



MIDDLE SCHOOL ANXIETY

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

MIDDLE SCHOOL IS A TIME WHEN students and parents can be equally as anxious. The student is thinking . . . *Will I fit in at the new middle school? Will I remember where my classes are? Will I make any friends?* It's important that you as a parent model the behaviors you want for your student. While some middle schoolers can tell you exactly what they're thinking and feeling, others are still attempting to formulate thoughts into words during this phase. Be patient and aware of nonverbal physical signs of anxiety such as stomachaches, extreme frustration, avoidance and isolation.

AFFIRM THEIR PERSONAL JOURNEY.

Knowing how to talk with your child 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

- "Tell me about your day. (Or the practice, test . . . whatever event immediately happened prior to the anxious behavior. Or whatever friends or people they were with prior to the anxious behavior.)"
- "Can you describe what worries you/what you're afraid of?"
- "How has feeling this way prevented 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?"
- "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?"
- "Thank you for telling me how you feel. I will always try to help you as much as I can."

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- "Life is stressful. You have to learn to deal with it."
- "Christians are not supposed to be anxious. It's wrong."
- "This is what I think . . . This is what I feel . . ."
- "These are the reasons not to be scared . . ."
- "Don't worry. I can fix it." (Do not 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.