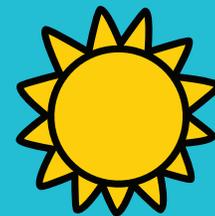




# Take a Day Time Break to Support Student Mental Wellness



## Dear Educator,

*Take a Day Time Break* has been developed by The Kids Mental Health Foundation, proudly founded by Nationwide Children's Hospital. The Kids Mental Health Foundation 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.

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 other 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](https://ymiclassroom.com/feedback-daytimebreak).

Sincerely,  
The Kids Mental Health Foundation Team

Dominic Kinsley, PhD  
Editor in Chief  
Young Minds Inspired



Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005, or by email at [feedback@ymiclassroom.com](mailto:feedback@ymiclassroom.com).

## Target Audience

Students in grades 6–8, teachers, and parents/caregivers

## Program Components

Available at [ymiclassroom.com/daytimebreak](https://ymiclassroom.com/daytimebreak)

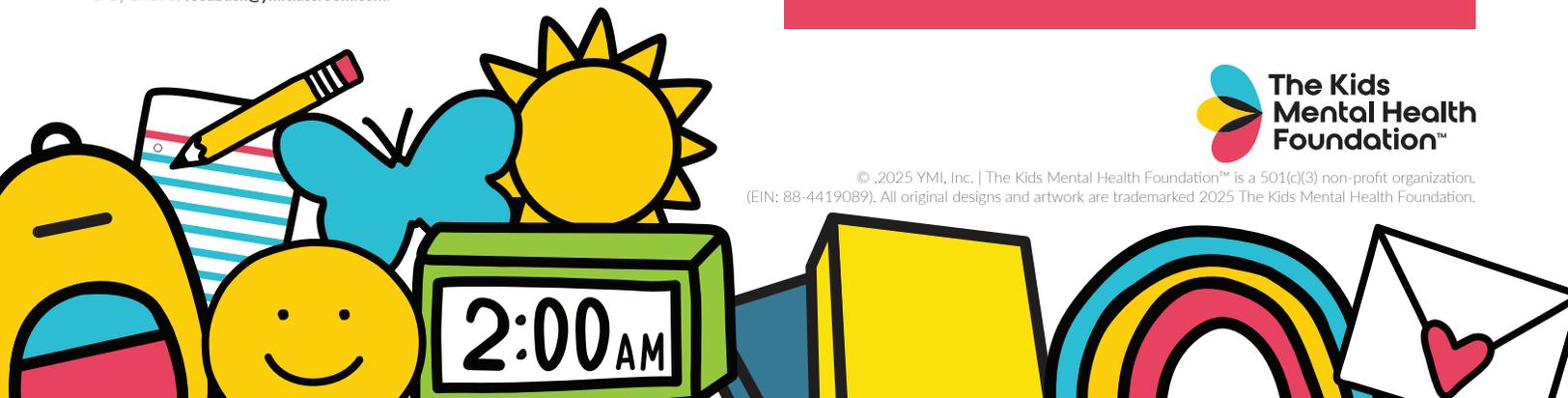
- This teacher's guide
- Two reproducible student activity sheets (in English and Spanish)
- A reproducible parent/caregiver letter (in English and Spanish)
- A standards alignment chart
- An online feedback form

## How to Use This Program

- Photocopy the student activity sheets and review the materials and resources before starting.
- 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.
- Encourage students to take the completed activity sheets home to share with their families. Also give them copies of the parent/caregiver letter with tips to help families navigate discussions around mental health to take home.

## Meet The Days

The Kids Mental Health Foundation *Take a Day Time Break* program is an ongoing mission of Christina and Ryan Day — strong advocates for The Kids Mental Health Foundation — 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 [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/support-kmhf/champions/day-family-fund](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/support-kmhf/champions/day-family-fund).



## Activity 1:

# Mental Health Myths & Facts



Your students may be familiar with certain mental health conditions but may not be familiar with the term *mental health* or understand what it means. This activity focuses on sharing facts, 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 and guiding 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.)
- Distribute copies of the activity sheet. Read the directions for **Part 1**, which features a true/false quiz about mental health. Let students know that this activity 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 the section and then discuss the answers below as a class. Be sure students adjust any incorrect answers and encourage them to bring their completed worksheets home to share with their families.

