SCHOOL NURSE DISCUSSION GUIDE
Understanding and Responding to Anxiety

This guide helps school nurses think through and talk about how to support students showing signs of anxiety—whether you're in a group setting or reflecting on your own. Pick the questions that feel most helpful or relevant to your team.

Icebreaker Questions
- How does anxiety impact students in your school or your work in the clinic?

Recognition of and Response to Anxiety
- What are common reasons students come to the nurse that may mask anxiety symptoms?
- What questions or approaches have helped you open up a conversation with a student showing signs of worry or distress?
- How do you explain anxiety to students in a way that feels validating and non-threatening?
- In your experience, how do younger students show anxiety differently than older students?
- How do trauma or chronic stress influence the way anxiety presents in students?
- What have you noticed about how anxiety may affect students differently based on their cultural background, identity, or family situation?

Systems and Supports
- Who do you usually involve when you're concerned about a student's anxiety?
- How does your school support students who frequently avoid class or school due to anxiety (e.g., missing gym, lunch, or arriving late)?
- What does your follow-up look like after a student has an anxiety episode in your clinic?
- What small tools or coping strategies have you shared that seemed to help anxious students (e.g., grounding techniques, deep breathing)?
- What are some school-wide practices that support students struggling with anxiety?

Personal Reflection and Wellness
- What parts of supporting students with anxiety feel most challenging or emotionally taxing for you?
- What helps you recharge or reset after helping a student in crisis?
- What professional development or training would help you feel more prepared to support anxious students?

Conclusion
- What's one new approach you'd like to try with an anxious student after today's discussion?

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