

## Angst - Teacher-Driven Classroom Discussion Guide

The following are discussion questions to encourage reflection and actions that can be taken to manage anxiety.

### Anxiety 101

**Clip 1: Anxiety 101** - <https://vimeo.com/325095674/9d1fa7976d>

1. What are some signs our bodies give us when we are experiencing anxiety? (ie: heart starts racing, start to sweat, want to avoid/escape, etc.)
2. One of the therapists in the clip mentions the 'Amygdala Hijack Phenomenon.' How can anxiety 'hijack' our brains? (ie: the amygdala takes over and tries to override our prefrontal cortex)
3. How do you think the amygdala served a purpose since the days of early humans? (ie: a caveman being aware of a lion nearby)
4. What sorts of things could be triggering our amygdala in modern times? (ie: social media, etc.)
5. What are some situations at school that may create anxious feelings? (ie: classroom presentations, test taking, applying for college, grades).

### Distraction: Give Your Amygdala A Break!

**Clip 2: Distraction** - <https://vimeo.com/325095875/dd1dca0889>

1. Why is distraction helpful when you are feeling very anxious? (ie: takes you out of the amygdala so can be in your rational, prefrontal cortex).
2. What are some tips you can use to bring calm to your body when feeling anxiety? (ie: snapping fingers, holding ice, listening to music, flipping hands, picturing calm place, etc).
3. In the last section, we talked about some stressful situations at school that may create anxious feelings (ie: classroom presentations, applying for college, grades). Now, let's apply some of these tips to those school situations (ie: doing the stress-breath before a presentation).

### Break, Reboot & Jump Back In

**Clip 3: Avoidance** - <https://vimeo.com/325096232/9933521bac>

1. Why is it important to jump back in after taking a break and not avoiding a situation when you are feeling anxiety? (Avoidance gives anxiety power, so being capable gives us back our control).
2. What are some things we can do to give ourselves a short break?
3. How can you have a friend help you when you are feeling tempted to avoid due to anxiety?

### It Gets Better, So Start Talking!

**Clip 4: Phelps** - <https://vimeo.com/325096415/667d48dcab>

1. Michael Phelps says 'It's ok to not be ok.' What do you think he means?
2. Why do you think talking to someone about your anxiety symptoms would be helpful?
3. Who would you contact at the school if you or someone you know needs help?
4. Would you like someone to reach out to you to check in about you or someone you know?

## Peer-Driven Classroom Discussion Guide

The peer-driven discussions are designed to encourage sharing of ideas to manage anxiety and respond to stressful situations by creating personal action plans for easing anxiety as it shows up in their lives and setting personal intentions.

1. PEER GROUP DISCUSS QUESTIONS (approx. 20 mins). Allow at least 5 minutes per question for group discussions. Each group can identify a student representative to read the question to their group and gather their responses. When they all reconvene, the student representatives will share their results with the teacher who writes the responses down on a board for all to see and discuss further.

**Question 1:** What are some signs our bodies can give us when we are experiencing anxiety? *(Go around the group and each student shares some signs they feel when they are experiencing anxiety. The leader writes down sample symptoms (ie: heart starts racing, start to sweat, want to avoid/escape, etc).*

**Question 2:** What are three stressful situations that can cause you to feel anxious feelings? (ie: classroom presentations, applying for college, grades, meeting new friends). *(The student leader asks everyone in their group to write sample situations that cause them to feel anxiety down on a scrap of paper and throw them in a hat/bowl. The leader then reads aloud each scrap of paper to the group. Chances are that there are more than one situation – many people share the same fears!)*

**Question 3:** What are some ideas for the anxious situations shared? What are some tips you can use to bring calm to your body when feeling anxiety? (ie: snapping fingers, holding ice, listening to music, flipping hands, picturing calm place, etc) *(Talk amongst the group about each situation and ideas that could help calm anxiety. The group leader will write down the calming ideas shared.)*

**Question 4:** Why is it important to jump back in after taking a break and not avoiding a situation when you are feeling anxiety? (ie: avoidance gives anxiety power, so being capable gives us back our control). *(Discuss as a group what would happen if the repeatedly avoid anxious situations? What would happen if they push past the fear?)*

2. STUDENTS LEAVE THEIR GROUPS AND RECONVENE AS A CLASS (approx. 20 mins)

1. Peer representatives for each group shares their answers to the questions. The teacher writes ideas shared down on the board for all to see.
2. Ask students to get a card or piece of paper for this next activity.
  1. The teacher asks students to write down their top three stressful situations that cause them anxiety.
  2. Looking at the shared ideas and tips for dealing with anxiety, ask the students to come up with specific intentions to respond to their top three stressful situations.
  3. Have the students write down the name of at least one person they can talk to when feeling a lot of anxiety. This can be a friend, teacher, or other adult.
  4. Suggest that each student keep the paper/card somewhere they can easily find and refer to when stressful situations arise: in their binder, in their calendar, on a picture in their phones, etc.