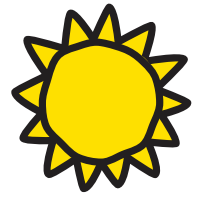


Take a Day Time Break to Support Your Students' Mental Wellness



DEAR EDUCATOR,

As a teacher, you know that mental wellbeing plays a key role in a student's academic and personal success. But did you know that one in five children is living with a mental health condition, and that 50% of all lifelong mental health conditions begin by age 14? Unlike physical health, mental health is largely misunderstood and stigmatized in our society. Because we don't wear our thoughts on our sleeves, we don't always know what children are going through on the inside.

Children need support navigating their thoughts and feelings, and teachers can play a vital role in this effort. The curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired (YMI) have teamed up with the **On Our Sleeves®** movement to transform children's mental health to help. Backed by the experts at **Nationwide Children's Hospital**, *On Our Sleeves* aims to break the silence and stigma surrounding children's mental health. The activities are designed for grades 6–8 and reinforce social-emotional learning, and health and language arts standards.

Through discussion and collaboration, students will learn mental health facts, dispel myths, and develop practical strategies for building empathy and improving self-care. The program also features activities to help your students *Take a Day Time Break* to boost mental wellbeing, as well as a take-home letter for parents and caregivers to raise awareness about children's mental health.

We hope you will share this program with other teachers at your school, as well as your school nurse, coaches, and guidance counselors, to help break the stigma and expand the dialogue around mental health. Please take a moment to share your thoughts on these materials at ymiclassroom.com/feedback-onoursleeves. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dominic Kinsley, PhD
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired



Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005, or by email at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.



Target Audience

Students in grades 6–8, teachers, and parents/caregivers

Program Objectives

- ▶ Promote the mental wellbeing of children
- ▶ Develop understanding of common mental health conditions and dispel myths
- ▶ Encourage children to discuss their thoughts and feelings with trusted adults
- ▶ Help students develop practical strategies for building empathy and improving self-care
- ▶ Provide families with resources and tips for talking with children about mental health

Program Components

Available at ymiclassroom.com/onoursleeves:

- ▶ This teacher's guide
- ▶ Two reproducible student activity sheets
- ▶ A reproducible parent/caregiver letter
- ▶ A standards alignment chart
- ▶ An online feedback form

The *On Our Sleeves* "Take a Day Time Break" mental wellness program is an ongoing mission of Christina and Ryan Day, strong advocates for *On Our Sleeves* to help start conversations around children's mental health. The Day Family's commitment extends their social mission to one of the most significant issues facing children and young adults by increasing education, advocacy, and fundraising. To learn more, please visit OnOurSleeves.org/DayFamilyFund.



How to Use This Program

Photocopy this teacher's guide and the student activity sheets, and review the materials and resources before starting. Each activity should take approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Encourage students to take the completed activity sheets home to share with their families. Also give them copies of the parent/caregiver letter with tips to help families navigate discussions around mental health to take home.

Be prepared for students who may have questions or a concerning response to these activities, and know your school's policy on mental health concerns. Validate students' feelings even if you don't necessarily understand them. Ask open-ended questions such as: *How can I help? What would help in this moment? What do you need to feel better?* Ask who their most trusted person (adult) is at school and seek their assistance. Call a parent or caregiver so that they are aware of the situation.

If students comment that they sometimes hurt themselves to make themselves feel better, be prepared to respond in the moment and know who to notify and what kind of resources or professional help you might need.



Activity 1:

Mental Health Myths & Facts

Your students may be familiar with certain mental health conditions but may not be familiar with the term *mental health* or understand what it means. This activity focuses on sharing facts, dispelling myths, and supporting self-care strategies to improve mental health and wellbeing.

1. Have students share what they know or think by asking the following questions and guiding the discussion with the notes in parentheses:
 - ▶ *What does "mental health" mean?* (Encourage students to brainstorm, even if their responses reflect misperceptions. Then share the following definition: Mental health includes how we think, feel, and act. It also helps guide how we handle stress, relate to other people, and make decisions.)
 - ▶ *What does it mean to have a mental health condition?* (We all experience sadness, fear, worry, confusion, or stress at times, but some people can experience these types of feelings more intensely and for longer periods of time, and may need help and support to cope.)

