



THE GROWING BRAIN

Episode 10: How to Talk to Kids about the News

Guest: Dr. Garica Sanford

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In today's 24-hour news cycle, it can be difficult to know when - and how - to talk to kids about what is happening. How much is too much? How do we talk about difficult things in an age-appropriate way? How do we respond to their questions? In this episode, we'll look at answers to these questions and more.

Welcome to The Growing Brain, a social emotional health podcast. This podcast is produced by Momentous Institute, a nonprofit in Dallas, Texas, dedicated to social emotional health for kids, families, adults, and communities. This first season of The Growing Brain is dedicated to parents. We will explore the joys, challenges and mysteries of parenthood through the lens of social emotional health. In this series, we'll shed light on topics such as how kids' brains work and healthy discipline, all better equipping parents to grow healthy brains. I'm your host, Maureen Fernandez with Momentous Institute.

Maureen *Welcome back to The Growing Brain podcast. Our guest today is Dr. Garica Sanford. Garica is a psychologist on our therapeutic services team at Momentous. And she also holds the role of training director; she manages our clinical training programs. Garica is also a parent to two boys, ages three and 10. Welcome to the show, Garica.*

Garica And thanks for having me.

Maureen *I'm excited to talk with you today because today we're going to talk about how to talk to our kids about what we hear in the news. And I'm sure this topic has always been relevant -- there's always been news and there's always been parents talking to their kids -- but it feels so urgent now, there's so much news, I feel like we live in this 24-hour news cycle with constant breaking news and so for me as a parent, I feel really this sense of, I have to figure out when do I talk to my kids and what do I talk to them about, how much is too much, what can they handle, how do I do it... so I'm really excited to dive into that with you today.*

Garica Yeah. It's such a great topic and question, and it's a great to talk about it. And it's sad that we have to, but that's our reality. We're here in Texas and we know we've had recently major events, at least two in our state, um, so it's one of those questions we might not like to think about, but it's so important that we're thinking about how do we start to approach the topic with kids.

Maureen *Yeah. And better to think about it before, instead of in the moment when we have all of our feelings about whatever's in the news too.*

Garica Yeah, definitely important. I think one thing that is so important with this topic is that parents need to be aware of what's happening for them, um, and so we'll definitely, maybe think about that a little bit more as far as creating space for what's happening with us emotionally, even before we think about like, how are we talking about it with our kids. Because that's so important too.

Maureen *Yeah. So let's dive in. What are some things that you think we should be thinking about, or some of the factors that we should be weighing when we're trying to decide what to share with our kids?*

Garica This is such a good question and it's kind of complex because there are definitely things we should be thinking about before we approach the topic with kids. So some of them are things we might think of as more external factors. So one is thinking about what has happened, um, what's the likelihood that our kids will know if something happened because that definitely can help guide when we need to have a conversation and prepare us for how much detail we need to go into it as well. Um, and then the likelihood that our kids will learn about at somewhere. And so for some kids, if they're younger, if you've got like a preschooler who goes to daycare, the likelihood of maybe them learning about an event is a lot less likely than if you have someone who's in middle school. And so, um, the awareness that they will have about an event definitely can guide how quickly we need to approach the topic. And so that's something to think about too. Um, and then there are internal factors that we need to think about, or maybe more individual factors, um, such as the temperament of a kid, um, kids have different personalities and temperaments, as far as what it's going to look like for them to be able to tolerate learning information, um, such as the things that are happening across the world. Um, but if you have a highly anxious kid, then we might want to think about the level of detail that we're going to talk about an event with that kid. Versus an older kid who really is really aware of what's happening in the world and wants to make a difference, we might be giving more information. So I think if you think about those, what's some of the external reasons and I might need to go towards these things, such as when they might learn about it, and then the internal and individual stuff, as far as how might it impact them, um, can help guide how much detail we go into and what exactly we share.

