

MENTAL WELLNESS

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 11-14 that focus on mental wellness. Developed by the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired, in partnership with mental health professionals from *On Our Sleeves*, the program is designed to help children understand that tuning in to their thoughts and emotions and actively working on a positive mindset is key to their mental well-being. The program also includes a take-home letter for families to reinforce these messages and promote greater awareness of children's mental health.

We hope you will share this program with youth group 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 11–14 and their families

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

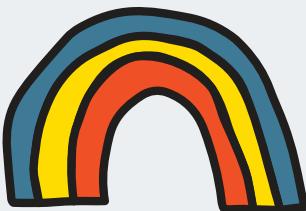
- Promote the mental health and well-being of children by helping them understand that mental wellness is an important part of their overall health.
- Provide children with strategies that help them manage difficult emotions and reframe uncomfortable social situations to create a more balanced perspective.
- Encourage children to incorporate a variety of enjoyable activities into their daily lives to keep their brains focused on learning and positive experiences.
- Provide resources and tips for talking with children about mental health and wellness.

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; paper and chart/board to write down guidelines for the activity guide



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.

Work It Out by Writing Activity Sheet

1. MENTAL WELLNESS

- ▶ Introduce the activity by having the children think about how people take care of their physical well-being and how that compares to actions people do to take care of their mental wellness. **Ask:** *What are some things we do to take care of our bodies and our physical well-being?* Answers might include exercising, eating healthy foods and getting enough sleep.
- ▶ Next, explain that just like physical wellness, it's important that we take care of our mental wellness. **Ask:** *What are some things people do to take care of their mental wellness?* Answers might include exercise, mediation, spending time with friends and family, and doing things they like.

2. WRITE IT OUT

- ▶ Set up the activity by asking the children to connect to an experience from their own lives when negative thoughts made them feel defeated. Pause to give them time to access the feelings they experienced. **Say:** *Try to remember a situation when you felt embarrassed or defeated. How did your body respond? What thoughts started popping up in your mind? Do you think it would be easier to talk about that experience or write about it? Why?*
- ▶ Invite children who feel comfortable to share their responses with the group.
- ▶ Explain that writing can be a powerful tool to process thoughts and feelings (especially uncomfortable ones) without having to say them out loud. **Say:** *Writing is one strategy you can use to work through uncomfortable thoughts and emotions and explore how they are affecting you. When negative thoughts pop up, taking time to directly challenge them can help promote a more balanced mindset. If your thought is, "I can't try out for the play because I'm terrible at singing" ask yourself if that is really the truth. Did someone say that to you? Did you recently audition for a school play? Even if you're not sure if you have a strong voice, you can still try. And, even if your voice is not strong—not everyone's is—that's okay. There are other roles you can try. Work to reduce the negative self-talk and flip it to something more positive.*
- ▶ Distribute the activity sheet and review the instructions with the children. Explain that the term *inner critic* refers to being tough on ourselves and criticizing ourselves. Then have the children complete Part 1.

3. POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- ▶ For Part 2, emphasize that keeping our minds focused on positive and enjoyable experiences to take care of our mental wellness is just as important to our overall health as staying physically fit. **Say:** *Trying new things and challenging ourselves in different ways is also a fun way to look after our mental wellness. Activities that focus on having fun, building relationships and accomplishing goals all help people stay balanced and happy.*
- ▶ Ask the children to read through the activity ideas. Then have the group work in teams to create a "Fun with Family and Friends Activity Guide" featuring a mix of activities to try from the two categories shown on the activity sheet. If children need additional support, provide subcategories such as puzzles, physical challenges, art projects, etc.
- ▶ Conclude by emphasizing that children should talk with a trusted adult if they have strong feelings and/or thoughts that they need help working through.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Ask children to write a 1-3 paragraph description of a new activity they tried (or one that is part of their regular routine) and how it helped them reset emotionally.

Resources

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



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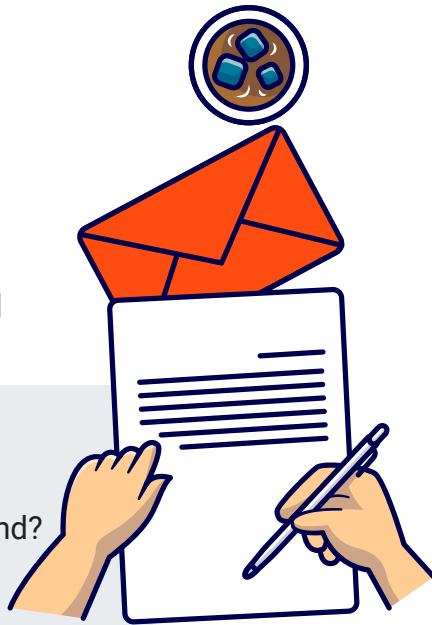


This curriculum was developed through a generous contribution from Kokosing, Inc., an *On Our Sleeves*® supporter and champion of children's mental health. For more information, please visit www.onoursleeves.org.