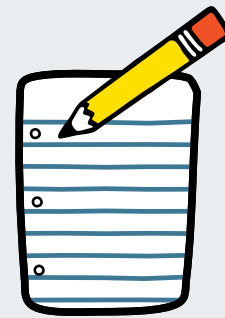
TEACHER TIPS & RESOURCES

The Nationwide Children's Hospital *On Our Sleeves* website has extensive resources for educators.

Visit [OnOurSleeves.org/for-professionals/schools](https://www.onoursleeves.org/for-professionals/schools) for information about mental health conditions, where to find help, wellness strategies, videos, and more.

To promote a safe and empathetic classroom environment:

- ▶ Encourage ongoing discussion about coping with feelings and remind students to talk to parents/caregivers and other trusted adults when they need help.
- ▶ Be aware of challenges your students may be facing and how best to support their learning.
- ▶ Show support for students who may be struggling to let them know they are valued.
- ▶ Have a "zero-tolerance" policy for bullying behaviors, such as physical intimidation, name-calling, and teasing.
- ▶ Use non-stigmatizing language so students see people first and disorders second (e.g., say "She has depression" instead of "She is depressed").
- ▶ Work with students to create a wall of images that make them smile, like photos of favorite athletes or singers.



2. Distribute copies of the activity sheet. Read the directions for **Part 1**, which features a true/false quiz about mental health. Let students know that this activity is not a test — it is to get them thinking about mental health and what they might know or have heard so you can have a class discussion to dispel any myths or misunderstandings. Have students complete the quiz and then discuss the answers below as a class. Be sure students adjust any incorrect answers and encourage them to bring their completed quizzes home to share with their families.

Answers: 1. True (Your health involves much more than what is happening in your physical body. Your mind and body are closely linked. To achieve the best overall health outcome, you want to focus on your physical health *and* your mental health or fitness.) **2.** False (Mental health conditions can affect people of all ages, so it is important for all of us to take care of our mental wellbeing.) **3.** False (We don't know what others are experiencing since we don't wear our thoughts on our sleeves. A person may not understand his or her feelings, may feel nervous or embarrassed to express them, or may not have the words to do so.) **4.** True (It's important to ask for help if you are struggling with your feelings. It's also important to be sensitive, supportive, and caring to others since we don't know what they are experiencing. Never make fun of someone's mental health challenges, call them names, or make light of their feelings.) **5.** False (Anyone can experience problems with their mental health, including those who may seem happy or successful on the outside.)

Conclude Part 1 by emphasizing that students should always talk with a trusted adult if they are stressed or troubled by their emotions or if they are worried about a friend.

- 3.** Direct students to **Part 2** of the activity sheet, a matching exercise involving three mental health disorders and two wellness practices. Have students work in pairs to match the terms with their definitions. If they are unsure, encourage them to make their best guesses based on context clues. Afterward, discuss the answers as a class.

Answers: 1. Depression = B; **2.** Self-Care = E; **3.** ADHD = A; **4.** Anxiety = D; **5.** Gratitude = C

Tell students that a **mental health condition** (like depression, anxiety, and ADHD) is a brain disorder that affects how someone thinks and feels, and often, how they relate to others. Explain that self-care and gratitude are **mental wellness** practices, which can help you improve your mental health.

- 4.** Introduce the concept of **Day Time Breaks**. Explain that just as you practice a sport or activity to get better at it, you can also practice "mental fitness" by pausing in the middle of the day to focus on your emotional wellbeing. Lead the following activities:
 - **What I Like About Myself:** Say: *Positive thinking is connected to mental health and wellness. Think about something you like about yourself and why you like it. Write it on a note to yourself.* Invite students to share, but only if they want to. As an extension, encourage students to take a "What I Like About Myself" selfie or draw a picture representing something they like about themselves.

