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Betsy Kindall ([00:08](#)):

I'm Betsy Kindall.

Nicole Fairchild ([00:10](#)):

I'm Nicole Fairchild.

Stacy Moore ([00:11](#)):

And I'm Stacy Moore.

Betsy Kindall ([00:12](#)):

And this is Arkansas A.W.A.R.E., a project to advance wellness and resiliency in education.

Nicole Fairchild ([00:22](#)):

Hey, welcome back everybody. Stacy and I are in here together because Betsy's busy and has to go be Betsy. So Stacy and I are going to talk for a minute about anxiety in the classroom with students. Now, here's one of the magic wand tricks that I've used before, and I think you have too. So, you're giving me a skeptical look.

Stacy Moore ([00:46](#)):

You throwing me into something? What is this?

Nicole Fairchild ([00:48](#)):

So, I've used the 5-point scale with anger quite a bit, like what does your anger look like at a one? What are you thinking at a one? What's your body do at a one? What's your anger look like at a two, a three, a four, a five? Well, what can... How can somebody help you at a three to get back down to a two? So we don't go to a four. Those kinds of conversations can be really helpful in helping students plan when anger pops up. But I have also found that to be very helpful when it comes to anxiety with students. Because some of the conversations we've been having are about how, even as adults, anxiety will hit us out of nowhere. We don't have words for it. We didn't even have thoughts about it. All of the sudden our body did this and we can understand that and relate to that as adults, but good gravy. What about kids? Kids who don't know, kids who aren't tracking their thoughts, kids who don't have words, language for it.

Stacy Moore ([01:48](#)):

I'm not putting you down here, but you talked about how you're more in your thinking brain. And so recognizing the bodily parts that go with that anxiety is probably harder for you.

Nicole Fairchild ([01:59](#)):

For sure. And especially when I was younger.

Stacy Moore ([02:01](#)):

And so, being able, I love that... I mean, it is a tool, it is a strategy, but what it's getting at is an awareness. Right? And so if they relate to the thoughts that they're thinking, and they can recognize that, but even in kids like you. Okay, I recognize my thoughts, but my bodily awareness is not there. But

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oh my goodness, I do clench my hands or I'd... my heart rate may increase or I may start pacing or I may start wanting to get out of here.

Nicole Fairchild ([02:29](#)):

Or my curly hair may go straight or my straight hair may go curly because I just got so angry. No, that's the anger, we're talking about anxiety.

Stacy Moore ([02:37](#)):

But either way, you can really talk about both of those as appropriate for the student.

Nicole Fairchild ([02:44](#)):

And it does also make me think about how just in regular social, emotional learning, self-awareness is an important skill. So when we're talking about young people and anxiety and what you can do in classrooms, I think self-awareness is one of the best things you can do.

Stacy Moore ([02:59](#)):

I think so too. I think self-awareness and then going into with the solid foundation of self-awareness and identifying feelings and kind of, even some of that ruler kind of things that we've talked about in the past, but is the self-management, it goes right into that. But we can't do self-management and we can't expect our students to do self-management well without the self-awareness. And I think we jumped to self-management.

Nicole Fairchild ([03:23](#)):

I agree. Could you say a little more on that?

Stacy Moore ([03:26](#)):

So I think it's more of a case where we're in a classroom and a student is demonstrating anxiety or anger or an emotion that is not conducive to learning. And I get that. It's not, but we expect them to manage it.

Nicole Fairchild ([03:38](#)):

Oh yes, because we do such a good job of that ourselves.

Stacy Moore ([03:43](#)):

Don't put me on that list. But, I mean, yes, because we need a solution. We are solution-seeking people. We've got to solve problems all day. We don't have time for this. We got to move on. But without self-awareness there... If they even knew the strategy, they are not going to understand why they're doing it or when to use it or how to use it or how it helps. And it may not even help. So that self-awareness piece not only for identifying our body, our thoughts, our emotions, identity, but what works for us that is all self-awareness. And it really needs to happen first.

Nicole Fairchild ([04:19](#)):

Yes. I have a feisty child.

This transcript was exported on Oct 15, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Stacy Moore ([04:24](#)):

One?

Nicole Fairchild ([04:26](#)):

I know, but this child has no historically self-awareness that the face says it all. And anger can be quick. And even if this child believes they are managing it, other people observing...

Stacy Moore ([04:48](#)):

Can see.

Nicole Fairchild ([04:49](#)):

May not say they're managing it, but they really are in their mind, because they didn't yell and they didn't blow up and they didn't whatever. But anybody else watching that child could say, "it's not enough. They still have a bad attitude or a dirty look on their face."