### Answers:

- True (Your health involves much more than what is happening in your physical body. Your mind and body are closely linked. To achieve the best overall health outcome, you want to focus on your physical health and your mental health or fitness.)
- 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.)
- False (TikTok, YouTube and other online sources are not the same as visiting a doctor or therapist for a diagnosis.)
- True (It's important to ask for help if you are struggling with your feelings. It's also important to be sensitive, 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.)
- False (Anyone can experience problems with their mental health, including those who may seem happy or successful on the outside.)

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.

Conclude Part 1 by emphasizing 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.

- Direct students to **Part 2** of the activity sheet, a matching exercise involving mental wellness practices. Have students work in pairs to match the terms with their definitions. If they are unsure, encourage them to make their best guesses based on context clues. Afterward, discuss the answers as a class.

**Answers:** 1. "good" stress = B; 2. self-care = E;

3. "bad" stress = A; 4. protective factors = D; 5. gratitude = C

Tell students that there are many mental wellness practices which can help you improve your **mental health**.

- 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 – who recognize and feel good about the good things in their life – 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 as a person.

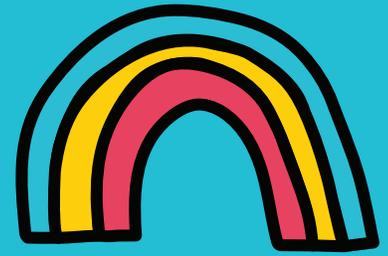
- Read the directions for **Part 3** and have students draw their images on separate paper. Create a wall display where students can post their images – anonymously if they prefer.
- As a follow-up, introduce the concept of positive thinking. Say: **Positive thinking** is connected to mental health and wellness. Think about something you like about yourself or that you're proud of, and why. Write it on a note to yourself.

Invite students to share, but only if they want to. As an extension, encourage students to take a "What I Like About Myself" or "What I'm Proud of" selfie or draw a picture representing their responses.



## Activity 2:

## Take Care



To further develop students' mental health awareness and boost self-care practices and empathy, this activity asks students to role-play scenarios that might cause a person to worry, and brainstorm coping strategies.

1. 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, and other concerns. Ask: *How do you deal with feelings of worry? What do you do to make yourself feel better?*
2. Distribute copies of the activity sheet and review the directions for **Part 1**. Invite volunteers to read the list of coping strategies. For each item, ask students why they think that strategy would be helpful in managing worry. Then have them add two additional (healthy and appropriate) strategies they use or would like to try, and how these are effective "worry busters."
3. Next, review the directions for **Part 2**. Scenarios 1 and 2 encourage students to reflect on how they might feel and react if the situation happened to them. Scenarios 3 and 4 focus on helping a friend with a situation that worries them.
4. Place students in small groups and encourage them to have open, respectful discussions about the scenarios on the list. For each item, students will identify how they or their friend might be feeling and why (this builds empathy), a trusted adult they could speak with, and coping strategies they could implement. Afterward, have groups volunteer to act out the scenarios.

**Possible Answers:**

1. 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.
2. Talk with a trusted adult, like a parent/caregiver or school counselor, about how you are feeling and how you can talk with your friend. Write in a journal to help work through your thoughts and emotions. Have a conversation with your friend, listen to them and find ways to compromise.
3. Support your friend by doing things together: take a walk, watch funny videos, or talk about happy memories. Encourage your friend to talk to her mom or another trusted adult about her concerns for her family.
4. 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.

5. To conclude the activity, tell students that they can become *mental health* advocates by starting a "Take a Day Time Break Club" to support self-care. In their groups, invite students to brainstorm quick, easy-to-implement mental health wellness activities to integrate into your classroom routine. Have groups share their ideas and agree on five activities to try over the coming week. Designate a daily 5- to 10-minute break to do the chosen activities as a class. Set up a box for students to submit new ideas and keep the breaks going throughout the month. Sample ideas:

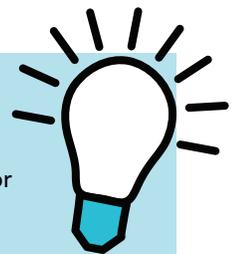
- Write a compliment or message of encouragement to a classmate.
- Create a class gratitude list by posting sticky notes on the bulletin board.
- Write down a personal goal and steps you will take to achieve this goal.
- Perform a random act of kindness (or make a plan to perform one).
- Stretch, do jumping jacks – or have a dance party!

