

TITLE OF ACTIVITY: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LISTEN?

FILM: *ANGST*

Overview

Angst features teenagers and parents who emphasize the importance of having difficult conversations about mental health. Learning to listen helped parents get a sense of their child's social world beyond the household, from children facing academic pressures to being cyberbullied or harassed online by peers. Moreover, these conversations assisted parents in boosting their child's self-efficacy and ability to cope with fears. In this activity, parents and teenagers alike sketch out an ideal "listener" as an inroad to having conversations about the internal, psychic life.

Aims

Viewers of the film will identify what characteristics make a good listener and conduct an exercise in deep listening.

Materials

- ★ Journals or paper for writing
- ★ Chart paper or board to record responses
- ★ Index cards

Getting Started

To frame the activity, talk about the importance of listening. Listening is a way that we show our respect and care for another person. Listening helps people mutually work through emotions and beliefs that can have a damaging impact on familial and interpersonal relationships.

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

PART I - WHO IS A LISTENER?

- ★ First, ask participants to get out a blank sheet of paper to do some writing or drawing. Ask them to write or sketch for a few minutes: *Who in your life is a good listener? How does it feel when*



someone listens to you?

- ★ Ask participants to take a couple of minutes to talk about their responses to the prompt. Then, write on a piece of chart paper: A GREAT LISTENER IS...
- ★ Give participants a minute or so to think. Then, elicit their responses. What qualities make for a great listener? Examples might be:
 - Looks at the other person when talking
 - Shows focus
 - Doesn't take over the conversation or make it about themselves
 - Waits until the other person is finished; doesn't interrupt
- ★ Write their responses on the chart paper. Then, ask participants to reflect: *What actions do you all practice? What might you need to work on more?*

PART 2 - HOW DO WE LISTEN?

- ★ Tell participants that they are going to practice with a short listening activity called a "dyad." A dyad is a conversation between two people in which both people agree to listen to each other without interruption. The purpose of the exercise is not to elicit information, but to simply listen for the benefit of the other person.
- ★ Ask the participants to get into pairs. With their partner, they will assign a Listener and a Speaker. The Speaker will talk for a full two minutes about a prompt. Facilitators can change the timing based on the needs and tolerance of the participants; some may be able to tolerate three or four minutes.
- ★ Ask the pairs to follow these guidelines:
 - Pairs should face each other.
 - Each person is given equal time for talking about a prompt. Silence is okay!
 - The Listener does not interrupt the Speaker with questions, clarifications, or commentary. The Listener can nod and give facial reactions.
- ★ After participants are sitting and facing each other, ask them to assign the first round of a Speaker and Listener. Then ask the Speaker to begin sharing: *Growing up, what were your experiences in school?* Start a timer.
- ★ After two minutes, stop the first round. Ask the pairs to switch roles as Listener and Speaker. Then, start the timer again for two minutes. The Speaker should talk about the same prompt.
- ★ When the timer stops for the second time, ask the pairs to join the whole group again.



Wrapping Up

Pass out index cards to all participants. Ask them to jot a few notes down on their process of doing the dyad:

- What came up during the process of speaking and listening?
- What worked well? What was challenging?
- What did you learn about listening?
- How can you be a better listener?

If time permits, ask a few participants to share out what they wrote on their index cards.

Extensions

Practice doing another dyad with a friend, but extend the time by a minute. Watch what happens to the body when you are in a listening role and a speaking role.

Review the list of what makes a “great listener.” Continue to add the list. Select one quality of a great listener. Make a plan to practice this quality within the day. Then, make a few notes about what happened when you practicing a characteristic of great listening and how the person responded.