

Because we don't wear our
thoughts on our sleeves



DEAR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS,

In school, your child has been learning about mental health and strategies for coping with stress and other feelings through a program that is part of the *On Our Sleeves* movement, created by the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired (YMI) in cooperation with Nationwide Children's Hospital and the Harlem Globetrotters. The *On Our Sleeves*™ movement is a national movement to break the silence and stigma surrounding children's mental health and start important conversations about this topic.

The program emphasizes the importance of kids sharing their feelings and what's on their minds with parents and trusted adults who can help them get to a place where they feel better. It is not uncommon to struggle with emotional or mental health concerns periodically. These strategies can help with managing and reducing symptoms and/or risks. Kids may be reluctant or not know how to speak about what they're feeling inside. But these are important conversations. One in five children is living with a mental illness, but only about half get help. That's why it is important to be on the lookout for early warning signs and learn how to address your child's needs.

Mental Fitness Activities

As a family, make an effort to stay mentally fit and help alleviate stress—play board games, meditate, go for walks after dinner, do volunteer work, and try the *On Our Sleeves* Mental Fitness Challenge (see link on resource list). Use the time to connect with your children about how they're feeling.

Start the Conversation

When speaking with your child about mental health and how they're feeling, give them your full attention so they can talk about things they may be having a hard time handling or that are upsetting them. Keep it simple. For example:

- ▶ Ask your child, "What was the best thing about your day?" And then "What was something not so great about your day?"
- ▶ Ask follow-up questions and use feelings words to assess what you think you're hearing, such as, "Sounds like you were mad that Emma did not play with you at recess"; "Sounds like you're upset that you didn't do well on your test."
- ▶ Acknowledge that it's OK to have these feelings and encourage your child to talk about them with you. Consider offering appropriate examples of your own day to reinforce this. It's important in these conversations not to lead a child to believe that certain emotions are "right" or "wrong." Encourage them to talk about their feelings. Don't force the discussion and stop when your child is ready.
- ▶ Talk about how your child might manage these feelings to help them build coping strategies, such as counting, drawing, listening to music, thinking about something fun, etc.

Check out the links on the next page for more information on how to start the conversation.



Learn more about mental illness and *On Our Sleeves*™ at OnOurSleeves.org.

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

ON OUR SLEEVES ONLINE TOOLS & RESOURCES

Children and families facing mental illness are not alone. The Nationwide Children's Hospital *On Our Sleeves*™ website has information about mental health conditions and behavioral concerns, along with tools that may be helpful if your child is exhibiting these behaviors:

- ▶ How to Talk to Kids About Mental Health:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-how-to-talk-to-your-kids-aboutmental-health](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-how-to-talk-to-your-kids-aboutmental-health)
- ▶ How to Start the Convo video:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-how-to-start-the-convo](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-how-to-start-the-convo)
- ▶ Videos featuring behavioral health expert Gina McDowell:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-video-resources](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-video-resources)
- ▶ Locator tool to find children's mental health resources in your state:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-state-resources](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-state-resources)

- ▶ Talking to Your Kids About Depression and Suicide:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-talking-to-your-kids-aboutdepression-and-suicide](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-talking-to-your-kids-aboutdepression-and-suicide)
- ▶ 10 Tips to Teach Your Kids How to Combat Bullying:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-how-to-combatbullying](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-how-to-combatbullying)
- ▶ How to Deal With Stress:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-stress](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-stress)
- ▶ Convo Starters:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-convo-starters](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-convo-starters)
- ▶ Mental Fitness Challenge:
[OnOurSleeves.org/hg-get-mentally-fit](https://www.onoursleeves.org/hg-get-mentally-fit)



ON OUR SLEEVES™
The Movement to Transform
Children's Mental Health



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