

TITLE OF ACTIVITY: CONVERSATION CARDS

FILM: *ANGST*

Overview

This activity offers tools to hold a structured conversation to accompany the film, *Angst*. Families can select from a series of conversation cards to discuss shared experiences, confront fears, and discuss worries in a supportive environment.

Aims

This activity aims to cultivate a dialogue between parents and children about everyday worries and the anxiety that interferes with daily activity and social interaction.

Materials

- ★ Set of Conversation Cards for the documentary film, *Angst*

Getting Started

To get started with a family conversation, settle into a comfortable space that you would normally gather as a family, such as a table where you eat your meals or a room with comfortable couches and chairs. Before beginning, set an intention for the dialogue: Say the family is convening to discuss some of the ideas that came up from the film, *Angst*, and to share personal experiences about anxiety.

Importantly, the facilitator of the activity should note that each person has their own level of comfort in disclosing personal information. Each activity should begin with an encouragement to participate in those activities at their own comfort level. Participants should only share voluntarily.

Activities

- ★ Select a person in the family to facilitate the conversation. This person should be comfortable with talking about mental health issues and be willing to share examples from their own life.
- ★ Set some ground rules to establish a safe space. The facilitator can ask: *What are some things we can do to make this a good conversation?* Suggestions might include:
 - Looking at the person who is speaking or giving other non-verbal cues that you are actively listening to, like nodding your head.
 - Re-stating what the person who has spoken before you has said.

- Taking a deep breath before speaking.
 - Having a compassionate stance and seek understanding
 - Disagree with statements, not the person.
 - Keep the conversation within the space.
 - Silence is okay
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- ★ Next, the facilitator should choose a card from the Conversation Cards (see below), reading the question aloud. The facilitator should model how to give a response that draws on personal experience and takes an emotional risk.

 - ★ After giving a response, the facilitator will ask: *Is there anyone else who wants to respond to add their own response to the question? Or talk about anything I've shared so far?*

 - ★ Allow time for silence and give plenty of time for thinking. After other members of the family have a chance to respond to the question and the dialogue is winding down, move to another question. The facilitator should urge another member of the group to select a conversation card for discussion.

 - ★ Tailor the discussion length for each family's comfort level. For some families, one or two questions is a strong start. Other families may wish to do three or four questions.

Wrapping Up

Take some time to give thanks for sharing personal experiences and risking being vulnerable. The facilitator should ask for some final reflections on the process: *What was a family conversation like for you? What worked for you? What might be done differently the next time?*

Extensions

After the family conversation, parents can ask their children to write down an emotion that came up for them during the conversation, such as *shame, pain, guilt, fear, or anger*. Parents can reflect on why their child might have selected this emotion. Then, consider how best to respond to this emotion, such as listening, talking about a shared experience, or offering encouragement.

Appendix

Conversation Cards: *Angst*

When you wake up in the morning, what are some of the thoughts that go through your head? What do you look forward to? What are you anxious about?

Describe a typical day for you at school or work.

Describe a time in your life when your worries or fears kept you from doing something you wanted to do.

What does anxiety feel like to you? What happens in your mind? Your body? What sensations do you have?

Do you think technology gives other people too much information on your private life? Why or why not?

What are some of your worries about the future?

When you hear the word, "fear," what comes up for you? What connections come to mind?

What tasks or activities do you like doing? Which ones do you avoid?

Who in your life do you talk to when you are feeling stressed or worried? What does it feel like to talk through your worries?

When and where do you feel most relaxed and at peace? Talk about a place or time of day when you are calm.

Do you ever find that you compare yourself to others?

What do you think a “normal” teenager is like? Do you see yourself fitting into the norm? Why or why not?