Stacy Moore ([05:05](#)):

Which is... Self-awareness, to me, means "here's a mirror." I'm not being ridiculous, just like, do you see?

Nicole Fairchild ([05:13](#)):

I think you told me to video it.

Stacy Moore ([05:14](#)):

Video. Videoing. Because I think, I mean, as an adult, honestly, when I was a teacher, as a parent, if you were to video me, I probably would be horrified as a parent to know what my body language or my face or my tone of voice. And I don't understand it at the time.

Nicole Fairchild ([05:30](#)):

That's right. Because at the time you think you're doing a very good job.

Stacy Moore ([05:34](#)):

Holding it together.

Nicole Fairchild ([05:35](#)):

Yes you are. And you're being as self-aware as you possibly can. And other people are looking at it going, "Mm. Mm-Hmm. More work needs to be done."

Stacy Moore ([05:42](#)):

But it also reminds me of one of my kiddos too, where I think anxiety has come out looking different because they weren't self-aware of it. And they still maybe aren't still self aware of what's really at the core. And so it comes across as, "I don't want to go to school" or "I don't like school." And so that's... There's usually a reason there and they're not able to identify a reason. And to me, that goes back to, okay, is there some anxiety going on here? And so what that might look like in school is, I've seen

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students who will erase... They will write an answer and erase it and erase it and erase it to the point where it will go through the paper. I've seen students, especially after COVID where coming to school now... They're not ready to come back.

Stacy Moore ([06:34](#)):

They don't want to come back. It's anxiety provoking to even come back into public situations for a wide range of reasons. It could be they're not wanting to get out of the car. Like I said, not wanting to come to school. Anxiety can look like irritability. Anxiety and depression can look similar too in kids and it can be somatic complaints. It can be "my stomach."

Nicole Fairchild ([06:58](#)):

Lots of trips to the nurse.

Stacy Moore ([07:00](#)):

"I don't feel good." And so a lot of different reasons in knowing what they avoid can sometimes help clue us in, are they avoiding recess all the time? What's going on out there?

Nicole Fairchild ([07:10](#)):

Or reading out loud or whatever.

Stacy Moore ([07:13](#)):

So there's a lot of reasons, but it's gonna... Especially with our kids, when we went over that criteria, it says kids really just have to show one of these symptoms because they may not be sleeping well. And that may be the indicator for us, if there's something anxiety provoking going on.

Nicole Fairchild ([07:30](#)):

Or they may be irritable. And we'd like to blame that on a bad attitude or lots of other things, but there's something churning underneath of it. And are we taking any time to find out what that is?

Stacy Moore ([07:42](#)):

Right. And sometimes that's hard because you think of teens and irritability and you think, "oh, maybe they're just being complicated." But as a teen, there is all kinds of situations that could be producing some anxiety. And maybe not diagnosable general anxiety disorder.

Nicole Fairchild ([08:00](#)):

But just even your day-to-day anxiety that can still disrupt learning in the moment.

Stacy Moore ([08:04](#)):

So I just think, Nicole, it makes me think of how are we making safe classrooms? How are we making safe classrooms where it's safe to make a wrong... To get an answer wrong, where it's safe to say that you need something. It's a place where we can control the environment enough to get rid of a lot of those potentially anxiety provoking situations to begin with. To prevent them.

This transcript was exported on Oct 15, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Nicole Fairchild ([08:31](#)):

And I do think that has a lot to do with classroom management, because if your classroom management strategy is shame-based, shame and power? If that's your classroom management strategy, is shame and power, it's not a safe classroom. It may be effective in terms of controlling behavior, but it's not going...

Stacy Moore ([08:50](#)):

And we can't pad the walls and do everything. There's going to still... There's human interactions, there's social interactions. There's things in schools, there's phones, there's social media. There's all kinds of things that could also be tapping into that anxiety. But I think that security and that safe base is important. Then the next thing is, okay, if a student does have anxiety in your classroom, what's safe for them to do? What's okay for them to do?

Nicole Fairchild ([09:14](#)):

To calm their body or to calm their thoughts.

Stacy Moore ([09:16](#)):

So what have we taught them? What have we practiced? Where can they go? What can they do? Knowing now that what we've talked about, where it could come from thinking, it could come... That they've needed... Something needs to happen with their body as far as exercise or movement.

Nicole Fairchild ([09:31](#)):

And that's real. What we're telling you as grownups to do it. Well, kids also need it. And we're not saying that that's always going to work in every moment in the classroom, but are we having any grace for that? Are we making any space for that? Are we having unrealistic expectations for students that we wouldn't have for ourselves? Because this stuff is really hard.