## Reproducible Parent/ Caregiver Letter

Studies have shown that many parents and caregivers feel apprehension and confusion about children's mental health topics. Many still maintain a stigma around mental health, hold misperceptions about mental health conditions, and are unsure how to talk to their children 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.

### There's More Online!

Visit [ymiclassroom.com/daytimebreak](http://ymiclassroom.com/daytimebreak) for Spanish versions of the activities and a letter for parents and caregivers.



# 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 about 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 [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/suicide-prevention/spotting-suicide-warning-signs-in-students](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/suicide-prevention/spotting-suicide-warning-signs-in-students).

### Mental Health Resources

The Kids Mental Health Foundation website has extensive resources for educators. Visit [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources) for free resources on mental health, wellness strategies, videos, and more, or get material via email by going to [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/sign-up](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/sign-up).

Below are additional tools that you might find helpful:

- Technology, Social Media and Kids' Mental Health [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/technology-and-social-media](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/technology-and-social-media)
- Helping Kids with Anxious Feelings or Anxiety Disorders [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/anxiety](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/anxiety)
- Mental Wellness Tools and Guides [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/mental-wellness](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/mental-wellness)

### Take a Day Time Break

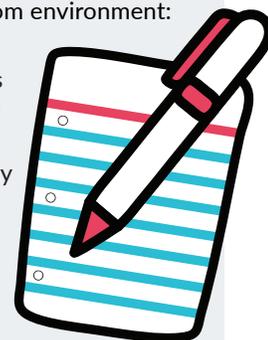
Invite your students to brainstorm quick, easy-to-implement mental health wellness activities to integrate into your classroom routine to take a day time break to recharge. Designate 5-minute breaks to do the activities as a class. Sample ideas:

- Create a wall of images that make them smile, like photos of cute and funny animals or silly jokes.
- Write a compliment or message of encouragement to a classmate.
- Create a class gratitude list by posting sticky notes on the bulletin board.
- Write down a personal goal and steps you will take to achieve this goal.
- Perform a random act of kindness (or make a plan to perform one).
- Stretch, do jumping jacks – or have a dance party!

### 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 Myths & Facts

Mental health is an important topic. If you're physically hurt or ill, it can be obvious and easy to see – and easier to describe in words. But because we can't always tell what someone is thinking and feeling, 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. Kids don't have mental health challenges.	
3. You can tell if someone has a mental health challenge by going online (TikTok, YouTube, etc.).	
4. Friends and family can make a big difference in supporting each other's mental health.	
5. Kids who have lots of friends, get good grades, and have lots of talents are happy.	

**Part 2:** Match each mental health or wellness term to its definition by writing the correct letter on each line.

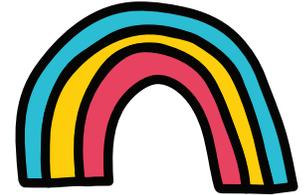
MENTAL HEALTH TERMS	DEFINITIONS
1. ____ "good" stress	A. Severe or ongoing feelings that we cannot meet demands or make it through a challenge. This can affect mental and physical health and can reduce quality of life.
2. ____ self-care	B. Pressure or stress we feel during challenging occasions or tasks (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 that make you feel good and that you're thankful for. Draw something that you're grateful for or something that symbolizes it. Ask yourself this question as you draw: *What does gratitude look like to me?*

**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.



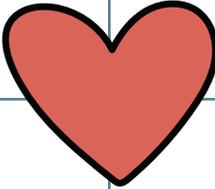
# Take Care



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 try 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.
- Take deep breaths: inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4 and repeat.
- Play your favorite music and sing along.
- Write in a journal or draw/sketch.
- Close your eyes and imagine visiting your favorite place.
- Call or text a friend.
- Break down tasks into smaller, easier steps.
- Go for a walk, exercise, or dance.
- Laugh – watch a funny video, tell jokes, look at silly memes or GIFs.
- Do a “body scan” where you slowly relax from your head to your toes.
- Get enough sleep and eat healthy foods.

