SOCIAL SKILLS

Dear Team Leader,

Thank you for your dedication to helping children learn and grow and for supporting *On Our Sleeves* in its mission to provide free educational resources to every community. We are proud to have your organization as a member of the *On Our Sleeves* Alliance to help break the silence surrounding children's mental health.

This free *On Our Sleeves* educational program provides activities for children ages 6–8 that focus on social skills that promote mental wellness. Developed by the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired, in partnership with mental health professionals from *On Our Sleeves*, this program is designed to help children understand how building and practicing empathy helps them develop their own emotional well-being and form positive relationships with others. The program also includes a take-home letter for families to reinforce these messages and promote greater awareness of social and emotional health.

We hope you will share this program with leaders in your organization. Please take a moment to share your thoughts on this program at ymiclassroom.com/feedback-oosalliance. We look forward to your comments.

Sincerely,
The *On Our Sleeves* team

TARGET AUDIENCE
Children ages 6-8 and their families

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES
Promote the mental health and well-being of children by helping them better understand others' emotions and how to practice empathy.

HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM
Make copies of the reproducible activity sheet for your group and prepare any materials needed in advance. The activity should take approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Have children share the completed activity sheets with their families, along with a copy of the take-home letter. You could also email the letter to parents and caregivers.

MATERIALS NEEDED
Copies of the activity sheet for each child, pencils

Activity Sheet: **Flex Your Kindness Muscles!**

1. **How Might Others Feel?**
   - Begin with an empathy-building exercise that helps children practice how to tune in to other people's feelings. Read the following scenarios to the children. Ask them to think carefully about how the person in each situation might feel and why.
     - **Scenario 1:** It is Marisol's first day in a new school. She has just moved from another town and doesn't know anyone yet. It's lunchtime and she is standing in the cafeteria wondering where to sit.

About the *On Our Sleeves* Alliance

The *On Our Sleeves* Alliance represents diverse and powerful voices committed to breaking the silence surrounding children's mental health and taking action. The Alliance works together to share best practices and advance *On Our Sleeves'* mission to provide every community in the U.S. with access to free, evidence-informed resources necessary for breaking stigmas around children's mental health and educating families and advocates. Together, we empower the mental health and wellness of every child. Learn more at OnOurSleeves.org.

- **Scenario 2:** Theo spent the whole summer practicing his soccer skills. He really wants to make the travel team but there are only a few open spots. He finds out his best friend made the team, and he did not.
- **Scenario 3:** Nina's choir teacher chooses her to perform a solo during the class concert. Nina loves to sing but has never performed alone in front of an audience—plus her whole family will be there!
- **Scenario 4:** At recess, a group of boys make fun of Jayden's clothes and call him names. Some of Jayden's friends hear the comments but don't do anything to help him.

- As the children share their responses, explain that *empathy* is when we try to put ourselves into someone's shoes to understand what they might be feeling and why. They may not always tell us.
- Ask the students to think about similar situations they've experienced. Encourage them to share if they are comfortable doing so.

2. **What Do Feelings Look Like?**

- Emphasize that different people in the same situation do not always feel the same way. For example, playing a game for the first time may make one person feel excited but another person may feel nervous or worried.
- **Say:** People can experience different emotions each day. Emotions are not good or bad, but some can be uncomfortable.
- Distribute the activity sheet, read the directions and have the children complete Part 1. Review the students' responses and ask them why they selected the uncomfortable words.

- Remind the children that people don't always express in words how they feel. Explain how a person appears on the outside may not match their feelings on the inside. For example, someone may put on a brave face and smile even if they feel sad. **Ask:** Why might someone choose to hide uncomfortable feelings or emotions? How can this make it more difficult for others to help them feel better?
- Reinforce that since we don't always know how people feel just by looking at them or by what they say, we should always show kindness, so others feel supported when they may be struggling with strong or uncomfortable feelings.
- Ask the children to complete Part 2 of the activity sheet. Read the sentences to the children. Discuss their responses. Reinforce the importance of showing empathy and kindness to support our friends and family. Explain that the situations are about friends, but the same example could be about a brother, sister, or cousin. Also explain that it's important to show kindness and empathy to people we don't know, such as other children in school or people we might see in shops. How we act toward people we don't know will be a little different. We can show them empathy by using kind words and not saying unkind or hurtful things.
- Emphasize that children should talk to a trusted adult if they have strong or uncomfortable feelings and/or thoughts that they need help working through.

Answers: Answers will vary.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Ask the group to create an empathy collage using pictures cut out from magazines showing people expressing a wide range of feelings and emotions. Have the children label each picture with a feeling word, such as joyful, and explain why they chose it. Point out how different, even opposite, feeling words could be chosen for the same photo. For uncomfortable feelings, ask the children to brainstorm ways they can show their support or help a friend feeling the emotion and create a list of "Ways to Show Kindness" next to the collage.

