

Take a Day Time Break to Support Student Mental Wellness



DEAR EDUCATOR,

Take a Day Time Break has been developed by The On Our Sleeves Movement For Children's Mental Health. [On Our Sleeves](#) is on a mission to provide free educational resources so that everyone can understand and promote mental health for children.

The program's student activities cover these concepts:

- Mental wellness plays a key role in every student's academic and personal success.
- Mental health is largely misunderstood and stigmatized in our society (unlike physical health).
- We can't always know what others are thinking about and feeling — they don't wear their thoughts on their sleeves.

Students will:

- Learn mental health facts
- Dispel myths about mental health
- Develop self-care strategies
- Discover how day time breaks can boost mental wellness

The program also includes a reproducible letter that you can share with parents and caregivers.

Use these materials when it works best for your class. Also, **share** this educational program with teachers and staff at your school to help break the stigma and expand the dialogue around mental health.

We want to hear from you! Please share your feedback at ymiclassroom.com/feedback-daytimebreak.

Sincerely,
The On Our Sleeves Team

Dominic Kinsley, PhD
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired

Target Audience

Students in grades 9-12

Program Components

- This teacher's guide
- Two reproducible activity sheets
- A classroom poster
- A reply card for your comments

Get additional resources at ymiclassroom.com/daytimebreak:

- Spanish versions of the activity sheets and poster
- Reproducible parent/caregiver letter
- Tips for Teachers on talking with teens and day time break activities
- Standards alignment chart
- Online feedback form

How to Use This Program

Photocopy the student activity sheets and review the materials and resources before starting. Each activity should take approximately 30 to 40 minutes. Before you begin, also read the Tips for Teachers found at the link above for important information on talking with teens about mental wellness and day time break activity ideas.

Activity 1:

What Is Mental Health?

This activity focuses on sharing facts about mental health, dispelling myths and supporting self-care strategies to improve mental health and wellbeing.

- Have students share what they know or think by asking the following questions. Guide 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 diagnosis?* (When our thoughts, feelings or behaviors feel out of our control for most days of the week, multiple weeks at a time, and start to get in the way of our daily lives. This can also include difficulty focusing, controlling our emotions or learning.)
 - *What have you heard about how to build mental health?* (Answers will vary.)

Meet The Days

The On Our Sleeves Movement For Children's Mental Health is on a mission to give expert-created resources to all U.S. communities so everyone can understand and promote mental health for children. The *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/take-action/champions/day-family-fund.



- Distribute copies of the activity sheet. Explain to students that this 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 Parts 1 and 2.
- 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

Part 1:

1. True (Your health involves much more than what is happening in your body. Your mind and body are closely linked. To achieve the best overall health outcome, focus on both your physical health and your mental health or fitness.)
2. False (Mental health diagnoses or mental illness 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 their 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 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.)
6. False (It's important to discuss mental health concerns and ask for help if you need it.)

Part 2: 1. “good” stress = B; **2.** self-care = E; **3.** “bad” stress = A; **4.** protective factors = D; **5.** gratitude = C

- Explain that we all have mental health. Emotions, like being excited, scared, happy or angry, are just one part of mental health. Everyone can improve their mental health. Research has shown that certain practices, like gratitude and self-care, are helpful.
- Some people have a mental illness that affects how they think or feel and may

impact how they relate to others. Just like there are many kinds of physical illness, there are a lot of different kinds of mental illness. Some people see a therapist for help, some take medication and some do a combination of things.

- Emphasize that students should always talk with a trusted adult if they are worried or troubled by their emotions or if they are worried about a friend.
- For Part 3, introduce the concept of day time breaks as time to practice “mental fitness” by pausing to focus on your emotional wellbeing. Discuss the concept of gratitude:
 - Say: **Gratitude** is the act of showing appreciation and of being thankful. Research shows that people who practice gratitude 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.
- Have students complete Part 3 and write five people or things that they're grateful for. Invite them to share, but only if they want to.
- As a follow-up, introduce another concept.
 - Say: **Positive thinking** is also connected to mental wellness. Think about something you like about yourself or that you're proud of yourself for and why. Write it on a note to yourself and keep it somewhere as a reminder.