Maureen *Right. Yeah. That makes sense. So, um, thinking about each child's temperament. I, I think we all kind of have a sense, a general sense, my child is more anxious or less anxious, but do you have any guiding thoughts around, how do you kind of feel that out? Like how do you kind of know whether they're ready for it or not?*

Garica That's a great question. And so some things is maybe even before we make about temperament, thinking about age. So I have a 3 and a 10 year old. My

three-year-old's awareness of what's happening in the world is very minimum, if, anything at all. Life is about dinosaurs and Toy Story right now. But my ten-year-old is definitely one that's thinking about things a lot more, his exposure to the news, what they're studying in school is bringing events, um, sometimes that I'm not even aware of, that he has awareness of. So first is age is really important. And again, that likelihood that they're going to hear about an event is a consideration. But to your point of temperament, it really is paying attention to just noticing - how does your child just recover to things in general? Um, so do you have a kid who is really curious, always asking questions? Do you have a kid who's easily upset by things? So even the smallest shift in their schedule completely throws them off for days or hours. That might be a kid that, um, what you share could really impact them as far as how they're able to process and hold that. So sometimes it's just paying attention to how your child is responding just to day-to-day changes, would be one to definitely look at, um, just how are they able to regulate their emotions? Can they do that really easily with the support of an adult or trusted caregiver, or even with that present is it's still really hard for them? So sometimes those things can be really helpful to kind of guide, um, what you might need to do before you approach topics like this.

Maureen *Let's get a more specific. So I'm curious what the conversation sounds like with kids. So let's think through maybe an example of something that's that happened in our community, but that's not, you know, personally affecting me. Um, how would that conversation look maybe with a younger kid and maybe with an older kid?*

Garica Yeah. So, I don't know if this kind of touches on it, but it makes me think about like, we used to be a lot better. We used to be in the habit of turning the news on, in our house in the morning. And so sometimes our ten-year-old would just overhear events that maybe we were not necessarily planning to talk about, but there, um, more locally. Um, so I think that's one is once I become aware that he's heard something, I can't just turn the TV off. I need to create some space to follow back up. And so that might be a decision point. Like, is he going to school? How much time do we have? But if, once he's heard it, I definitely want to be able to go back. Um, and so I might just check in and say, hey, you were listening, did you hear that, what just happened? I think one thing is really, um, being willing for caregivers to put themselves and share what they're experiencing. So I might be, I'd say that was really hard to hear that that happened, um, or that might make me sad. So one, I'm just giving permission to emotions connected to the event are definitely present, um, and seeing what the experience might be for them emotionally. And then definitely checking in to say, um, do you have questions about that? Um, so really creating the space to share, or I think as parents, we want to ask a lot of questions, and sometimes we're less comfortable with sharing information, but that sharing is the modeling about giving voice to what kids are feeling and the space for that. Um, so I think those are the two things I would hold, definitely with kids who are more verbal and who are older. Um, and then I think for the ones that are younger, it might be something that's more simply

saying, Oh, I'm so sad that happened to that person. Um, and really again, labeling, um, is something that is coming to mind when I'm thinking it about that.

Maureen *Yeah. That makes sense.*

Garica So I think earlier when we were talking about, you know, how do we approach, um, and talk to kids about maybe negative or bad things in the news? One thing that's so important to think about is the difference in what we might define as negative or bad can vary for kids. So I think most of us are thinking about the large events and the larger negative events that are happening across our world, like active shootings and police violence, um, and the natural disasters that like just happened in The Bahamas. But for some kids, it can be something that can feel pretty benign to us, like hearing about someone who is homeless, that doesn't have shelter and for kids that can be something that they could get stuck to and not have an understanding of how that can happen and why that could happen, could that happen to me? So it's really listening and paying attention to 1) what are kids are exposed to, and then what's the questions that they're asking, um, to be able to know, is it something we need to go toward versus only thinking when it's these huge big events that means I need to go towards it.

Maureen *Yeah, that's such a good point because I think about sometimes, like you were saying, where might they hear the news? And sometimes they hear things that you don't even know they're thinking about at all.*

Garica Yeah. So it can be really good to even just, what are some routines you have around just conversations with your kids in general? Like what's the ways... a lot of times, as parents we'll want to say, how was your day at school or what do you do at school? But what's the way that we expand that a bit to ask kids, you know, is there anything you've been thinking about, you know, what, what are kids talking about at your school? Um, anything that you don't understand? So just creating more space where they can ask questions that are a little broader. So that if you have to go towards something more difficult, they're used to those types of questions, how do you feel about that, versus when it's the first time, that can be really difficult to label in addition to finding out something traumatic as well.