- **Gratitude:** Say: *Gratitude is the act of showing appreciation and of being thankful. Research shows that people who practice gratitude — who recognize and feel good about the good things in their life — are healthier and happier. They feel more energized, sleep better, have stronger social connections, and feel better about themselves. Gratitude helps us grow mentally and grow as a person. What is something you're grateful for? Write it on a note to yourself.* Invite students to share, but only if they want to.

Read the directions for **Part 3** and have students create gratitude emojis on the back of the activity sheet. Create a "Gratitude Emoji" wall display where students can post their images — anonymously if they prefer.



Activity 2: Take Care

To further develop students' mental health awareness and boost self-care practices and empathy, this activity asks students to role-play scenarios that might cause a person stress, and brainstorm coping strategies.

- 1.** Explain that stress is a common part of every person's life. As students, they might feel stressed about being accepted by friends, their appearance, tests, doing well in sports or other activities, and other concerns. Ask: *How do you deal with stressful situations? What do you do to make yourself feel better?*
- 2.** Distribute copies of the activity sheet and review the directions for **Part 1**. Invite volunteers to read the list of coping strategies. For each item, ask students why they think that strategy would be helpful in managing stress. Then have them add two additional (healthy and appropriate) strategies they use or would like to try, and how these are effective "stress busters."
- 3.** Next, review the directions for **Part 2**. Scenarios 1 and 2 encourage students to reflect on how they might feel and react if the situation happened to them. Scenarios 3 and 4 focus on helping a friend with a distressing situation.
- 4.** Place students in small groups and encourage them to have open, respectful discussions about the scenarios on the list. For each item, students will identify how they or their friend might be feeling and why (this builds empathy), a trusted adult they could speak with, and coping strategies they could implement. Afterward, have groups volunteer to act out the scenarios.

Possible Answers: 1. Work with your teacher to create a plan or schedule to prepare for the test. Before the test, get a good night's sleep, eat a healthy breakfast, and try some breathing and relaxation techniques.

2. Talk to a trusted adult, like a parent/caregiver or school counselor, about how you are feeling and how you can talk with your friend. Write in a journal to help work through your thoughts and emotions. Make an art project for your friend to show how much you care about them.

3. Support your friend by doing things together: take a walk, watch funny videos, or talk about happy memories. Encourage your friend to talk to her mom about her concerns for her family. **4.** Speak out against unkind behavior and let your teacher know. Check in with your friend. When a friend is going through changes, the best thing you can do is ask how you can support them.

5. To conclude the activity, tell students that they can become mental health advocates by starting a *"Take a Day Time Break Club"* to support self-care. In their groups, invite students to brainstorm quick, easy-to-implement mental health wellness activities to integrate into your classroom routine. Have groups share their ideas and agree on five activities to try over the coming week. Designate a daily 5- to 10-minute break

to do the chosen activities as a class. Set up a box for students to submit new ideas and keep the breaks going throughout the month. **Sample ideas:**

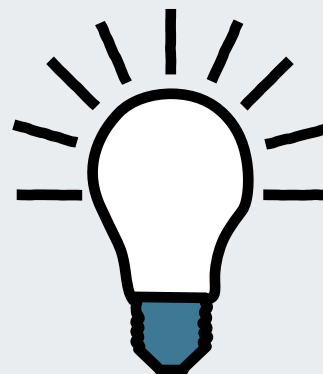
- ▶ Write a compliment or message of encouragement to a classmate.
- ▶ Create a class gratitude list by posting sticky notes on the bulletin board.
- ▶ Write down a personal goal and steps you will take to achieve this goal.
- ▶ Perform a random act of kindness (or make a plan to perform one).
- ▶ Stretch, do jumping jacks — or have a dance party!