Stacy Moore ([09:52](#)):

And we know that our behavior, just... It influences somebody else's behavior, which then influences our behavior and it's just this big cycle. So if there's anxiety and we respond to it harshly, or we call students out in front of the classroom and then we can get where...

Nicole Fairchild ([10:11](#)):

Guess what this one did? This one right here.

Stacy Moore ([10:12](#)):

Telling on them.

Nicole Fairchild ([10:13](#)):

Oh my gosh.

Stacy Moore ([10:14](#)):

I know. And then what does it end up as? A behavior issue.

This transcript was exported on Oct 15, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

Nicole Fairchild ([10:20](#)):

And why would we be surprised by that? Or, how easily that could be anxiety provoking. We were talking about this the other day, and I told you that I've always been a rule follower. I never wanted to get in trouble in school. And I guess I never really thought about this, but I think I always was kind of like, "shh the teacher's talking, you're not supposed to be talking." I was always that person.

Stacy Moore ([10:44](#)):

You were that one?

Nicole Fairchild ([10:45](#)):

I was, but in second grade... And I remember it was still the beginning of the school year. Somebody was trying to talk to me, I guess. I don't know. I'm sure I didn't start it. My second grade teacher may have a different memory of it, but I, I doubt that I started the conversation. Somehow, my name got put up on the board and it was parent teacher conferences that day. And they left my name on the board. I was horrified.

Stacy Moore ([11:11](#)):

So everybody that came in.

Nicole Fairchild ([11:13](#)):

I was, Stacy...

Stacy Moore ([11:14](#)):

All the parents.

Nicole Fairchild ([11:15](#)):

I was horrified because it wasn't a reflection of a normal day for me. It wasn't the kind of student I was. I felt called out and shamed. And to this day, if you sit next to me in a PD and you're trying to talk to me, I'm like, "shut up. You're not supposed to be talking right now. I'm going to ignore you."

Stacy Moore ([11:32](#)):

And does anybody honestly deserve that kind of critique from outside? So even if it was little Johnny, I always pick on Johnny, but little Johnny who always... Is it fair for his name to be left up forever?  
[inaudible 00:11:47]

Nicole Fairchild ([11:46](#)):

I think safe classrooms, they... You have a balance of firm and kind. We've said that a lot. You can have warmth, and kindness, and safety and still have firm and clear expectations.

Stacy Moore ([11:58](#)):

You've got to, or it honestly isn't safe.

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Nicole Fairchild ([12:00](#)):

That's exactly right. So it doesn't mean chaos. Really power and shame is control. Power and shame, those are not the best classroom management strategies. You may have no outbursts, and you may think that you're doing a great job, but if you ask the students if they feel safe or cared for...

Stacy Moore ([12:17](#)):

Do they like school? Do they want to come to school?

Nicole Fairchild ([12:20](#)):

You're not going to hear it. So I think that firm and kind really is our best strategy overall, especially for these anxious kiddos.

Stacy Moore ([12:28](#)):

And empathy for that. Right?

Nicole Fairchild ([12:30](#)):

Yeah. I think about kids that are selectively mute. Which can be probably annoying in a classroom. And yet, there's something going on.

Stacy Moore ([12:39](#)):

There's something. And selective doesn't mean "I am selecting not to talk." It means that in select environments they don't feel safe.

Nicole Fairchild ([12:48](#)):

It's anxiety provoking.

Stacy Moore ([12:49](#)):

It's anxiety provoking. And so I know sometimes that gets misconstrued.

Nicole Fairchild ([12:55](#)):

Here we are again saying "firm and kind." Here we are again saying "have reasonable expectations, have some empathy." Realize these are little people just trying to figure it out. And that self-awareness piece can be really powerful.

Stacy Moore ([13:12](#)):

And that's one of those things where creating trauma-invested classrooms can help for those who have experienced trauma. But it's helpful for all kids. It's just good practices.

Nicole Fairchild ([13:24](#)):

So if you want to know a little bit more about social, emotional learning, or self-awareness in particular, you can check out The Guide for Life. That's kind of the Arkansas version of what we see in the five basics of skills and social, emotional learning. You can also check out CASEL, C-A-S-E-L, the Collaborative for...

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Stacy Moore ([13:44](#)):

Academic and Social Emotional Learning.

Nicole Fairchild ([13:46](#)):

So check out those resources. But remember that anxiety is probably present in your classroom. Whether you've realized it or not, it probably is there. And it would be interesting to go into your classroom the next time you walk through the door and see if you can identify and pay attention, look around. We'd love to hear from you. If you have questions, we'd love to take your questions. So get ahold of us, find us on social media, send us a message. And we'd love to incorporate some of your questions or some of the thoughts you have in the podcast. So we'll see you all next week.