Activity 2: Understanding Self-Care

To help boost their mental health awareness and self-care practices and empathy, students evaluate scenarios that might cause a person to worry, and brainstorm coping strategies.

- Explain that worry is a common part of every person's life. As students, they might feel worried about being accepted by friends, their appearance, tests, doing well in sports or other activities, preparing for college and other concerns. Ask: *How do you deal with feelings of worry? What do you do to make yourself feel better?*
- Distribute copies of the activity sheet and review the coping strategies. For each one, ask students why they think that strategy would be helpful in managing worry. Then, in Part 1, have them add three additional (healthy and appropriate) strategies they use or would like to try, and how these are effective “worry busters.”

- For Part 2, place students in small groups and encourage them to have open, respectful discussions about the scenarios and the three questions to be addressed. Offer assistance and guide students into selecting healthy strategies. Afterward, have groups volunteer to share some of the strategies discussed.

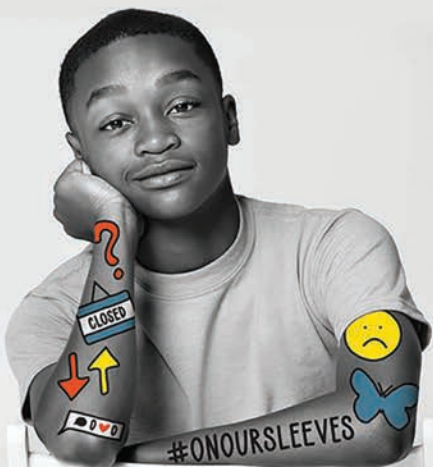
Possible Answers

1. Talk with a trusted adult (parent/caregiver, teacher or school counselor) about how you are feeling. Let people know that the post is not true and ask your friends not to comment on the post. Consider taking a social media break while you are problem-solving.
2. Write in a journal to help work through your thoughts and emotions. Keep busy with friends and activities that you enjoy. Talk with a trusted adult about how you're feeling if it lasts.
3. 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.
4. Support your friend by doing things together: take a walk, watch funny videos or talk about happy memories. Encourage your friend to talk with a trusted adult about their concerns.
5. Check in with your friend. When a friend is going through a challenge, the best thing you can do is ask how you can support them. Encourage them to speak with a trusted adult. Offer to go with them. You can also talk with a trusted adult about your friend if you're concerned.

There's More Online!

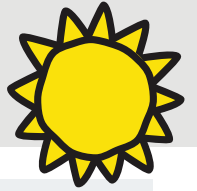
Visit ymiclassroom.com/daytimebreak for Spanish versions of the activities and poster, plus a resource list with day time break ideas you can try with your students and mental health resources for educators. You'll also find a reproducible letter for parents and caregivers. Many parents and caregivers feel apprehension and confusion about children's mental health topics. Many are unsure how to talk to their teens 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.





Take a Day Time Break

Tips for Teachers to Support Student Mental Wellness



TALKING WITH TEENS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS

Follow your school's policy on addressing any mental health concerns and be prepared for students who may have questions or a concerning response to these activities. 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?* If you are concerned about a student, seek assistance from the school counselor. For significant concerns, follow school policy for contacting a parent or caregiver so they are aware of the situation.

If a student shares self-harm or suicidal thoughts or behaviors, be prepared to respond in the moment and know who to notify and what kind of resources or professional help you might need.

For information about talking with students about suicide, check out "Spotting Suicide Warning Signs in Students and What to Do" at [OnOurSleeves.org/mental-health-resources/articles-support/suicidal-behaviors/spotting-suicide-warning-signs-in-students](https://www.onoursleeves.org/mental-health-resources/articles-support/suicidal-behaviors/spotting-suicide-warning-signs-in-students).

TAKE A DAY TIME BREAK

Invite your students to brainstorm quick, easy-to-implement mental health wellness activities to integrate into your classroom routine to take a day time break to recharge. Designate 5-minute breaks to do the activities as a class. Sample ideas:

- Listen to music.
- Give students time to talk to each other.
- Stretch, do jumping jacks — or dance!
- Get creative and have students doodle.
- Create quiet time so students can just chill.
- Play a game.
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Get to know each other. Pair students up and have them answer fun questions – what's the best candy, ice cream flavor, movie, sport, etc.
- Listen. Let students talk about events going on in the world that concern them. Let them know that you hear them.
- Schedule planning time. Encourage students to create a plan of how they will tackle a big assignment or study for a test they are worried about.