Maureen *That makes total sense. And I'm thinking like my kids are young and they go to school, and my first grader, I just, just last year when he was in kindergarten, I just thought, well, he's just with kindergarteners all day. And then I forgot, you know, in the afterschool program he's with these big kids. And so sometimes he's coming home with things that, you know, fifth graders told him. And fifth graders are exposed to way different things. And so he would know about things that I thought were a little advanced for him because I just hadn't thought about that exposure, which is exactly what you're talking about.*

Garica Yeah. That's a such a great point when you get those siblings, with such a huge age difference. And then sometimes for younger kids, they might not be able to comprehend what's happening as far as the facts, but they'll see the impact on the family. Or as we're talking about that, they'll notice that either our affective is different or we're sad, or maybe we're angry about what we're watching. And so just being able to still label those emotions and being aware, that even before they have the words, we know that receptive language develops a lot quicker than their verbal. So they're hearing and they're understanding more. And so again, if the, if I have my three-year-old, he's been in the room with us and we've been tearful, I've got to go back and loop back with him. I can't just assume, oh, he doesn't know. So really making sure that we're paying attention and thinking of developmental considerations, too.

Maureen *That's good. So I want to talk a little bit more about when the news stories hit close to home. So when it's, you know, something that is, you know, part of your community, or maybe it's part of your identity, it's related to your race or gender or your church or your worldview, just something that hits really close to home in that you have an emotional reaction to. Um, how do you kind of approach those conversations with kids?*

Garica Yeah, I think that's something that's so important that the closer a tragedy is to our family, to our communities, the more likelihood we need to be having conversations and maybe even more than one conversation around it. Um, so I think that's first, you know, some, the likelihood of even my 10 year old maybe knowing about something across the sea, across the world is a lot different, but definitely the things that's been going on here in Texas, like I, there's no way not to talk about that.

Maureen *Right.*

Garica The likelihood of me needing to do that increases. Um, and then I think the reality is for a lot of kids, the closer it hits, the more likely fear start to develop. This worry about, could this happen to me? Could this happen to our family? So I think the closer it is, the more awareness parents need to have that it becomes, it can become more generalized and really throw off a kid's sense of safety. Those why questions get really big. And so that's the important for parents to even think about that before they go in to begin. Because if a kid asking, hey, will that happen to me? We can usually fall into two traps. One telling a kid, nope, It will never happen to you. And as much as we want to think that that's the truth in our reality, more and more, we're realizing that it's not. And then the other part is saying, I don't know. So then you've got your kid who is like, oh, crap. I don't know if I can say that. But kind of like, you know in one, I'm so safe and protected. And then the other one is that, you know, no, it will never happen. And so what's the ways that we really emphasize the ways that we're trying to increase safety for our kids. So talking about all the things we do to try to make sure that they're safe, um, is definitely something we want to do. So reassuring them around how we can be safe.

Maureen *Okay. So let's, so let's go into that one because I want to hit this one home because I do think it's probably the big question that kids are asking. Will that happen to me? So you're talking about increase, um, how we work hard to increase our safety... build that out a little. What does that look and sound like?*

Garica So I think it's one of that we really want to be realistic. That for one, we're being honest with our kids. So, no, I don't want to tell my kids, you know, if you go to school, yes, this could happen. I don't know that I'm being that explicit by any means. But I think what I'm definitely talking about is all the ways that we, we think about the natural ways that we try to build safety. So I wear my seatbelt so that if I'm in an accident, the likelihood that I can walk away from that is greater than not, um, the same thing that schools do fire drills, so they make sure that if a fire happens, I know what to do. Um, and so trying to expand those into more general ways, or we already are practicing safety about the world is what I think about in those circumstances. Um, and, and for, for some parents, it could be for the anxious kid, what this looks like can be really different because that, um, if we're not answering the questions directly, that can increase more anxiety for kids. So as parents, we think if we kind of dance around it, we're decreasing anxiety, but kids will answer it on their own. And so really kind of figuring out what will be the way that you're responding to these questions. And again, some of that's going to depend on temperament as well.

