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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 Aware, a project to advance wellness and resiliency in education. Welcome back, everybody. We've been talking about anxiety in the classroom, and we're just going to continue the conversation today about strategies, things that may help with young people, and what we've found over time. Last week, we talked about several different things and I was thinking about one of the things you mentioned, Stacy, about defining terms. I think sometimes we overlook how important it can be for younger children to learn vocabulary words related to emotion.

Stacy Moore ([00:51](#)):

Yes, and how limited our vocabulary is.

Nicole Fairchild ([00:56](#)):

Tell us more, tell us more.

Betsy Kindall ([00:57](#)):

We have mad, sad, happy, scared. You know, sometimes in therapy I would do this activity with kids where I would say "draw a great big heart on the page" and they would draw a heart and then I would give them five colors and I would say, "pick a color for happy" and then depending on if they could do it, they would scribble that color, maybe yellow, and then they would write happy by it.

Betsy Kindall ([01:20](#)):

Or I would help write happy by it, depending on how old they were. They'd pick a color for happy. They'd pick a color for sad, mad, scared, and then I'd let them pick another feeling word, whatever one they came up with. It was always interesting to see how granular their ability to identify an emotion was. Then I would tell them to color their heart, show me how much of that emotion is inside of your heart. They would color a whole bunch of happy, or color a whole bunch of sad, or mad, or whatever. Then I would be able to have a conversation with them like "tell me all the happy parts. What's here? You had a really big, happy spot. What's all in there?" and "oh, this little sad spot's over here by itself. I wonder what's going on over there" and just kind of give them the opportunity to talk about what's in their heart.

Betsy Kindall ([02:10](#)):

Then what was great was, maybe a couple weeks later, if I talked to them again, I'd have them draw their heart again and maybe pull out the old one and say, "Wow, things have changed inside your heart."

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There's something great about doing that because it helps them to understand emotions that they are not necessarily fixed, that they ebb and flow, but also they're developing their ability to identify. This is what it's like when I'm happy. This is what my body feels like when I'm happy. This is what it's like when I'm sad. These are the things I do feel sad about. These are the things I feel both ways about. Sometimes kids will blend the colors together.

Betsy Kindall ([02:47](#)):

It's really helping them to start to have this emotional vocabulary that they can do something with. You can really... You as educators out there, know what vocabulary words are appropriate for what age kids. You could get into apprehension at some point, that'd be a tough spelling word there, but you could do.

Nicole Fairchild ([03:09](#)):

Talk about teaching SEL in the classroom. This is how you do it.

Betsy Kindall ([03:12](#)):

That's embedded, right. That's embedded. But when you think about anxious kids, it's helpful for them to start to know difference. Am I scared or am I worried? That's a difference for young people and can they identify it? The better able they are to identify it, the better able we are to intervene.

Stacy Moore ([03:32](#)):

It makes me think a couple things, one thing is I feel that maybe they're limited in their vocabulary because that's what we model. Yeah. Oh, that's totally [crosstalk 00:03:42] agree out of our mouth. I mean, how often do I use apprehension

Nicole Fairchild ([03:48](#)):

With my own kids? Never.

Stacy Moore ([03:51](#)):

But you know, I mean, like I do think - [crosstalk 00:03:53]

Nicole Fairchild ([03:52](#)):

I'm really apprehensive right now.

Stacy Moore ([03:54](#)):

Yes. I've watched Daniel Tiger and they'll talk about... Maybe they'll get anxiety, or anxious, or something else in there besides scared. But I do think it's what we've modeled for them and what they see. The exposure and teaching of it is a critical piece. I also wonder Nicole, when you've had students do that, especially little ones... When I've been in the classroom... If I ask questions as far as how they feel, it's almost like some of them are programmed to please me and say, "oh, I'm happy, so I'm going to color that heart happy all over." Have you had an experience like that where you really kind of had to dig a little bit?

Nicole Fairchild ([04:33](#)):

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Oh, for sure. For sure. Yeah. Especially if there's, if there's none of a certain emotion and usually it would be sad or, or, or angry or scared. Then it's like, wow, there's none of that in there. Here again, especially with little kids, I don't often ask direct questions. I make observations and let them take the reins. So "that's a lot of yellow. There's no places on here that are sad ever."

Stacy Moore ([04:58](#)):

I see.

Nicole Fairchild ([04:59](#)):

Then I wait and see what they have to say because if I'm asking direct questions, they may defend, they may sort of armor up a little bit.