Reproducible Parent/Caregiver Letter

Studies have shown that many parents and caregivers feel apprehension and confusion about children's mental health topics. Many still maintain a stigma around mental health, hold misperceptions about mental health conditions, and are unsure how to talk to their children about these topics. We encourage you to copy and send home this letter, email it to families, or post it on your school website to support families.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- ▶ Understand Mental Health Conditions
[OnOurSleeves.org/find-help/conditions](https://onoursleeves.org/find-help/conditions)
- ▶ *Take a Day Time Break* (additional resources for your classroom, such as posters, stickers, etc.)
[OnOurSleeves.org/about/day-family-fund/request-day-time-resources](https://onoursleeves.org/about/day-family-fund/request-day-time-resources)
- ▶ Resources for Schools
[OnOurSleeves.org/for-professionals/schools](https://onoursleeves.org/for-professionals/schools)
- ▶ Day Time Break Information for Schools
youtu.be/jC0kkjCrKNA
- ▶ Day Time Break: Overview
youtu.be/0U3md2bZ_9w



MENTAL HEALTH MYTHS & FACTS



Mental health is an important topic. If you're physically hurt or ill, it can be obvious and easy to see – and easier to describe in words. But because we don't wear our thoughts on our sleeves, mental health can be harder to understand and talk about.

Part 1: Below are some statements about mental health. Some of them are true (facts), and some are not (myths). On the right side of the table, write "True" or "False" based on what you know.

STATEMENT	TRUE OR FALSE?
1. Keeping your brain in shape is just as important as physical fitness.	
2. Mental health conditions are not really something kids struggle with.	
3. You can tell how someone is feeling or if they have a mental health condition just by looking at them or listening to what they are saying.	
4. Friends and family can make a big difference in supporting each other's mental health.	
5. Kids who have lots of friends, get good grades, and have lots of talents are always happy on the inside.	

Part 2: The terms below describe some mental health conditions and behaviors. Match each term to its definition by writing the correct letter on each line.

MENTAL HEALTH TERMS	DEFINITIONS
1. ____ Depression	A. People with this condition tend to have a high energy level and have trouble focusing on the task before them.
2. ____ Self-Care	B. This condition lasts longer and feels stronger or different from typical sadness. Sometimes it is a feeling of hopelessness.
3. ____ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	C. This practice involves thinking and talking about things you are thankful for, in order to boost your mood and remind yourself of the good things in your life.
4. ____ Anxiety	D. People with this condition have a prolonged sense of worry and dread that can impact all aspects of their daily life.
5. ____ Gratitude	E. These behaviors include eating healthy, getting good sleep, moving a little bit every day, and creating positive relationships with family and friends to help keep the mind fit and healthy.

Part 3: Take a Day Time Break! Just as you practice a sport or activity to get better at it, you can also practice bettering your mental health. One way to do that is by thinking about things that make you feel good and that you're thankful for. Create your own "gratitude emoji" on the back of this sheet. Ask yourself this question as you create your emoji: **What does gratitude look like to me?**

REMEMBER: It's ok not to feel ok. If you're ever struggling, reach out to a trusted adult like a parent, family member, teacher, coach, or guidance counselor.




TAKE CARE

We all feel stressed sometimes. Some stress is normal, but too much isn't good for you, so it's important to know how to take care of yourself and manage the stress you feel. Below is a list of self-care strategies you can try to help yourself feel better — calmer, happier, more in control — if you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed:

- ▶ Talk with a parent or another trusted adult about your feelings.
- ▶ Take deep breaths: inhale for three, hold for three, exhale for three, repeat.
- ▶ Play your favorite music and sing along.
- ▶ Write in a journal or draw/sketch.
- ▶ Close your eyes and imagine visiting your favorite place.
- ▶ Call or text a friend.
- ▶ Make a plan or schedule for completing a school project or studying for a test.
- ▶ Go for a walk, exercise, or dance.
- ▶ Laugh — watch a funny video, tell jokes, look at silly memes or GIFs.
- ▶ Do a "body scan" where you slowly relax from your head to your toes.
- ▶ Get enough sleep and eat healthy foods.

Part 1: Use this chart to list other healthy things you do that help when you are in a stressful situation. Then explain how each self-care strategy helps you feel better.

MY SELF-CARE STRATEGY	HOW IT HELPS ME FEEL BETTER
1.	
2.	