Maureen *And so is there ever a time where you think where you would advise, just say, yeah, no, it will never happen to you?*

Garica It's a great question. Um, I mean, I I'm sure that there are, I mean, one thing that comes to mind would be definitely be developmental considerations. Like I think for, you know, when my kid gets like four and five, how I explain safety might be different, you know? And so I think some of that's going to be a value thing cause I feel like honesty or not. So I think the biggest consideration I would say is more developmentally. You might kind of consider when they're ready to hold this space of, but I'm also making sure that I am, as I'm talking about things that could happen, that we're also talking about how we plan for safety in younger kids. That concept is a lot more difficult to understand versus for my 10 year old, I'm not telling him that it's not going to happen.

Maureen *So we've had lots of news stories that, you know, hit different groups in different ways. Um, so as an example, news stories that have to do with race, and of course I'm white and my kids are white and you're black and you're, so your kids are black and they have a different experience in the world than my kids. And so just thinking about how we each talk to our kids differently and the same about things that affect our kids in different ways.*

Garica That's such an important question too, to layer into this of first, even the awareness of thinking about the fact that we have different experiences in the world based on our cultural identity. So whether that's our gender, adults and kids have different experiences, men and women. So first just recognizing and

creating space for the fact to be, or the perspective to be that there can be differences in how we might perceive news and the impact of that is important. Um, and then, yeah, there's definitely times where we think about what's the purpose of why we're sharing. And so the purpose could be, if I'm thinking about things that are particularly more prevalent in the African-American community, then what I'm thinking about for my child, I have two males, is the impact of how the world might see them, that when they leave my door, they're not just my two sweet kids, that there's people who perceive them in different ways. Um, and so I need them to have that awareness, that, that awareness that there could be times where them and their friends can be treated differently. So I'm sharing to increase awareness, where it could be you're also hopefully sharing that to increase empathy, so that if you're the friend, you have awareness that if our kids are hanging out together, they might have different experiences depending on the neighborhood or where they're going in the world and how helpful that can become um, to offer empathy, to offer understanding, um, as well. And so it becomes about not *if* it should be shared because the impact might be different for us, but what's the purpose that we're hoping to share it for, um, is what that makes me think of.

Maureen *Yeah that makes sense, because you know, we both should be talking about these things, you know, when it's developmentally appropriate, when our kids have the maturity to understand it, but your, the way you talk about it, has extra layers of complexity than the way I need to talk about it. But the conversations should both lead to that... creating a space where both kids feel safe in the world.*

Garica Yeah. Definitely.

Maureen *So just speaking about news in general, of course, you know, as a parent, I'm torn between this idea of keeping my kids these innocent, perfect little babies forever which of course is one on one side of my pulling on my heart. And the other side is this idea that I want my kids to be socially conscious and responsible adults in the world and understand the complexity of the world. And it's just such a fine line. I think, you know, you don't want to tell a five-year-old about, you know, violence and hatred and evil things in the world, but you also don't want to wait until they're 15 before they learn about anything at all, you know? Um, so how do you, what advice do you have around kind of walking that line about the social conscious piece versus innocence?*

Garica Yeah. I think that's one that we will always struggle with as parents. And I think it makes sense that we'd want to hold on to innocence as much as possible. And the reality of it is, is the more technology we have in the world, the more difficult that becomes, because even if my kid on a tablet, popups come up, you know, there's just, things or news things. Um, and so I've, I think it becomes harder to do that. Um, and so I think it's one again that we want to think developmentally, like for my three-year-old, I am holding onto that, you know, I'm holding onto that tightly, but I also have this awareness that once he hits school, what that looks like is going to be different because as I have less