TIPS FOR PROMOTING EMPATHY

To promote a safe and empathetic classroom environment:

- Encourage ongoing discussion about coping with feelings and remind students to talk with 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").



Mental Health Resources

The [On Our Sleeves](https://www.onoursleeves.org) website has extensive resources for educators. Visit [OnOurSleeves.org/Educators](https://www.onoursleeves.org/Educators) for free resources, or get new material via email by going to [OnOurSleeves.org/Sign-Up](https://www.onoursleeves.org/Sign-Up).

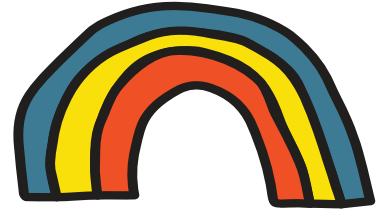
Below are additional tools that you might find helpful:

- Social Media and Kids' Mental Health [OnOurSleeves.org/OnlineSafety](https://www.onoursleeves.org/OnlineSafety)
- Teacher Resources [OnOurSleeves.org/Educators](https://www.onoursleeves.org/Educators)
- Mental Wellness Tools and Guides [OnOurSleeves.org/mental-wellness-tools-guides](https://www.onoursleeves.org/mental-wellness-tools-guides)
- Take a Day Time Break (additional resources for your classroom, such as posters, stickers, etc.) [OnOurSleeves.org/take-action/champions/day-family-fund](https://www.onoursleeves.org/take-action/champions/day-family-fund)



The ON OUR SLEEVES[®] Movement
For Children's Mental Health

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?



You've probably heard the term *mental health*, but might not quite know what it is. Mental health includes how we think, feel and act. It also helps guide how we handle worry, relate to other people and make decisions. It's a broad term that covers a range of emotions and illnesses that people may need support to cope with.

If you're physically hurt or ill, it's usually easy to see and 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 illnesses are not really something teens struggle with.	
3. You can tell how someone is feeling or if they have a mental illness just by looking at them or listening to what they're saying.	
4. Friends and family can make a big difference in supporting each other's mental health.	
5. Someone with lots of friends, good grades and lots of talents is always happy.	
6. Mental health should only be discussed between a patient and professional.	

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

MENTAL HEALTH TERMS	DEFINITIONS
1. ___ "good" stress	A. Severe or ongoing feelings that we cannot meet demands or make it through a challenge. This can affect mental and physical health and can reduce quality of life.
2. ___ self-care	B. Pressure we feel during challenging occasions or tasks (like playing a sport or singing in a concert) that motivates us to prepare and perform
3. ___ "bad" stress	C. This practice involves thinking and talking about things you are thankful for. Building this habit can help boost your mood and remind you of the good things in your life.
4. ___ protective factors	D. Behavior that decreases the risk of mental illness, reduces the effects of worrying or improves mental health
5. ___ gratitude	E. Behaviors that 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 improving your mental health. One way to do that is by thinking about things and people that make you feel good and that you're thankful for. On the back of this sheet, list five things or people that you're thankful or grateful for. Keep your list and add to it as a way of supporting your mental health.

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.



UNDERSTANDING SELF-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.

Try these self-care strategies to help yourself feel better — calmer, happier, more in control — if you are feeling stressed, worried or overwhelmed:

- Talk with a parent or another trusted adult about your feelings.
- Get enough sleep and eat healthy foods.
- Take deep breaths: inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4 and repeat.
- Play your favorite music.
- Write in a journal or draw/sketch.
- Call or text a friend.
- Go for a walk, exercise or dance.
- Laugh — watch a funny video.
- Get absorbed in a good book.
- If there is something you can change about the situation that will help you feel better, take action!
- Break tasks down into smaller, more achievable steps.