Name _____

WORK IT OUT BY WRITING

Exploring our thoughts and feelings through writing is a way to tune in to our emotions and mental wellness. It can help us recognize negative self-talk and talk back to it. Follow the guidelines below to practice steering yourself toward a more positive mindset as you write.



Tips for working through feelings by writing:

- ▶ Acknowledge the feeling and try to describe how it is affecting you.
- ▶ Think back to other times you experienced this emotion. How did you respond?
- ▶ Practice challenging any negative thoughts that may be starting to form.

Part 1: Use the sentence starters below to help guide your written response to each scenario.

1. When I feel frustrated about making a mistake, my inner critic may say...

I can talk back and silence my inner critic by reminding myself that...

2. Sometimes when I feel lonely, I start thinking about...

I can challenge these thoughts of loneliness or sadness with words of encouragement, like...

3. When I feel angry, I have trouble calming my inner voice that says...

I can work through my anger thoughts by focusing on...

Part 2: Participating in a variety of activities that we enjoy is another great way to support a positive mindset and mental wellness. Mastering new skills can also promote positivity.

ACTIVITIES FOCUSED ON FUN	ACTIVITIES FOCUSED ON RELATIONSHIPS
Play a favorite sport.	Participate in family game night.
Dance to your favorite music.	Meet up with a friend.
Go for a nature hike.	Write a letter to a grandparent.
Cook or bake with a new recipe.	Volunteer in the community.
Work on a painting or a puzzle.	Perform a random act of kindness.

Try It Out! Use the examples above and your own ideas to create a “Fun with Family and Friends Activity Guide” that features a mix of activities from each category. Then take it home and use it to create fun memories with loved ones!

Nombre _____

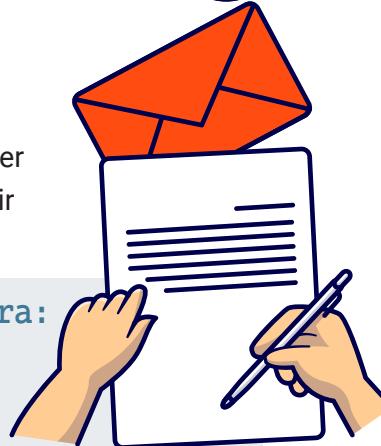


ESCRIBELO A MANO

Explorar nuestros pensamientos y sentimientos a través de la escritura nos sirve para conectar con nuestras emociones y nuestro bienestar mental. Puede ayudarnos a reconocer el diálogo interior negativo y responder a él. Sigue estas pautas para practicar la forma de ir adquiriendo una mentalidad más positiva mientras escribes.

Consejos para explorar tus sentimientos a través de la escritura:

- ▶ Reconoce el sentimiento e intenta describir cómo te afecta.
- ▶ Piensa en otras veces que sentiste esta misma emoción. ¿Cómo respondiste?
- ▶ Practica cómo luchar contra los pensamientos negativos que puedan estar empezando a formarse.



Parte 1: Utiliza los inicios de frase que te ofrecemos para responder por escrito a cada situación.

1. Cuando me siento frustrado/a tras cometer un error, mi crítico interior puede decir...

Puedo replicar y hacer callar a mi crítico interior recordándome que...

2. A veces, cuando me siento solo/a, empiezo a pensar en...

Puedo desafiar estos pensamientos de soledad o tristeza con palabras de aliento, como...

3. Cuando me siento enojado/a, me cuesta calmar mi voz interior que dice...

Puedo analizar mis pensamientos de ira concentrándome en...

Parte 2: Otra buena forma de promover una mentalidad positiva y el bienestar mental consiste en practicar actividades que nos gusten. Dominar nuevas habilidades también puede fomentar la positividad.

ACTIVIDADES ENFOCADAS EN LA DIVERSIÓN	ACTIVIDADES ENFOCADAS EN LAS RELACIONES
Practicar un deporte que te guste.	Organizar una noche de juegos en familia.
Escuchar tu música favorita.	Quedar con un amigo.
Dar un paseo por la naturaleza.	Escribir una carta a un abuelo.
Cocinar u hornear una receta nueva.	Hacer trabajo voluntario en la comunidad.
Pintar un cuadro o hacer un rompecabezas.	Realizar una buena acción arbitraria.

¡Inténtalo! Utiliza los ejemplos anteriores y tus propias ideas para crear una “Guía de actividades divertidas con familiares y amigos” que incluya una combinación de actividades de cada categoría. Luego llévala a casa y úsala para crear recuerdos divertidos con tus seres queridos.

MENTAL WELLNESS

Dear Parents & Caregivers,

Your child has been learning about mental wellness through a program developed by mental health professionals at *On Our Sleeves*, the movement for children's mental health, and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired.

