



HIGH SCHOOL ANXIETY

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

LEARNING TO DRIVE. PEER GROUPS. FIRST REAL JOB. DATING. GETTING INTO COLLEGE. There's a lot of pressure in high school just with "normal" life. Throw in any number of additional stress inducers and you may see signs of anxiety, such as stomachaches, extreme irritability, avoidance and isolation.

MOBILIZE THEIR POTENTIAL.

Being able to handle feelings and thoughts associated with anxiety is a major life skill you can help your student develop. Knowing how to talk with them during these times can help them learn how to express and process their anxiety in healthy ways. Here are a few ideas of what to say and what not to say.

WHAT TO SAY

- "Would you like to tell me about what worries you/what you're afraid of?"
- "How has thinking/feeling this way stopped you from being happy/being who you want to be/doing what you want to do?"
- "This is what I hear you saying . . . Did I hear you correctly?"
- "I can see how you would feel that way/think that."
- "I have struggled with feeling anxious too." (*Be authentic and share your own experience with anxiety.*)
- "God wants us to talk to Him when we're worried and afraid. Tell Him what you're thinking and feeling. He loves you and wants to help you."
- "Would you be willing to speak with someone, like a counselor, who can give you some things to do to help you when you're anxious?"
- "I can't thank you enough for telling me how you feel and what you're thinking. I will always try to help you as much as I can."

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- "Life is stressful. Get over it."
- "Christians are not supposed to be anxious. It's wrong."
- "This is what you need to do . . ." (*Try and listen and reflect back on what you heard rather than just telling them what to do.*)
- "Don't worry. I can fix it." (*Don't try and fix anything—just be present.*)
- "Let's just think this through logically." (*Avoid using logic. Logic does not speak to emotions.*)
- Nothing.

MAKE SURE TO INVOLVE PROFESSIONAL COUNSELORS, AS NEEDED, AS WELL AS YOUR MINISTRY LEADER.