

*Transcript has been edited from automatically generated captions and may contain errors.*

[Kiarra:] I think all of us want to answer your question.

Yeah.

We are all so excited to support you. So maybe... Yeah. Yeah.

Oh, so well—that was such a good description of a traumatic experience. I will talk short and then so you can hear everyone's. But can I just say: that wasn't your fault. That wasn't your fault. Your kids had that experience. You did a great job.

Yeah, you're welcome.

All right, let's move on. I—oh, you know what? I forgot I was going to say. I wanted to say that. Go and I'll come back. Oh, go, Ali.

[Dr. Ali:] OK, so one of the things that helps with anxiety is asking children to identify what they can control.

You know, "What can you control in this situation?" What they will find is that there's far more that they can control than what they're realizing. You know, the other thing that I will do is I will—so like in this situation, for example, one of the things that I might have done for today when she didn't want to go, you could have pulled up Cornerstone's website and you could have said, "OK, let's look at the schedule."

Like, so proactively, you're building out her expectations so that she knows what's coming next. And so this is what the schedule looks like, so she understands what the schedule is and what her time constraints are. Then you might be pulling up Cornerstone's website and saying, "These are our speakers. These are some of the new faces that you'll be seeing." Or you might be sharing who all will be attending the conference today so that she has an understanding of who she can expect.

Oh, OK then. Well, you could have—so none of that was put out there, like as far as the four of us talking?

She's nine.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. But I would have—oh, she's over there. Is there any way that you could have found out what the kids ministry would have looked like prior to dropping her off?

Yeah.

OK.

Yeah.

OK. So then I would—there's two other things and then I'll stop talking. The first is, she needs to be taught some anxiety reduction strategies that she can do to basically lower her baseline before she's put into the high anxiety moment or environment. OK, so some psychoeducation around that would probably benefit her.

So she would have some skills and tools that she could implement herself, and would not be as reliant on you because right now she's really reliant on you to provide all of the external support to make her OK.

Something else, and this is just really, really simple, that I will suggest to parents who have kids with separation anxiety: you can give her an article of your clothing. Like even if you're not going to wear a scarf, wear a scarf that day and then give it to her because it's kind of like a tangible item that she can hold on to for comfort that is representative of you. It smells like you. But she also, in her mind—because she's nine—will know that you have to come and pick her up because you have her scarf.

And so there are some simple things like that that can also be done.

[Tammy:] That was so good.

And there are so many other things for calming her. But one thing is you said the word trauma. And then I feel like you really explained a scenario that is trauma. And so with trauma, it's—you know, we can have things happen and then we can go about our life and we're not reliving it.

And what happens with trauma is there's such a neurological thing that happens in our brain that makes our body feel like we're in that situation over and over. And to me, it feels like if I went to a water park and broke my foot, I would really see it as my foot is broke. And nothing's broke about her at all. But you're right, it sounds like trauma, even though we didn't see her.

So that's just a little—takes a little bit more time and a different skill set than only seeing it as anxiety. And there are a lot of trauma specialists and there are things that you can do too. And I'm sure there's a lot of us in this room that can think of something that happened to us as a child.

And then maybe it was on a boat, and then when we get on a boat, our anxiety goes up because our body is telling our brain we are in danger. And the thing is, it's not logical because it's not happening in the logic part of our brain. And so what I know, what I want to do, is tell myself, "The boat is fine." I'm not—it's not like when I was eleven and— But it doesn't matter because it can't get fixed logically. It is coming from the body.

The body kind of stores that trauma. And then when our eyes see something that reminds us of that, it starts triggering. And this is all going on—we're not thinking about it. It's just all of a sudden she must be so scared to think about leaving you.

And I think that's probably so real considering that that was trauma for her. I would be so happy to connect with you after also, or any of us.

[Dr. Ali:] Like, going through exact strategies might be beyond the scope of where we're at right now with the Q&A. But I think that—I mean, there are lots of tools that any of us really could help her with.

[Tammy:] We will definitely use anxiety because how Ali and Kiarra were talking about things to do—your daughter will still do those things because she's going to teach her brain how to be calm away from you.

And we would never want to do that by just dropping her off somewhere and her learning it. We would start very gradually at Cornerstone. That's how we would do it, very gradual. We may have her sit a table away from you or two chairs away from you, and then we would keep—and she would be a part of planning what's next.

And then what happens is her body starts feeling safe away from you, and that would be the approach toward something traumatic. And I am so glad you brought that up, even though we're not talking about trauma, because I think it's so important to know—you're probably not the only one in the room that has a trauma experience or a child with a trauma experience.

And then I would add, if it's trauma, to bring someone in to help you with that.