If schoolwork is causing you to worry, create a plan or schedule to complete your assignments so that you can map out the time you need. Plan to do your work with a friend who can help you stay on track. And talk with your teachers if you need guidance or have any questions.

Part 1: List three healthy things you do that help when you are feeling worried. How does each self-care strategy help you feel better?

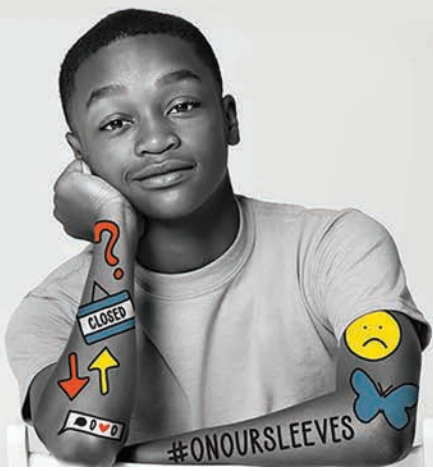
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Part 2: Practice using self-care strategies with the situations described below. These are 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 situation invoke and why?*
 - *Which trusted adult could the person talk with about the situation?*
 - *What are some things the person could do to help cope with their feelings?*
1. Someone posted a rumor about you online and it seems to be spreading fast.
 2. You and your girlfriend/boyfriend have just broken up and you're having a tough time with it.
 3. You are not doing too well in science class and have a mid-term coming up. You need to get a good grade to pass the class.
 4. Your friend has been acting anxious about getting into college and it's all they seem to focus on.
 5. Your friend has seemed sad for several weeks. They've been very emotional recently. They don't want to talk about it.



REMEMBER: If you have a friend who is having a hard time, show empathy and let them know you're there if they want to talk. Don't try to manage their feelings on your own. Anyone can call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing 988. Please reach out to a trusted adult for how to best help your friend.



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



DEAR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS.

When a child has a physical illness, there are usually signs, and we know what to do. But mental health concerns can be more challenging to detect. Sometimes warning signs can even be mistaken for typical changes teens experience. Young people don't wear their thoughts on their sleeves, so we have to check-in and have conversations to understand how they are feeling.

The On Our Sleeves Movement For Children's Mental Health is on a mission to give expert-created resources to all U.S. communities so everyone can understand and promote mental health for children. Working with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired, they have created a mental wellness program called *Take a Day Time Break*. This resource focuses on normalizing emotions and building empathy. It also provides teens with some practical strategies to improve self-care, including taking day time breaks to reduce stress.

Continue the Conversation

Helping teens 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. Getting teens to share may be a challenge. Build the habit of daily conversations with your teen and let them know they're supported.

- Ask them about their day and their friends.
- Share your own experiences about challenges you faced during your day or things that make you angry or stressed and how you feel about them. Ask if they ever feel the same way.
- Show your child healthy ways you manage feelings, such as deep breathing, taking a walk, etc.
- Check in with your teen if they have a big event coming up, like a test, sporting event, job interview, college application, etc. Ask them how it's going and if they need help. Remember not to trigger feelings of anxiety by asking things like, "Are you worried about the test?", instead ask open ended questions like, "How are you feeling about the test?"
- Share stories about mental health that you hear in the news and ask your teen what they think about the story.

For more conversation starters, visit OnOurSleeves.org/Conversation.

Meet The Days

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/take-action/champions/day-family-fund.



Take a Day Time Break

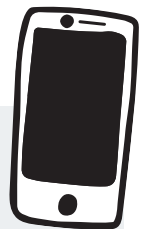
As a family, try taking day time breaks for mental wellness and to help reduce stress. These breaks might include enjoying your favorite music together, taking a walk outdoors, or turning the refrigerator door into a gratitude wall with sticky notes. Generate your own ideas together!

Additional Resources

Social Media and Kids' Mental Health:
OnOurSleeves.org/OnlineSafety

Mental Health Resources for Your Child:
OnOurSleeves.org/mental-health-resources

Videos featuring behavioral health experts:
YouTube.com/OnOurSleeves



If you or your child need immediate help due to suicidal thoughts, go to your local emergency room immediately. Or you can call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or text "START" to 741-741.