The program helps children achieve mental wellness by tuning into their thoughts and feelings with activities that promote a positive mindset.

We hope you will reinforce these lessons by using the ideas below to spark conversations with your child and will encourage them to explore activities that will nurture their minds and bodies in positive ways.

For more ideas and information on how to support mental wellness and your child's overall mental health, visit OnOurSleeves.org.

Sincerely,

The *On Our Sleeves* team



STRATEGIES FOR HAVING CONVERSATIONS WITH CHILDREN ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH:

- ▶ Remind your child that while strong feelings can be overwhelming at times, it helps to talk about and work through them instead of bottling them up.
- ▶ Establish an open line of communication. For example, you might set a time each day for family members to share something that has been on their mind.
- ▶ When talking with your child, try to give them your undivided attention. Focus on listening so you can understand what your child is thinking and feeling.

Find ways to connect! To get started, cut out the activity ideas shown below, then fold each one and place them in a bag. Every few days, take turns picking an activity slip out of the bag as a fun way to bond and try new things together!

<p>Write 3 compliments about each family member. Take turns reading them out loud.</p>	<p>Visualize a special place that makes you feel happy. Describe that place to the family.</p>	<p>Take turns talking about one high point and one low point from everyone's day.</p>
<p>Make time for a 5-minute family meditation before bedtime.</p>	<p>Explore a new park or nature trail together.</p>	<p>Organize a family scavenger hunt. Write clues to finding special items in your home.</p>
<p>Have a dance party! Everyone takes turns playing a favorite song.</p>	<p>Ask an older relative to tell you the story behind a photo from their childhood.</p>	<p>Write a thank you note to a family member. Place it on their bed or mirror as a surprise pick-me-up.</p>
<p>Volunteer in the community and offer your time to a cause you believe in.</p>	<p>On a family outing, take turns sharing what you are noticing with each of your five senses.</p>	<p>Challenge a family member to a game of checkers or chess.</p>

Bienestar Mental

Estimados padres y cuidadores:

Su hijo/a está aprendiendo cosas sobre el bienestar mental a través de un programa desarrollado por profesionales de la salud mental de *On Our Sleeves*, el movimiento para la salud mental de los niños, y especialistas en planes de estudios de Young Minds Inspired.

El programa ayuda a los niños y niñas a lograr el bienestar mental conectando sus pensamientos y sentimientos con actividades que promueven una mentalidad positiva.

Esperamos que refuerzen estos aprendizajes utilizando las siguientes ideas para generar conversaciones con su hijo/a y que le animen a explorar actividades que alimenten su cuerpo y su mente de manera positiva.

Para obtener más ideas e información sobre cómo mejorar el bienestar mental y la salud mental general de su hijo/a, visíten OnOurSleeves.org.

Atentamente,

El equipo de *On Our Sleeves*



ESTRATEGIAS PARA MANTENER CONVERSACIONES SOBRE SALUD MENTAL CON NIÑOS:

- Recuérdense a su hijo/a que, aunque a veces los sentimientos intensos puedan resultar abrumadores, hablar de ellos y analizarlos ayuda a resolverlos.
- Establezcan una línea de comunicación abierta. Por ejemplo, pueden establecer un horario para que, cada día, los miembros de su familia compartan lo que piensan.
- Cuando hablen con su hijo/a, traten de prestarle toda su atención. Concéntrense en escuchar para entender lo que su hijo/a está pensando y sintiendo.

¡Encuentren maneras de conectar! Para empezar, recorten las ideas de actividades que se muestran a continuación, dóblenlas y métanlas en una bolsa. Cada pocos días, túrnense para sacar una actividad de la bolsa como una forma divertida de crear lazos y probar cosas nuevas juntos.

Escriban 3 elogios para cada miembro de la familia. Túrnense para leerlos en voz alta.	Visualicen un lugar especial que les haga sentirse felices. Describan ese lugar a la familia.	Túrnense para hablar de una cosa buena y de una cosa mala que haya sucedido durante el día.
Reserven tiempo para realizar una meditación de 5 minutos en familia antes de acostarse.	Visiten juntos un parque o un sendero natural nuevo.	Organicen una búsqueda del tesoro en familia. Escriban pistas para encontrar objetos especiales en su hogar.
¡Organicen una fiesta! Túrnense para cantar su canción favorita.	Pídanle a un familiar mayor que les cuente la historia de una foto de su infancia.	Escriban una nota de agradecimiento a un familiar. Déjenla sobre su cama o en el espejo para que la encuentre por sorpresa.
Realicen trabajo voluntario en la comunidad y dediquen su tiempo a una causa en la que crean.	Salgan a dar un paseo y túrnense para compartir lo que notan con cada uno de sus cinco sentidos.	Desafíen a un familiar a jugar a las damas o el ajedrez.

