friend for who he or she is.

Communicate - Be sure to listen with a nonjudgmental attitude. Help him or her find treatment. Sometimes it's hard to take the first step alone. Be supportive and encourage your friend to get help.

Encourage - Encourage your friend to confront stressful situations and support them through the experience, rather than avoiding anxiety-provoking situations. Avoidance can actually make the anxiety disorder worse.

Be fun - Sure it's good to have someone to talk to, but your friends need you to keep the fun going. Help make them laugh and relax.

TIP SHEET 2 - MANAGING ANXIETY IN YOUR WORK, SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY

Be Specific: Address your stress inducing thoughts and label them concretely. Make a list at the end of each workday and evening (at home) with the labeled stressors and an action plan of completion. Even if the items of stress are not task oriented in nature, it is beneficial to label them and write them down (for example, “Concerned about my daughter’s lack of interest in school.” Plan – take her for a drive and begin a conversation.) (For employees: “I am worried about an upcoming presentation.” Plan – talk with a coworker, manager or HR representative.)

Take a Break and Distract: If you feel your thoughts becoming clustered and overly emotional, or the beginning stages of anxiety increasing, get up and move for 5-10 minutes. Take your thoughts and body to a new location, even briefly, to grab a drink in the lounge or hallway, listen to music for a moment. Distracting your thoughts will allow your brain to function in an organized and efficient manner.

Don’t Isolate (for long): During COVID-19, we are all isolating in some ways, to comply with safety guidelines. It can be helpful to distract your mind and give yourself some space for a short period, but prolonged isolation can lead to avoidance of anxiety producing situations, which reinforces the negative thought process. Try to still stay connected, virtually or in other ways, while also following COVID-19 guidelines. Do what you fear, be it online networking socials or assertively stating your idea in a meeting.

Model Emotional Honesty and Reach Out: Let your coworkers, and loved ones know if you are feeling stressed, create an environment where all emotions are labeled and acknowledged. Address your needs.

TIP SHEET 3 - 12 DEFINITIONS & TIPS ON ANXIETY

Some anxiety is normal and natural, occurring in children, teens and adults every day. Anxiety is generally defined fear that is future-oriented, while phobias are specific, exaggerated fears. Anxiety becomes problematic when it begins to interfere with everyday life.

1. There are many different types of anxiety disorders, and they are one of the most common forms of mental illness. They include:
 - a. **Panic Disorder**, which involves physical symptoms of anxiety as well as fear of having another panic attack.
 - b. **Social Anxiety** in which people avoid social situations (i.e., public speaking).
 - c. **Specific Phobias**, or intense fear of specific objects (i.e., snakes).
 - d. **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder**, which involves thoughts (obsessions) that tend to be unwanted and intrusive (i.e., maybe there are germs on my hands), and create anxiety, after which the individual engages in compulsions, or actions designed to reduce that anxiety (i.e., hand washing).
 - e. **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**, or excessive fear related to several things.
 - f. **PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)** involves exposure to an extremely traumatic event that could result in death or serious injury, followed by a re-experiencing of the event, increased arousal, and avoidance of things that remind the person of the event.

2. There are three parts to anxiety: What I think (cognitions); What I feel (physical sensations); and What I do (behaviors). Helping people break down and verbalize these distinct thoughts, feelings, and behaviors helps them understand and face their fears.
3. Our bodies have a natural, physiological, way of coping with fear. A specific set of sensations occurs when we're anxious, including pounding heart, shortness of breath, dizziness, and sweating. This set of symptoms, called the fight-or-flight response, is designed to help us avoid danger, but sometimes works more like a faulty smoke alarm. Helping teens understand these natural sensations in their bodies without overreacting and, showing them how quickly things can return to normal can help give them control over their feelings of anxiety.
4. Facing fears and anxiety can teach an individual that they are stronger than they think they are, that they can face something that they thought was insurmountable, and decreases those fears in the long term. Avoiding fears actually increases the chances that they will turn into a problem.
5. Excessively reassuring someone who is anxious that everything will be okay may backfire when trying to help them cope with anxiety. Instead, empathize that it's natural to feel anxious, and focus on helping them through their feeling so that they can successfully face their anxiety. Avoiding activities because of fear can lead to increased anxiety because it reinforces the false concept that anxiety makes the activity too scary or difficult. For example, if someone is anxious about having a panic attack while driving, and therefore is encouraged not drive, they learn that driving must be dangerous, because otherwise, why would everyone be discouraging driving?
6. Fears, phobias, and anxieties can be successfully treated with cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which helps teens change their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This is a short-term (6-16 session) weekly type of therapy that teaches an individual to become his or her own therapist. The cognitive piece helps people identify their fear as excessive, and as something they can overcome by focusing on, and then changing, specific irrational thoughts that lead to anxiety.

7. Behavior therapy for anxiety often relies on the concept of Exposure Therapy, which focuses on helping an anxious person face their fears in a controlled environment. This may involve helping someone with a fear of public speaking give a speech in front of a few people, and then a larger group, and finally, a target audience. The goal of Exposure Therapy is to help an individual learn that they can feel anxious but that they can still live their lives.
8. Medication for anxiety may be an option as well. The most typical types of medication prescribed for anxiety are called Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors, or SSRIs.
9. The best thing you can do for someone with anxiety is help them face their fear. If you're experiencing symptoms of anxiety, think about how you can tackle your fear head on, possibly in small steps.
10. You can also help reduce anxiety through changing "self-talk", a part of CBT where people learn to identify the thoughts that they have that perpetuate their fears. Instead, try and identify what you're really worried about, and whether it's likely to happen.
11. Praise and reward yourself for facing tough situations. Be liberal with support if you know someone who is struggling with anxiety – even if the fear is irrational, it's difficult to face your fears. Any small step in the right direction should be encouraged.
12. Finally, take care of yourself! If you're feeling anxious, make sure you're managing your base stress levels by exercising, eating right, and getting enough sleep. All those factors can play a part in making anxiety worse as well.

CONTACT US

Spread the word. Believe change is possible.

These screenings bring families together to talk about this universal issue, share personal stories, and provide resources and tools. There is power in solidarity. The more we share, the more we connect and the more we can help ourselves and each other.

angstmovie.com

Connect with us online! Let's keep the conversation going!

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