



On Thursday, January 16th, Skyview PTSA, North Creek PTSA and Northshore Council PTSA hosted a screening of the film "Angst" followed by a panel discussion.

The discussion was moderated by **Joseph Valentine**, Executive Director of the North Sound Behavioral Health Organization. Panelists included North Creek High School Assistant Principals **Joseph Robertson** and **Sharyn Mehner**, North Creek High School Counselor **Nancy Smith-Vela**, Skyview Middle School Counselor **Gini Scott**, and Skyview Counselor Intern **James Kim**.

Each panelist began by sharing a bit about themselves.

Discussion notes:

Key takeaways from the film:

- The importance of personal connections and relationships and to truly invest in the people in your lives.
- The value of the positive messaging surrounding seeking treatment—you don't have to live with it forever, you can get help.
- The triggers brought forward by the film that are often catalysts for anxiety in youth, including the pressure of the future, college, and just what high schoolers are going through in general.
- When kids share something, know that it is hard for them. So if they have the courage to share, honor that.
- The need for grace and understanding that balance is required. We can help our youth by sharing tools that they can use to help themselves.

The key is to remove the stigma of anxiety and start having conversations.

What tools can parents use to help kids open up?

- Open-ended questions and different types of questions.
- Figure out where the best place is to talk... might be the car, might be right at bedtime... but find that spot and then really listen.
- Listening is key—find ways to deal with whatever personal guilt you might have, so that you can actively engage and honor their feelings/experiences.

What do you do after the conversation—how do you make sure you are helping and not just enabling?

- Resource suggestion: author/professor [Eli Lebowitz](#) has published helpful books on the subject.
- Work to understand the difference between supporting vs. protecting. Asking the question: "Can my child handle this?" vs. "I need to protect my child."
- Build your child's confidence in their ability to cope with struggle.
- Experiencing failure is an important part of development; removing all obstacles does not help. Don't

- be a "lawnmower" parent.
- Helping your child to navigate failure and learning where the line is before we step in and advocate on their behalf.
- Know that things don't define who you are—character and values are key—that is where the emphasis should be as that is what defines you.

How do you know when anxiety reaches the level of needing professional help? At what point is medication necessary?

- Try to look beyond adolescent drama and what might just be an up or down day vs. a string of days where those ups or downs are starting to interfere with normal everyday functioning at home, school, around peers.
- If professional help is sought, make sure that you give it a chance. It takes time. Suggestion to go at least 4 times.
- If you take your child to counseling, be engaged and take part in it—even if it is just a few minutes in one appointment a month.
- Know that medication can be trial and error and it takes time to experience results.

What do you do when someone is having a panic attack?

- Call crisis line (or 911 if needed)-- they can help determine
- Help kids practice their coping skills-- so they are better able to use them when they need them most.

What services or offices are there at North to help with anxiety?

- Counseling department-- their doors are always open.
- There is an area for students to chill-out if they just need space.
- Administrators and trusted teachers/staff can listen. Athletic director and campus supervisor are also great about building relationships and being willing to talk.
- Note: North Creek has a mental health counselor on campus 3 days/week—however, they do not do regular therapeutic work due to large case loads. They are a sort of first-response and then, if they see support is needed, they will contact parents and share referrals.

What services or offices are there at Skyview to help with anxiety?

- School Counseling staff is there to help and they regularly try to check-in with their students.
- Parents can always email and ask for resources.
- There is a reset room available for students to use if they need a break.
- There is a mental health counselor 3 days/week, but their job is serving kids who cannot get outside support.

Many, many thanks to our moderator and panelists!!!

More information: flyer with crisis hotline, email and link to resources around anxiety.