control of who he's interacting in the world. And so, his connection to people who might have differences or see the world differently than me, or again, just the exposure to what's happening in the world, I lose a little bit more control. So I think that's one of the things that maybe we're thinking about again, is going back to that external factor of what's the likelihood that they're going to, and if they're going to, I want it to be my voice that's talking to them hopefully before others. Um, and if not before then definitely in response to. So I think sometimes that can help be a bit of a guide. And then from there applying developmental, so he's at five. So again, the way that I'm talking about things is going to be a lot different, a lot shorter sentences, concise, not tons of detail versus the older my ten-year-old gets, the more realistic and transparent I need to be about some of the ways that the world works. Um, so I think it's fine for parents just to sometimes have space just to grapple with how much it sucks that we even have to talk about these things, um, and to figure out what are we doing to care for ourselves as we need, need to do that. But not doing it doesn't really protect the innocent, um, the innocence of our kids. It's a false illusion that it does, but really we don't prepare them to navigate the world, either having the perspective and the understanding of experiences that others have, or even just teaching them of how to be aware of what's happening with them when really difficult things come up.

Maureen *Yeah. That's really true. And I love what you said about you want your voice to be in their heads. So, you know, they're hearing it anyway. You don't want them to just hear it from the fifth grader on the playground.*

Garica Yeah. By any means. I was that fifth grader making up stuff, so I don't, I don't want that. And the other part too, is the reality is, even if you're not worried about the fifth grader, kids will make up or they will try to make sense and understanding about things. So if, even if we take an example, like parents divorcing and we don't really sit down with the kid, we all know they're likely to blame themselves. So if we don't kind of give any information to kids, we think we're protecting them, but really we're leaving them out there by themselves to figure it out. And that's the most, that's not helpful either. So again, it can be this sense of this false illusion of protection, but really what happens is we're not supporting our kids. And what we definitely know is if we've got to talk about things like this, they need us, they really need us to be able to be there and to support them.

Maureen *I want to talk about kids who hold on to the fear or anxiety after the conversation. So you've kind of had a conversation about what did you, how did you feel about what you heard and then they're having nightmares or they bring it up a few days later, or you can tell they're just holding onto it for extended periods of time. How do you kind of work through some of that?*

Garica Yeah. So some of that's going to be really monitoring again, what is it that you're seeing. So one is expected, depending on what the event is, how close the impact is directly to the kid or to your family, it would actually be concerning if there was no response. So I think sometimes as parents, we think

that if we see a response, that has to mean the worst, where actually sometimes when I'm talking with parents, and even with my own kids, I'm looking for a response. So if we have a death in our family, I'm looking for my kid to grieve. I'm not looking for them just to go about life as usual. I want to have some moments of that, of course. But if I'm never seeing that, then that also is something. So I think sometimes not looking for the absence of, but what you're really looking for is frequency, duration and intensity is what we kind of think about around that. So have nightmares come, you know, um, after you've talked about something and they're lasting for a week versus if they've lasted for six months a year, the longer that duration, um, it's going to happen if it's every single night and they're never getting any rest, that would, um, be another one. So again, I think we will do want kids to come to us and they want to process information, ask us questions. But again, if it's impacting across all areas of their life, they're not sleeping, they're not eating, they can't focus in school. So the more we're seeing that impact, that's when we want to get a little bit more maybe, um, thinking about what resources we might want to tap into, whether that's therapy or counseling or some other support. I think the other thing too, that can be really helpful for those kids who are really feeling anxiety, is that when things like this happen, it really throws off a kid's sense of control. Like now in the world, it feels like bad things can happen to just anyone. It can happen to us. And so there's this loss of safety and control that comes in. And so now it's not just, um, a tornado, but it could be the wind or something bad could just happen in general with no explanation. Kids will generalize, um, and catastrophize in a lot of ways, and so sometimes what can be helpful is thinking about how do we kind of give our kids some grounding? Um, so sometimes that can be things, whether that's practicing some true mindfulness or if there's other things that families are connected to, whether that's religious beliefs or practices. Um, and then too this sense of thinking about how do we help our kids connect to things that are more within their control are really kind of reinforce that the entire world's not bad. So whether that is, it was a great example in the news actually recently, after the hurricane in The Bahamas there was as a ten-year-old, I think it was, who gave up his Disney saving funding. He was going to Disney world and he gave it up to, um, to gather some items and donate to the victims in The Bahamas. And so that's one of those sense where for him I'm sure he felt really powerless, but he's thinking, what can I even do even in my 10, my 10 year old self.

