

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

[Kiarra:] It will be OK, but she's not OK right now.

She actually is really anxious right now and she's really nervous and we want her to know that she's OK.

But she's in middle school. And so her whole life experience is like 12 years, 13 years. And this is huge.

So she has no concept for, "This will be OK," because she doesn't have the life experience to know that yet.

And so if we're going to practice SASS with her-- and this-- you're so spot on of knowing this is a gradual thing that we'll grow into, that we'll practice long-term if we're going to practice SASS with her.

You get that initial anxiety thing where she's like doing whatever she does.

"I don't wanna go to bed," or she's just like fidgeting with stuff, whatever she does. Engage the conversation.

"Hey, you, what's going on?" You slow down. "What's going on? Tell me what's happening for you right now. You are moving everything and you're rearranging your room right now." OK.

Like whatever the thing is that she's doing, I wonder if you can get her to talk about what she feels in that moment, whatever she'll give you. Acknowledge it and let it exist.

So if she's like, "I'm so nervous, I'm so-- I don't want-- I just don't want to be by myself. Like it's so scary to be by myself." That is what's happening right now. So we'll say, "Oh yeah, I get that. I don't always like to be alone. That's really scary." Sometimes that makes sense.

We're just gonna let it exist. We're not gonna try to move her to it's OK immediately. We're gonna let it exist for a little while and just sit with that for for a couple minutes with her. See if-- see how it changes her.

Just start to notice. Does it change her? Does it bring her down some? Does it not? Then we can try some encouragement. "What do you need?" And I love the support section because it gives you some control because that feels a little nice So you don't--don't suggest stuff that you can't do.

Don't suggest, "Can I sleep with you?" Because I'm not doing that. I'm going to get in my own bed, right? "You can figure it out," you know? Yeah. So, so like-- right? With my person.

"You're not that. You're great, but you're not him," you know? Yeah, I totally get that. So. So you might say something like, "OK, how can I help? What-- What do you need tonight?"

Do you want to try-- What are some things you want to try? Do you want to try a night light? Do you want to try this?" Give her some suggestions. See what she gives you. This is where you can try encouragement and just try different stuff.

Because if this happened every night, you got seven nights to try a whole bunch of different stuff, you know? Yeah.

02:36

[Dr. Ali:] I have a couple of things I can add to this. And because my youngest child is also a middle schooler and he's anxious. So I will ask him, "Do you need me to listen or do you need me to help you solve something?" So I'm teaching him how to organize-- you know what I mean? His thoughts. But it's also a big clue to me.

So I'm not overstepping my bounds telling him, "This is what you need to do," you know, type thing. So I get him talking about it. I mean, we were joking earlier because we were like 9:00 at night is when we are the most tired. You know, like you do not want to talk-- like you had 4 1/2 hours, 4 1/2 hours before this moment and now you're coming to me! [laughing] You know, you're so tired. But that-- So it helps me help him organize his thoughts.

The other thing that I think is really important-- and it's how-- so if she is a journaler, she could actually journal her thoughts because then she's making them external. Everything that's like building up inside, she's putting outside.

There's a ton of research that supports how effective journaling is and-- and so getting them on the outside, you know of her and then she can actually go back a couple days later when she has perspective, but less of the punch of the emotion and look at what she wrote and she can talk about that with you and process it.

But the one thing that I want to do with my son is I want him oriented to bed. And so I will ask him, like, "What are three things that made today great?" I want him going to bed positive, OK?