

Seattle-based IndieFlix expanding its content, including with films about mental health for young people

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When Scilla Andreen co-founded Seattle-based entertainment company IndieFlix, the goal was to help independent filmmakers make money. She had no idea that 15 years down the road, it would position her as a mental health resource for families during a pandemic.

But that is what happened to the multifaceted venture, founded in 2005, that expanded from a global indie-film streaming service to one with multiple arms. IndieFlix (indieflix.com) now has films and curriculum for education; several channels offering free films (with ads); independent films that are streamable on demand (subscription only); a platform for film festival programming; and a nonprofit arm that supports the production and distribution of “films that matter,” according to its website.

Part of IndieFlix’s films for education includes an ongoing series of original documentaries addressing anxiety, social media and cyberbullying, combining real-life stories of affected youth with expert knowledge and practical advice — all with the aim of normalizing conversations about mental health.

Those films are typically shown during in-person community screenings. When the pandemic foreclosed such gatherings, Andreen, who is also IndieFlix’s CEO, considered pausing the project. But with young people isolated at home and spending even more time on social media, Andreen knew families needed mental health education and resources more than ever. So she chose to lean in. “We built a new platform of our own and we host eight to 10 virtual events every week,” Andreen says.

The company became directly involved in producing new documentaries after Andreen lost a friend to suicide a few years ago. Starting with Andreen’s own 2017 film “Angst,” which addresses anxiety disorders in youth, IndieFlix began to hold community screenings with moderated discussions in schools and businesses. Included in the licensing for school screenings is a social-emotional learning curriculum built on Andreen’s research for the films and for her [book](#), “The Creative Coping Toolkit: Simple Activities That Gamify Talking About Our Feelings.”

Making “Angst,” she noticed a connection between social media and rising rates of anxiety. In 2018, Andreen released her next film, “Like,” a documentary exploring the impact of social media on mental health. That led to research about cyberbullying and the 2020 release of Andreen’s “The Upstanders.” Because it deals with the story of a youth’s suicide, “The Upstanders” is recommended for ages 13 and up, where the previous films are for ages 10 and up.

There will be January screenings of those films with “Angst” showing Jan. 25,

“Like” Jan. 26 and “The Upstanders” Jan. 27. Tickets are \$10 for each film (registration information below).

(While “Angst,” “Like” and “The Upstanders” are available by registering for virtual-screening events through IndieFlix, those films are not available for streaming on demand on the site. That’s because there’s meant to be discussion to accompany the films. During the pandemic, schools and businesses are hosting virtual live-screening events that include supplementary materials to stimulate conversations.)

IndieFlix is also adding to its other arms, not just films for education. It’s adding some 500 titles, including those featured in two new channels. The Northwest Arts Streaming Hub channel will make content created by local artists available to global audiences. And Kids In The Spotlight (KITS) will feature several dozen short films created by foster youth who participated in the KITS filmmaker program in Los Angeles. IndieFlix also leveraged its experience with live streams to create its new virtual film festival platform, starting with the Stony Brook Film Festival last autumn.

“I have never been so exhausted and I have never been more excited,” says Andreen.

Registration for virtual screenings and panels (tickets \$10 each):

· “Angst,” 4 p.m. Jan. 25: [eventbrite.com/e/angst-virtual-screening-panel-hosted-by-indieflix-registration-134800731617](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/angst-virtual-screening-panel-hosted-by-indieflix-registration-134800731617)

· “Like,” 6 p.m. Jan. 26: [eventbrite.com/e/like-virtual-screening-panel-hosted-by-indieflix-tickets-135456214183](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/like-virtual-screening-panel-hosted-by-indieflix-tickets-135456214183)

· “The Upstanders,” 4 p.m. Jan. 27: [eventbrite.com/e/the-upstanders-virtual-screening-panel-hosted-by-indieflix-registration-135457652485](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-upstanders-virtual-screening-panel-hosted-by-indieflix-registration-135457652485)

For additional mental health resources for young people, go to: [st.news/mental-health](https://www.st.news/mental-health)

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