Maureen *Awww. That's so sweet, I hadn't heard about that.*

Garica Yeah. So it's so cool that he thought about that. And it was cool too, that Disney actually still of course took them to Disney World.

Maureen *Nice. Good!*

Garica Yeah. So, but, but I think any of those things, um, can be really helpful so I can remember when my 10-year-old was about five, we had a lot of curiosity that we were passing people, um, who were asking for donations, they were homeless. Um, and didn't just have a good understanding of that. And so

again, there's nothing I can necessarily do to stop that. But what we talked about is what can be something kind that we will do. And so we came up with things. We gave out bags with toiletries for a little while, we decided to volunteer. So it becomes that sense of, we might not be able to control it, but what's the ways that there's a little bit control within what happened.

Maureen *That's great. So we've talked to quite a bit about younger kids and middle-aged kids. And let's talk about the older kids, teenagers who are really able to process through some of this more complex information. I see, there's probably an opportunity here with the older kids to sort of layer in some values around what we think about things that have happened in the news. Can you kind of walk us through what those conversations might look and feel like?*

Garica Yeah, it's such a great thing to kind of think about this in developmental stages. And one thing that sometimes can be a little misleading about our older kids is definitely the sense that developmentally they have the ability to understand more, but we can kind of maybe assume that's going to be easier for them. But if we think about all the developmental stuff that's happening around this time, um, kids are already likely to engage in riskier behaviors, auto withdraw, and so then when you add something traumatic onto that, actually for this age group, it's one where there can be more likelihood that we need to kind of make sure we're assessing.

Maureen *Yeah.*

Garica Um, because teenagers are less likely to tell their parents, yep, something's really bothering me.

Maureen *Right.*

Garica I mean, hopefully we, you know, have a close relationship, but even in that situation, it's just that time of life where they start to connect, um, to their social circle. And so it's just one that we want to be aware of that we can have the conversations, but their willingness to engage might look a little bit different. But you definitely bring up a good point that when we are talking about news events, we're able to expand the conversation in ways that we wouldn't necessarily with younger kids. So having an understanding about how older kids, um, are seeing for one themselves, how they're seeing aspects of their identity, whether that's gender roles, whether that is, um, beliefs. Um, so this is a time where teenagers will really start to question some of the things our family has had a value around and now start to think, do these things fit for me? So this is an age too where parents really have to be ready to tolerate that you might be asking questions and think you know the answer. And they have really been exposed to different ways of seeing the world or different ideas. Um, but it's definitely that opportunity to ask those questions, you know, like what, what do you think about the fact that this is happening to this particular group, um, or what do you think - like right now in gun laws is something we're talking about - what do you think about that? So that you're not just talking

about the specifics of event, but you're starting to explore what's your child's values and starting again to have your voice in the room. That it's definitely natural that they'll start to question, but what's the information you want them to have to consider as they're kind of making those decisions. And so that happens more...

Maureen *And to do that in a way that doesn't push that on them, maybe something like in our family, we believe this, or what I believe is this, but you may believe differently as you grow up... That kind of thing? Is that kinda what you're thinking?*

Garica Yeah. So definitely creating space to continue to be okay holding to the values that you have with your family, but what's the way that you don't hold so tightly that you're telling them if they differ at all, that that's not acceptable within your household. So definitely saying, you know, here's what we think, and this is the way that we've kind of raised you. And so what's the ways that you're thinking about this, or how will you handle if somebody outside of here thinks differently because sometimes, um, the, the kid might have the same value that you have, but are we preparing them for what it looks like to sit in a space when people have very different values than us? And so just even asking them how they might navigate that a bit.

Maureen *Nice. Where we really might see that is during things like elections.*

Garica Definitely.

