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Toni Boos, PsyD, LCP, Compass Health ([00:14](#)):

Always using supportive statements with kids. **We want to validate their emotions and hold the expectations.** So saying, "I can see you're really anxious and it's an expectation that we're going to school today." **By holding that expectation, it sends the message to our kids that we believe that they can tolerate the distress or the stressors of school.** By giving in and letting them stay home, it's saying,

"You're right. School's too hard and you can't handle it, so I'm going to let you take the day off."

And we don't want to send that message to our kids. We want them to believe in themselves. And so they really need to see us holding firm with that expectation. Another thing is **giving space can be effective too, especially if your child is dysregulated** to the point of yelling, getting physically aggressive. **We don't want to have too much back and forth conversation in those moments because we know our kids aren't thinking logically and rationally at that point.** So, it's better to just say,

"We've got 20 minutes until we need to leave. Remember the expectation is you go to school. That's how you earn your privileges today. So I'm going to let you make your choice and I'm going to go to downstairs and get breakfast ready. I'll see you in 20 minutes and just walking away and giving space."

I think **another important reminder is anxiety can be contagious.** And oftentimes our kids, when they are refusing school are pretty anxious. And so it's important to check in with our own levels of anxiety in the morning too. And **as calm and cool and collected as we present as parents in front of our kids who are anxious, the better the outcomes will be.** So even if we have to fake it till we make it and present as calm, even though inside we're not calm, that will help significantly because it will help our kids co-regulate in those moments and remain calmer themselves too.