Betsy Kindall ([05:08](#)):

With the little bitty kids you can lead by accident.

Nicole Fairchild ([05:11](#)):

Well, sure. I'm just leaving it open. [crosstalk 00:05:13] I'm just leaving it open. "Oh, there's no sad at all. I wonder if there was any sad yesterday" because you might wonder aloud

Stacy Moore ([05:21](#)):

Society... It's kind of like us when we say hello, how are you? And we're all like, okay. I mean it's that whole permission to have those feelings to begin with.

Nicole Fairchild ([05:29](#)):

I had somebody the other day say to me, "I'm not going to lie to you." And then that's all they said.

Betsy Kindall ([05:35](#)):

Today is really bad. Oh, that's all they said? I can appreciate that.

Stacy Moore ([05:40](#)):

I can appreciate that. I think that trickles down to our kids where... When I'm in the classroom, it's... They want to... They have the right answers. What do you do to help people? Be kind. Well, tell me more about... Be kind. That's as far as... [crosstalk 00:05:59] That's what they've been taught. You be kind well, what does that mean?

Nicole Fairchild ([06:02](#)):

How do you do that?

Betsy Kindall ([06:03](#)):

How do you do that? You be kind? I be nice to somebody... Really trying to pull that out, instead of giving them permission to have some of those feelings that aren't seen as liked by society, okay.

Nicole Fairchild ([06:20](#)):

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If I wanted to poke a little, I might say, "oh, I wonder if you've ever had somebody take the toy you were wanting."

Stacy Moore ([06:27](#)):

Give an example.

Nicole Fairchild ([06:28](#)):

Then that way they are able to maybe identify what anger felt like.

Stacy Moore ([06:33](#)):

Which makes it more concrete instead of something just floating in the air.

Betsy Kindall ([06:37](#)):

You are right. We're not real good at modeling the different emotions that we feel as adults. We're not really good at that. Articulating, is what I'm trying to say. We're not good at articulating the different emotions that we might feel. This is an activity adults could probably do too.

Stacy Moore ([06:55](#)):

In the permission to feel book if you have a copy of it or if you even just look it up, you'll see that there is a grid with red feelings, which are low pleasantness, high energy, yellow, green, and blue. So it all has to do with the scale of pleasantness and energy, but then there are granular boxes. Even if you took the time to say with your older students, your middle school students, you go through each of those boxes and say, "what does that word really mean? Ask your smart neighbor. What's that word mean?" No, don't do that. I did that in church the other day, "ask your smart neighbor," but that, or even say examples of what that emotion could feel like so that they have... I forget how many boxes are on there, but there's plenty and you could really identify the difference between irritated and furious.

Stacy Moore ([07:48](#)):

I think that's powerful. I often contrast that with zones of regulation, which has the same colors, but uses it differently. So it can be sometimes confusing. I often in my own practice, I use this zones of regulation for the younger kids, because it's not two dimensional. Then for middle school, I would definitely move on to permission to feel, but with zones of regulation it's... It's blue is low energy, low intensity. I worry sometimes will they understand what intensity is? It's when you're sick, you're tired, you're bored, you're shy, those low energy kind of things. Then it moves into green. That's good to go, I'm feeling okay. That's like the learning zone where we're good to go. Yellow is... This is what's a little tricky, is yellow is a little higher intensity than green.

Stacy Moore ([08:32](#)):

So it could be nervousness. It could be excitement. It could be that you're a little excited. It could be a little anger or irritation and it could be what we see as good, the happy, and the intense, or it could also be some of those that we see as bad. It kind of takes that out of the scenario and just looks at the energy of it because it makes it harder to learn when you are super excited, something's coming up... Then red is kind of warning, red is that... Not warning as far as behavior, but just warning as far as do we need to

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do something to readjust because that's with intense emotions. Intense anger, intense anxiety, intense excitement, like you're running around the room excited.

Stacy Moore ([09:12](#)):

Those... But when I've used that with kids, honestly, it's amazed me how they really have been able to tease apart the complexity of it, that if I give them a scenario and I say, "okay, what zone would you be in?" They, they pull from blue and yellow and they understand that there's some of both in there.

Betsy Kindall ([09:30](#)):

I love that.

Stacy Moore ([09:31](#)):

It's so cool because I'm often amazed that they're able to do that. That's pretty cool.