RESOURCES

- On Our Sleeves: OnOurSleeves.org
- YMI microsite: ymiclassroom.com/oosalliance

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Name _____

FLEX YOUR KINDNESS MUSCLES!

Paying attention to other people's feelings can help us recognize when someone needs a friend. Having empathy means we try to understand how others might be feeling.

Part 1: Circle the words that describe uncomfortable feelings or emotions.

happy

angry

joyful

afraid

hopeful

worried

excited

proud

sad

jealous

embarrassed

calm

Part 2: Once we understand how someone might be feeling, we can take action to support them. This includes showing kindness. Use the feelings words above or your own words to complete the sentences below. Then describe how you could be a good friend and show kindness to others in each situation.

1. My friend is taking the bus to school for the first time. My friend might feel _____.

   I can show kindness by _____.

2. My friend's mom is sick. My friend might feel _____.

   I can show kindness by _____.

3. My friend gets a new toy that she really wants. My friend might feel _____.

   I can show kindness by _____.

4. My friend can't go to a birthday party he was excited about. My friend might feel _____.

   I can show kindness by _____.

5. My friend wins an award. My friend might feel _____.

   I can show kindness by _____.

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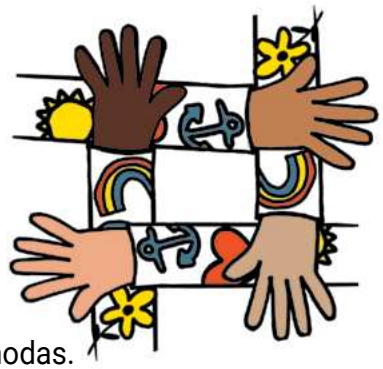

Nombre _____

¡PON EN PRÁCTICA TU AMABILIDAD!

Prestar atención a los sentimientos de otras personas puede ayudarnos a reconocer cuándo alguien necesita un amigo. Tener empatía significa que tratamos de entender cómo pueden sentirse los demás.

Parte 1: Haz un círculo en las palabras que describen sentimientos o emociones incómodas.

feliz

enojado

alegre

temeroso

esperanzado

preocupado

emocionado

orgulloso

triste

celoso

avergonzado

tranquilo

Parte 2: Una vez que comprendamos cómo se siente alguien, podremos tomar medidas para apoyarlo. Esto incluye mostrar amabilidad. Usa las palabras de sentimientos de más arriba o tus propias palabras para completar las oraciones a continuación. Luego, describe cómo podrías ser un buen amigo y mostrar amabilidad con los demás en cada situación.

1. Mi amigo toma el autobús a la escuela por primera vez. Mi amigo podría sentirse _____.

   Puedo mostrar amabilidad al hacer lo siguiente _____.

2. La madre de mi amigo está enferma. Mi amigo podría sentirse _____.

   Puedo mostrar amabilidad al hacer lo siguiente _____.

3. Mi amiga consigue un juguete nuevo que realmente le gusta. Mi amiga podría sentirse _____.

   Puedo mostrar amabilidad al hacer lo siguiente _____.

4. Mi amigo no puede ir a una fiesta de cumpleaños a la que tenía muchas ganas de ir. Mi amigo podría sentirse

   _____.

   Puedo mostrar amabilidad al hacer lo siguiente _____.

5. Mi amigo gana un premio. Mi amigo podría sentirse _____.

   Puedo mostrar amabilidad al hacer lo siguiente _____.

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SOCIAL SKILLS

DEAR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS,

Mental health professionals from *On Our Sleeves*, the movement for children's mental health, have teamed up with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired to create activities for schools and youth organizations to support children's mental health and wellness.

Your child has been learning about empathy — the ability to recognize, understand, and show compassion for the feelings and perspectives of others — which is a cornerstone in building relationships. When we express empathy, we can help others cope with difficult situations. This mindfulness can help support mental wellness and help children understand that we all need kindness and help from others at times, which is okay.

We hope you will find the ideas provided below helpful in supporting ongoing conversations with your child about expressing feelings, empathy, and mental health, and encourage them to explore activities that nurture their minds and bodies in positive ways.

For more ideas and information on how to support your child in practicing empathy and developing social skills that support their mental health, visit OnOurSleeves.org.