Maureen *Um, I know with my kids, I've said here's who I'm voting for. Other people are voting for different people and everyone's allowed to vote for the person they think will be the best person for the position. And, and we, we had a good opportunity, um, recently we had a mayor election in Dallas and my husband and I voted for different people. So, um, that was a good opportunity for us to say, so I'm voting for this person and daddy's voting for this other person. We still love each other. We just have different opinions about who we think will be the best person here. And so kind of modeling that idea of other people may have different opinions, but, um, this is kind of how we're making sense of what's happening.*

Garica That's such a great example because what you're like you said, teaching them is that when we have different opinions and still love each other. And also if we think even about siblings, we hope that's what they'll do. You know, you don't have to agree, but at the end of the day, um, so yeah, you're definitely teaching that empathy, that space and that tolerance for different opinions. And so, I think that's such a great example of something that a lot of parents wouldn't even think to talk about with their kids, but even just bringing in the room begins to say, okay, that that's permissible. And it doesn't mean that we can't be connected.

Maureen *So like I said, at the beginning, I just feel like we live in this world where the news is just flying at us a million miles a minute. And I know for me, I've really filtered out what I take in, I've turned off my notifications and I know tons of people are doing that because it's just too much. It's so overwhelming. And so if it's overwhelming for me, it's probably overwhelming for a lot of people. And so what thoughts do you have there just about what we receive in news and kind of how that shows up for our kids?*

Garica Yeah, that's so important too, because I think as we're talking about our kids, what we have, what we definitely know is that in order for me to be there for my kid in any capacity, I first got to make sure that I'm okay. And so definitely like you said, being aware of how much exposure do we have to what's going on in our news and thinking that that's not impacting us is not likely, so really kind of operating from that stance of how are you taking care of yourself? How are you processing what you're taking in? Sometimes we just take in, take in, take in, and we haven't even sat down to think through like, gosh, how is this impacting me? How is this impacting how I'm seeing the world? Or how I might be connecting to people or not? So just taking a moment for one to just think, what am I exposed to? What's the impact for me allows me to show up a little bit better for my kids. And then I think I mentioned too, that, um, we had got in the habit of having the news on and so really being thoughtful that we could accidentally expose our kids to things. And so just being aware of it when I'm in the car, the radio, things like that. So being aware of how are we exposed to it. And then also what's the exposure that we might be accidentally or unintentionally having for our kids to hear things too.

Maureen *I did this the other day. I was, uh, we were in the car and I told, I was telling my husband about something that was way too mature for my kids to listen to and my son in the backseat, he piped up. He said, wait, what? I was like, uhhhhh.*

Yeah, it was probably not a good parenting move, but I told him, oh, I'm just talking about something I saw on TV. Because it was way too mature for him to understand and I'd said, oh, I'm sorry, buddy. I didn't know you were listening to that. That was a grownup thing that I saw on TV. Um, and he said, mom, I'm always listening.

Garica Yeah. And he's right.

Maureen *And he was right!*

Garica But I think it's a good, you're right in that moment, and it's one where yeah, if you can get away with that and sometimes it is just to brush it off because you don't want to open up Pandora's Box for lack of a better word. Yeah. But then a question might be, you know, what did you hear about, I was talking about something on TV... is there, you know... did you hear, you know... and so it's finding that balance too. Once it's out there to kind of know, like, you want to know what they heard, um, as well, but yeah, there might be times if we don't

have to go into it and we don't. Um, but once we do hear, like, what's the ways that we're approaching right.

Maureen *Right. And just, um, note to self. Just don't talk about things in the car.*

Garica Yeah. It's the radio sometimes. You'll think I'm just listening and before you know, it there's a news break on something and then I'm like, well, once it's heard, how much detail do I go in?

Maureen *Right.*

So this has been super helpful. I think I have a lot to think about here and to sit with, and I appreciate all your thoughts. Do you have any closing thoughts, any final advice for parents?

Garica I think one is in these moments, really just again, that we're paying attention to ourselves, what's happening with us emotionally, what's happening with our kids and being okay asking questions and being curious if we're not for sure. And then being willing to seek out resources, that can be helpful. So whether that is - there's tons of resources on the internet. That's the good part. We get all this news, but there's so many resources. If we Google even, how do you talk to kids about things? We'll get tons of articles. And so making sure that we're okay reaching out to those resources or more professionals. And so, um, that would be the biggest thing is just that we're okay figuring out what we might need and that, that might vary for each kid or for each individual.

Maureen *Yeah. Great. Well, thank you so much for this conversation. Thank you so much.*

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