Nicole Fairchild ([09:37](#)):

I think that could be really useful for young people, littles, that are dealing with anxiety because anxiety at a yellow, we could teach them to tolerate.

Stacy Moore ([09:51](#)):

Yes, that's a good... We can get them to that point and then to see that it's not sadness, it's not blue, it's not low energy. There's even that physical sensation and that that's okay. We want to keep you in yellow... If red would be the one we're trying to bring the tools back to yellow.

Nicole Fairchild ([10:06](#)):

That's right. What we... I think fail to do as a society is teach people to tolerate anxiety.

Betsy Kindall ([10:13](#)):

Uncomfortableness.

Nicole Fairchild ([10:14](#)):

Tolerate uncomfortableness. We want to rescue and eliminate and give kids a pill and fix it, or make it all better, or where's my Xanax. The real work is learning to tolerate discomfort and tolerate... If they can learn that when they're small that they can be in a yellow zone, that feels uncomfortable. They're not in danger and it's not going to kill them.

Betsy Kindall ([10:36](#)):

Well, and even better would be to utilize that energy in a different way. If they could for lack of a better word, repackage it and utilize it in different ways, that would be beneficial. You can't get much better than that.

Stacy Moore ([10:54](#)):

That's where the zones go is then you would have a toolbox. Then for yellow, you have tools that you have tried out. Sensory tools, calming tools, and honestly, for blue, you need exciting tools that excite

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you perk up a little bit, but to exactly do that, to say, "okay, where can... How can I channel this energy so I can get back to green or I can tolerate yellow. It's at a level where I can still cope and go on."

Nicole Fairchild ([11:21](#)):

I love that.

Betsy Kindall ([11:23](#)):

Pretty cool.

Nicole Fairchild ([11:24](#)):

Have we covered the gamut there? Have we covered all ages in terms of possible strategies? Have we given out enough strategies, my educator friends?

Betsy Kindall ([11:34](#)):

Well, I think everything we've talked about, we've for all of our listeners at there, we've used examples of our little kids, but the truth is, is everything we've said we probably could utilize as adults too. We're making the assumption that adults do this and do it well, and that's not really true. So I definitely think that back to your point in order to model what we want for these kids, we have to first take care of our self... We've talked about a ton on this podcast. Do you know your emotions? Can you articulate them? Do you understand them? Really, you need to be able to do that first if you're going to expect that from children. Yeah. That's kind of where I'm at with it. Yeah.

Nicole Fairchild ([12:17](#)):

And I will say, I think it was about this time last year that we first read Permission to Feel and did several podcast episodes on it. If you want to hear a little bit more about that in particular? Check back, we've got... I don't know, Donny, what do we got 19 hours a podcast out there now? I mean it's quite a bit, so you could roll back through the previous seasons, but season two, we talked quite a bit about Permission to Feel and how to sort of embed these kinds of things in your classroom so that when we've got something like an anxious student, we've got strategies in place, and culture in place to be able to help those young people deal.

Stacy Moore ([12:53](#)):

Can also one more thing?

Nicole Fairchild ([12:54](#)):

Absolutely.

Stacy Moore ([12:55](#)):

I agree with Betsy that we need to be aware. We need to be able to, before we go in and try to model for these kids or students, what I love about using in the classroom is it's a cue and a prompt for you too. Yeah. So when you are saying, what zone are you in? You're identifying your zone. When you're saying, "where are you at on the Permission to Feel grid, you're identifying where you're at too. Then you can make adjustments and you can model and say, "this is where I'm at and so this is what I'm going to do." I

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think it's a great self care in a way when we do it for our kids, we're reaping the benefits too, because we're not only modeling it, which is good for them, but we're practicing it ourselves.

Nicole Fairchild ([13:35](#)):

I totally agree. The hot topic right now is with Guide for Life and SEL information and curriculum, we're all about implementing it in the classroom. This is how you implement it in the classroom. [crosstalk 00:13:46] This is a fine example of how you can do it just a few minutes in the day, as well as embed it in your lessons that you're already doing.

Nicole Fairchild ([13:55](#)):

We're getting close to the end of the semester. Maybe we're done. I don't remember where we're at with episodes here, but try it in your classroom. If you need a deep breath, make everybody do a deep breath. That is the truth.

Betsy Kindall ([14:04](#)):

It's a good cue.

Nicole Fairchild ([14:07](#)):

Thanks for joining us and we'll see you next time.