

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

[Kiarra:] My name's Kiarra. I'm a marriage and family therapist. I really love talking to families. I really love talking about marriage and relationships. I think they matter and they're important.

And so if you, you know, find me in the streets one day, talk to me about that. We'll stand there for an hour, talk about all the things. Unless you need to go, then I will free you. All right.

I'm just going to talk about myself for a moment. I feel super nervous right now, and I hate anxiety. I absolutely hate feeling like this. I hate feeling like my stomach is, like, going to fall out of my body. I hate feeling like I don't know what's going to happen. And it's like jittery nervous. I just-- I just generally hate it.

Am I like alone in that? OK, good. I'm glad that I'm in a room of anxiety haters because I don't like it. I don't like that experience.

I don't like it so much that I don't watch scary movies. I don't like scary movies. I don't like suspense. I'm the people that yell at the TV over Christmas break.

My husband was watching "Carry On" on Netflix. It's not scary. It's like a suspenseful movie about like-- an airport that had some people try to take over it or whatever. And I'm walking by because I don't want to watch the movie because I don't need the extra anxiety. So I'm walking by.

But every time, like, I see something, I stop and I look at it and I'm like, I don't need to see this. And I come back and I eventually end up sitting down. And I think they hated when I came because after that I'm like, well, why would you do that? Like, come on, take the package, move it. And I'm like, I'm in it. I'm in the movie at that moment.

And it's just because, like, I just want it to hurry up and be over. I just want to hurry up and get out of the suspense. I want to hurry up and get out of the anxiety. I just don't want to be in it anymore. And so I'm doing whatever I can to make this go faster, even though I didn't produce this movie, I physically can't make the movie go any faster.

And so when I was thinking about what am I going to say to you guys about anxiety, that story came to mind about me trying to manage my anxiety by yelling at the TV screen, by avoiding it. And what really landed for me was that anxiety is mostly an emotion that we try to get out of and rid of as fast as possible. Most people just don't want to experience it, me included.

And that makes sense because anxiety, as far as emotions are concerned, anxiety is the fastest traveling emotion. If you put a bunch of people in a room together, especially a family in a room together, if one of them is feeling anxious, that anxiety will travel through the family faster than any other emotion. It's almost like the cooties. One person get them.

And this winter time in PA, we know about the cooties right now. One person will get them and then it's like we can't get rid of them in the house. They just keep moving around and it's awful. And this makes sense because someone can be having a bad day near you. They can be sad and you still have a good day. You're not sad.

Someone can be angry near you and as long as they don't, you know, give their anger to you or be mean to you, you can still just, "la la la la." Someone is anxious-- if one of us was to get up right now and start running, all of us would probably get up and start running before we even know why we're running.

And we get out to the lobby and be like, "Why are we out here?" And it's because our anxiety-- our anxiety is-- it has a function. It's designed to help us prepare for what's to come. It's designed to give us adrenaline so that we can act.

Anxiety is what lets moms and dads pick up cars and do crazy stuff because it gives your body the extra boost. But it's not helpful to have a car picking up level of boost when I'm watching a TV show, or when I'm sitting at my bed trying to go to sleep, or when I'm talking to a friend, or when I'm standing on a stage talking to people who don't look like serial killers, it's not helpful.

But anxiety is there trying to help us do something that we don't need. So what I thought I would do is give you guys just one. I only have one slide. It's not this orange one, but this one is cute. It's that one. It's really sorry the words are small. Just talk to me after. I only have one slide.

I figured I would just give you a practical tool on what to do when your kids have this, because when I have this, it's hard enough. I don't want it. But when my kid comes to me and they have this, it is even more challenging to know what to do. Is this making sense so far? OK.

So I'm going to tell you a story and then you guys are all going to collectively be my parents, right? So we'll pretend like I'm your kid and you guys will all be my parents. Thank you all for feeding me, raising me, doing a good job. All right.

So when I was in college, I went to school in South, South Georgia. Like, if you mix the exit, you'll end up in Florida. And that means we have weather, we have humidity and we have amphibians. We have frogs. Anybody like frogs?