Sincerely,

The *On Our Sleeves* team

TIPS TO TRY AT HOME

Learning to recognize how others might be feeling allows us to adjust how we approach situations and build closer relationships. It takes practice, especially since people use verbal and nonverbal signs to express their emotions. Children might need support and practice in identifying emotions and recognizing these signs.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO EXPRESS THEIR FEELINGS AND TO RECOGNIZE THE FEELINGS OF OTHERS

- Model empathy by showing genuine interest in your child's daily experiences and emotional well-being. Make time for family members to share highs and lows of their day or week so your child can practice sharing feelings and recognizing emotions others are feeling.
- If a family member or friend is experiencing a difficult time, talk about what they might be feeling. Talk about how showing them empathy and kindness might help them, and how you could express empathy toward the person.
- When reading or watching TV, point out examples of people expressing empathy. Or ask your child how a character might be feeling and how another character might be able to support them.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO PRACTICE EMPATHY AND KINDNESS

- Seek out and celebrate different perspectives and cultural practices. Attend a cultural festival or watch a film or television show about people from a different ethnic or cultural background. Discuss similarities and differences to help expand your child's experiences and understanding of others. Talk about how empathy can help build this understanding and respect.
- Notice when your child's behavior may impact how someone else feels and discuss it. Recognize positive examples and talk about situations where your child might have room for improvement.
- Create opportunities for your child to practice kindness, such as volunteering to help others in need. This could be as simple as helping an elderly neighbor you know collect their mail or volunteering at a local food drive or animal shelter.

As a family, have ongoing discussions about empathy and kindness as your child grows and continues to develop new relationships with friends.

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HABILIDADES SOCIALES

ESTIMADOS PADRES Y REPRESENTANTES:

Los profesionales de salud mental de *On Our Sleeves*, el movimiento para la salud mental de los niños, se han unido a los especialistas en planes de estudio de Young Minds Inspired con el propósito de crear actividades para escuelas y organizaciones juveniles a fin de apoyar la salud mental y el bienestar de los niños.

Su hijo/a estuvo aprendiendo sobre la empatía (la capacidad de reconocer, comprender y mostrar compasión por los sentimientos y las perspectivas de los demás), que es un componente importante en las relaciones saludables. Cuando expresamos empatía, podemos ayudar a otros a enfrentar situaciones difíciles. Esta actitud consciente puede contribuir al bienestar mental y ayudar a que los niños entiendan que todos necesitamos la amabilidad y la ayuda de los demás a veces, lo cual está bien.

Esperamos que las ideas que se proporcionan a continuación le resulten útiles para apoyar las conversaciones en curso con su hijo/a acerca de expresar sentimientos, empatía y salud mental, y para alentarlo/a a explorar actividades que nutran su mente y cuerpo de manera positiva.

Para obtener más ideas e información sobre cómo alentar a su hijo/a en la práctica de la empatía y el desarrollo de habilidades sociales que respalden su salud mental, visite OnOurSleeves.org.

Atentamente,

El equipo de *On Our Sleeves*

SUGERENCIAS PARA PONER EN PRÁCTICA EN CASA

Aprender a reconocer cómo podrían sentirse los demás nos permite cambiar cómo respondemos a las situaciones y a crear relaciones más cercanas. Se necesita práctica, especialmente porque las personas usan señales verbales y no verbales para expresar sus emociones. Los niños pueden necesitar apoyo y práctica para identificar emociones y reconocer estas señales.

ALIENTE A SU HIJO/A A EXPRESAR SUS SENTIMIENTOS Y A RECONOCER LOS SENTIMIENTOS DE LOS DEMÁS

- Practique la empatía al mostrar un interés genuino en las experiencias diarias y el bienestar emocional de su hijo/a. Dedique tiempo a los miembros de su familia para compartir los momentos buenos y no tan buenos de su día o semana para que su hijo/a pueda practicar compartir sentimientos y reconocer las emociones que otros sienten.
- Si un familiar o amigo atraviesa un momento difícil, hable sobre lo que podría estar sintiendo. Hable sobre cómo mostrarle empatía y amabilidad podría ayudarlo, y cómo podría expresar empatía hacia la persona.
- Cuando lea o mire televisión, señale ejemplos de personas que expresan empatía. O pregúntele a su hijo/a cómo podría sentirse un personaje y cómo otro personaje podría apoyarlo.

ANIME A SU HIJO/A A PRACTICAR LA EMPATÍA Y LA AMABILIDAD

- Investigue acerca de diferentes perspectivas y prácticas culturales y celébrelas. Asista a un festival cultural o vea una película o un programa de televisión sobre personas de diferentes orígenes étnicos o culturales. Analice las similitudes y diferencias para ayudar a ampliar las experiencias de su hijo/a y su comprensión de los demás. Hable sobre cómo la empatía puede ayudar a construir esta comprensión y respeto.
- Observe cuándo el comportamiento de su hijo/a puede influir en cómo se siente otra persona y hable sobre ello. Reconozca ejemplos positivos y hable sobre situaciones en las que su hijo/a podría mejorar.
- Cree oportunidades para que su hijo/a practique la amabilidad, como el voluntariado para ayudar a otras personas necesitadas. Esto podría ser tan simple como ayudar a un vecino de la tercera edad que usted conozca a recoger su correo o hacer trabajo voluntario en una colecta de alimentos local o un refugio de animales.
- Como familia, mantenga conversaciones continuas sobre la empatía y la amabilidad a medida que su hijo/a crece y continúa desarrollando nuevas relaciones con amigos.

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