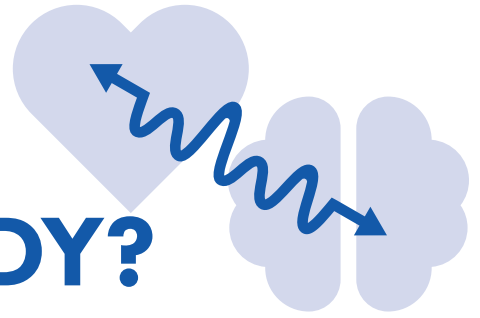


The Mind-Body Connection

HOW DO FEELINGS SHOW UP IN THE BODY?



PRE-K/ELEMENTARY

Our bodies give us clues about how we feel. Just like our body tells us when we're hungry or tired, it also reacts to feelings.

Feelings in the body are real and important. They are ways our body lets us know we may need comfort, rest or support.

MIND-BODY CONNECTION EXAMPLES

When children feel worried or stressed, their body might have a:



Headache



Feel sweaty or shaky



Fast heartbeat



Stomachache



Trouble Sleeping

When children feel sad, their body might:

- Cry more easily
- Eat more or less than usual
- Feel very tired
- Need more comfort or physical closeness

WATCH FOR SIGNS

It may help to talk about the mind-body connection if your child:

- Often has headaches or stomachaches without a clear illness
- Has trouble naming or explaining their feelings
- Has a hard time calming down when upset

over
1-in-4
PARENTS

of young children think their child's belly pain may be connected to worry or other big feelings, not a medical problem.



Source: Mott Children's Hospital Mott Poll Report, 2023

► **If you notice these or other signs, take them seriously. Check with a health or mental healthcare provider if you're concerned.**

FAQ

Q: Is it a problem when feelings show up in the body?

A: It's normal for bodies to react to feelings. If your child's body symptoms are too strong, last a long time or make daily activities hard, it may be time to get extra support.

Q: Are body symptoms caused by feelings still "real"?

A: Yes. Body symptoms caused by feelings are real and can feel very uncomfortable, even when there is no illness.

Frequently Asked Questions

TRUST YOUR GUT. You know your child best.

How do feelings show up in the body?

Pre-K/Elementary



PAY ATTENTION TO SIGNALS

Listen to what your child says about their body. Some body symptoms may have a medical cause, so it is important to rule that out. **For example:**

- Headaches could be from illness or vision problems
- Trouble breathing could be asthma
- Belly pain could be illness or constipation

If you're unsure what is causing your child's body symptoms, check with your doctor or healthcare provider.



BE UNDERSTANDING

Let your child know that **ALL of their feelings are okay**, even the big or uncomfortable ones.

Do:

- Say, **"It's okay to feel this way"**
- Let them know feelings are normal
- Be their safe place and let them know they'll be okay

Don't:

- Dismiss their feelings
- Don't say, **"You're fine"**
- Don't say, **"It's no big deal"**



TEACH FEELING WORDS

Help your child learn simple feeling words.

Naming feelings can help children better understand what their body is telling them. Here is a list of feelings words to start with:

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| • Happy | • Angry | • Thankful |
| • Frustrated | • Relaxed | • Tired |



BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Show your child how you notice and calm your own body when you have big feelings. You can say things like:

- "I'm feeling stressed, so I'm taking slow breaths"
- "I'm going to stretch to help my body relax"
- "Listening to music helps my body feel calm"



SUPPORT HEALTHY COPING

Try simple calming ideas together:

- Blow bubbles to practice deep breathing
- Close your eyes and imagine being in your favorite place
- Color, move or listen to music
- Trace a shape with your finger

Different strategies work for different children.

Try a few to see what helps most.

Learn More



- Children's Nebraska | [Feelings Check-In](#) (available in Spanish and English)



- Watch a short video with your child to learn mind-body connection strategies



**LET'S
TALK**

Start a conversation about how feelings show up in the body. Ask questions like:

- What makes your body feel happy?"
- What does your body feel like when you're upset?
- What helps your body feel better when you're upset?

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CHILD AND NEED HELP RIGHT AWAY?

You can call or text 988 for support or walk in anytime to the Children's Nebraska Behavioral Health & Wellness Center, which is open 24/7: 8550 Indian Hills Drive, Omaha, NE 68114 | 402-955-4700. **In case of a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.**

Medically reviewed by: Sarah Klein, PMHNP-BC, Shannon Soderberg, PMHNP-BC Date reviewed: July 2026

About this project: This resource was developed by Children's Nebraska, in collaboration with Nebraska Partnership for Mental Healthcare Access in Pediatrics (NEP-MAP) and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Public Health. This resource and others in the series provide practical information and tips specifically designed for Nebraska parents and caregivers. This information is not intended as medical advice.

NEP-MAP is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of cooperative agreement U4CMC32322 to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NEDHHS) totaling \$821,760 for 2025-2026 with an additional 20% percent non-federal funds cost-sharing. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS, the U.S. Government, or NEDHHS.