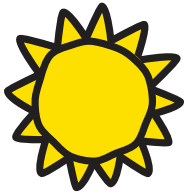
Part 2: Now, practice using self-care strategies with the situations described below. These are all situations that might be stressful or upsetting to you or a friend. For each one, discuss these questions with your group:

- ▶ What feelings might each person be having, and why?
 - ▶ Which trusted adult could the person talk to about the situation?
 - ▶ What are some things the person could do to help cope with their feelings?
1. You are not doing too well in history class and have a big test coming up. You need to get a good grade to pass the class.
 2. You have just gotten into a fight with a friend and they're really mad at you. You want to work it out, but don't know how to talk to them about it.
 3. Your friend's mom lost her job and your friend is worried about her family. Your friend seems much more anxious than usual.
 4. Your friend takes a prescribed medication for depression. He does not like to talk about it. Some classmates found out and have been teasing him.

When you're done, role-play each scenario. Assign the characters in each situation to the people in your group. Then, volunteer to show your class the self-care strategies you came up with.



Remember: If you have a friend who is struggling with feelings, show empathy and let them know you're there if they want to talk. You can also reach out to a trusted adult to talk about how you can help your friend.



Take a Day Time Break to Support Your Child's Mental Wellness

DEAR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS,

When a child has a physical illness, we know what to do. But navigating mental health concerns can be more challenging. Unlike most physical illnesses, there are no blood tests, imaging scans, or other objective measures to detect most mental illnesses. Sometimes warning signs can even be mistaken for typical developmental changes.

To help you and your child become more informed about mental health, the **On Our Sleeves**® movement to transform children's mental health has teamed with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired to create an in-school mental health wellness program called *Take a Day Time Break*. The program aims to correct misunderstandings about mental health conditions, and provides students with some practical strategies to build empathy and improve self-care.

Backed by the experts at **Nationwide Children's Hospital**, *On Our Sleeves* aims to break the silence and stigma surrounding children's mental health. We know that one in five children is living with a mental health condition that interferes with everyday life, and that half of all lifetime mental health conditions start by age 14. Kids don't wear their thoughts on their sleeves, but when they are struggling, they need support. Therefore, it's important that parents and caregivers build awareness about mental health.

Conversation Starters

Helping children talk about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences can provide a safe opportunity for them to work through things they are having a hard time handling or that are upsetting them. Below are some "convo starters" the *On Our Sleeves* team has created to help you discuss everyday thoughts and feelings with your child. Try out a few. You might be surprised by your child's willingness to open up when they know they're supported!

- ▶ When you feel sad, what do you think about to help yourself feel happy again?
- ▶ Tell me three words to describe yourself.
- ▶ What makes you angry? What helps you to feel less angry?
- ▶ How has someone been kind to you today? How were you kind to someone else?
- ▶ What do you do when someone makes fun of other kids at school?

For more conversation starters, visit OnOurSleeves.org/find-help/tools-for-you/convo-starters.

The *On Our Sleeves* "Take a Day Time Break" mental wellness program is an ongoing mission of Christina and Ryan Day, strong advocates for *On Our Sleeves* to help start conversations around children's mental health. The Day Family's commitment extends their social mission to one of the most significant issues facing children and young adults by increasing education, advocacy, and fundraising.

To learn more, please visit OnOurSleeves.org/DayFamilyFund.



Take a Day Time Break

At school, your child has learned that taking a "Day Time Break" for mental wellness can help reduce stress and promote empathy. Spend a few minutes a day taking a break as a family with activities such as giving a compliment to each family member, doing an errand or chore for a neighbor, taking a walk outdoors, or turning the refrigerator door into a gratitude wall with sticky notes. Generate your own *Day Time Break* ideas together!

For more ideas, go to: OnOurSleeves.org/about/day-family-fund/request-day-time-resources.

Additional Resources

- ▶ Understand Mental Health Conditions:
OnOurSleeves.org/find-help/conditions
- ▶ Mental Health Resources:
OnOurSleeves.org/find-help
- ▶ Videos with behavioral health expert Gina McDowell:
OnOurSleeves.org/find-help/tools-for-you/video-resources
For example:
 - *Questions to Ask at the Dinner Table*
 - *How to Get Mentally Fit*
 - *Stress and Self-Care*

If you or your child need immediate help due to having suicidal thoughts, go to your local emergency room immediately. Or you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255), or text "START" to 741-741.