OK, I'm going to pray for you more often. Y'all, I don't. I don't like frogs. I just feel like they're fine in the water. Not fine on me, near me, by me. You stay where you live. I'm going to stay where I live.

So I was coming home from class when I was in my master's program. And on my door there is a frog just right by the doorknob where I would have to put my hand. There is a frog right there.

And I don't know, it was like 20 teen something. So I pull out my phone. I don't know why. I pull out my phone and I'm like recording and I'm freaking out because I can't get in. I have to get home. It's night and I need to get inside. But there's a frog and I am like panicking.

If you watch the video, don't go find it. If you watch the video, it's just me. Like, I can't get into this house and I don't know what to do. And why are there even frogs? This is so stupid. Like nobody needs-- it's just me completely freaking out, right?

So. I want you all to pretend like you are my parents and I have come to you with my frog dilemma. I have come to you and I need to get in my house. And there was a frog. And so I've come to you. "Mom, there's a frog in my door. And I don't understand why there's a frog. This is so dumb. I don't want to be-- Dad, I don't get it. There's a frog." Have you all heard this before?

OK, cool, cool! Hope I'm in there. "I hate it. I hate. This is so stupid. I don't want to be here. And I wish this wasn't here." And all the different things, first of all. When your kids come to you with this level of hysteria, when they come to you, a ball of anxiety and really a ball of emotion, what we usually do is meet them in their hysteria.

Because you just gave me your cooties. You've come to me with this mass panic, and now I'm in a panic. So you're-- it's a frog. And I'm like, "where, where, where?!" I don't know. And so now both of us can't get in the house. We both standing outside all night. That's not helpful.

But that's what I normally do because it's so hard. Again, anxiety is the fastest traveling emotion. If you don't do something else, it will jump on you. It is super cooties.

OK, so I want to teach you something else you can do instead of picking up their anxiety and we're going to practice. I like to say that kids are sassy. So when they come with their sassiness, when they come with their ball of anxiety, their ball of emotion, we are going to bring the sass right back to them.

We're going to give them "SASS" in return. This doesn't mean, like, have an attitude with them. Stay with me. We're going to bring the SASS. SASS is an acronym. It has four parts. The four parts are slow down, acknowledge and allow, support, and solve. OK, S-A-S-S.

First one, slow down. What's the first one? Oh, good job. Ya'll get five points. All right. They can't be redeemed for anything. Sorry. They're just arbitrary points. Like, "Whose line is it anyway?"

All right, slow down. When a kid comes to me, and I also-- when I'm not doing therapy, I also work as a youth pastor. When the kids come to me and they're hysterical, I always do whatever I can to just put some space between what they said and how I respond.

It doesn't matter if you add 2 seconds, 40 seconds. Ali talked about pausing and so did Tammy. We just want to put a little bit of space between when I heard the issue and when I respond. It doesn't matter how you put space, we just need a little bit of room.

So sometimes, sometimes it's taking a deep breath and we just learn some breathing techniques. Sometimes you're just like, "OK, hold on. What?" Sometimes-- Sometimes I just start coughing because I need a second to have to respond. So I'll just, "Hold on. I'm so sorry. OK, sorry. What did you say?"

You need space because when you don't have that amount of space, you just respond and you enter their anxiety. Sometimes I'll yawn, sometimes I'll sip a tea, a water, anything to add yourself a little space. You wanna give yourself time to be able to respond, to come out of reaction and into responding.

Okay, so our first one is slow down. Slow down this moment. Put some space between when they said it and when you responded. That's number one, slow down, okay.

SA. A is for acknowledge and allow. So I've come to you, I'm freaking out about this frog at my door, and you are like, whoa, whoa, OK, tell me what happened again. And usually if you do this with your kids, they'll say it again, but they're just not quite as incoherent. They're just like, "There's a frog at my door and I can't get inside my my door. I don't want to be there anymore. I-- I hate it here." But they're less screaming. More talking.

Once you slow down a little bit, you're already starting to regulate yourself. So acknowledge and allow.