

BREAKING STIGMAS



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The **On Our Sleeves**[®] movement, powered by the behavioral health experts at Nationwide Children's Hospital, aims to break the stigmas surrounding children's mental health and educate families and advocates. To support families and schools, **On Our Sleeves** has teamed up with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired to provide your child's teacher with classroom resources that support students' well-being. **On Our Sleeves** is based on the idea that kids don't "wear their thoughts" on their sleeves, so we don't know what they are going through. That's why we must give them a voice.

Helping your child identify and manage their emotions is an ongoing process, but a vital one. When we talk openly about emotions and moods, we empower our children with the tools to self-manage their mental wellness. The tips below can help you support your child's emotional and mental well-being — and your family's as well.

- **Check-in with your child:** Make it a daily habit to ask how they are feeling. Instead of only asking about school, ask about their emotions as well. Did anything happen that made them feel joyful? Sad? Daily check-ins create the habit of talking so that when a difficult conversation comes up, everyone feels more ready to talk.
- **Model talking about your emotions:** Freely talk about your own feelings, whether you are happy, sad, frustrated, or even angry. The more you normalize conversations about emotions, the easier it will be for your child to share with you when they are feeling overwhelmed.
- **Share coping strategies:** Explain how you cope when you are feeling strong emotions, then ask your child if they would like help managing their own. If listening to music, spending time with friends, reading, or physical activity works for you, it might work for them, too.
- **Create a calm corner:** Sometimes our homes can be too loud and stimulating for a child who is feeling overwhelmed. Sometimes we just need a break to calm down. Designate a quiet space where your child can cozy up with a blanket or soft pillow. Fill a box with their favorite distraction or relaxation items and place it in the space, for example — coloring sheets and colored pencils, a puzzle, the child's journal, or some of their favorite books.
- **Identify other trusted adults:** With your child, discuss and make a list of other trusted adults in their lives who they can talk with if you are not available and they are not feeling okay.

Remind your child that it's okay not to feel okay, but it's important to talk about it and ask for help when they experience strong emotions or feel overwhelmed. Starting these conversations with your child at an early age makes it easier as they grow older.

Sincerely,

Ariana Hoet, PhD

Clinical Director, *On Our Sleeves*

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The Movement for Children's Mental Health

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