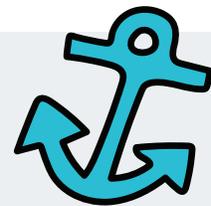
**Part 1:** Use this chart to list other healthy things you do that help when you are in a stressful situation. Then explain how each self-care strategy helps you feel better.

MY SELF-CARE STRATEGY	HOW IT HELPS ME FEEL BETTER
1.	
2.	

**Part 2:** Now, practice using self-care strategies with the situations described below. These are all 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 person be having, 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. You are not doing too well in history class and have a big test coming up. You need to get a good grade to pass the class.
  2. You have just gotten into a fight with a friend and they're really mad at you. You want to work it out, but don't know how to talk to them about it.
  3. Your friend's mom lost her job and your friend is worried about her family. Your friend seems much more anxious than usual.
  4. Your friend has seemed sad for several weeks. They've been very emotional recently. They don't want to talk about it.

When you're done, role-play each scenario. Assign the characters in each situation to the people in your group. Then, volunteer to show your class the self-care strategies you came up with.

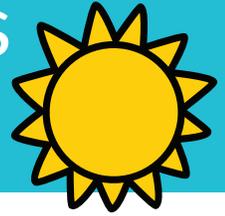


**REMEMBER:** If you have a friend who is having a hard time, show empathy and let them know you're there if they want to talk. Don't try to manage their feelings on your own. Anyone can call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline by dialing 988. Please reach out to a trusted adult for how to best help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





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



## Dear Parents and Caregivers,

When a child has a physical illness, we know what to do. But navigating mental health concerns can be more challenging. Young people don't always share their thoughts, so we have to check-in and have conversations to understand how they are feeling.

To help you and your child become more informed about mental health, The Kids Mental Health Foundation, proudly founded by Nationwide Children's Hospital, has teamed with the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired to create an in-school mental health wellness program called *Take a Day Time Break*. The program aims to correct misunderstandings about mental health and provides students with some practical strategies to build empathy and improve self-care.

The Kids Mental Health Foundation is on a mission to provide free expert-created resources to all U.S. communities so that everyone can understand and promote mental health for children. Parents and caregivers have a big role to play in building mental wellness.

## Conversation Starters

Helping children 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. Below are some "convo starters" The Kids Mental Health Foundation team has created to help you discuss everyday thoughts and feelings with your child. Try out a few. You might be surprised by your child's willingness to open up when they know they're supported!

- When you feel sad, what do you think about to help yourself feel happy again?
- Tell me three words to describe yourself.
- What makes you angry? What helps you to feel less angry?
- How has someone been kind to you today? How were you kind to someone else?
- What do you do when someone makes fun of other kids at school?

For more conversation starters, visit [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/starting-conversations](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/starting-conversations).

## Meet The Days

The Kids Mental Health Foundation *Take a Day Time Break* program is an ongoing mission of Christina and Ryan Day – strong advocates for The Kids Mental Health Foundation – 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 [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/support-kmhf/champions/day-family-fund](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/support-kmhf/champions/day-family-fund).



## Take a Day Time Break

At school, your child has learned that taking a day time break for mental wellness can help reduce stress and promote empathy. Spend a few minutes a day taking a break as a family with activities such as giving a compliment to each family member, doing an errand or chore for a neighbor, taking a walk outdoors, or turning the refrigerator door into a gratitude wall with sticky notes. Generate your own day time break ideas together!

For more ideas, go to [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/school/day-time-break](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/mental-health-resources/school/day-time-break).

## Additional Resources

- Go to [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org).
- Sign up for our free newsletter at [kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/sign-up](https://kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org/sign-up).
- Check out videos featuring behavioral health experts: [YouTube.com/@KidsMentalHealthFoundation](https://YouTube.com/@KidsMentalHealthFoundation)

 (@kidsmentalhealthfoundation)

 (@kidsmentalhealthfoundation)

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.

